

As priest-in-charge of St. Anskar's Episcopal Church, I am very glad to welcome you here today and very grateful for the opportunity to say a few words in celebration of this occasion and in appreciation of the efforts of the Swedish American Historical Society of Wisconsin, members of this parish, and others who have brought this project to its fulfillment.

Since you are already here today, there is probably little need for an introduction to Gustav Unonius. I won't try to summarize or say better what you and anyone else who might come along in future days can now read on this historical marker. But in preparing for this occasion, and in reflecting again on Unonius' story, it seems fitting to remember once more how closely the life of this parish is bound to his life and how much we continue to owe to his remarkable faithfulness in response to God's unexpected call.

As you know, Unonius came to the United States and to this part of Wisconsin in 1841. His purpose was to pioneer a homestead, the nearest boundary of which is just about a tenth of a mile from where we now stand. He came to plant a farm, but in a very short span of time he was called to leave that work to plant and labor in another field—in the Lord's vineyard—as a pastor to the growing Scandinavian community settled around Pine Lake.

That part of the story—which is the part of the story to which we have the closest of connections—even when recounted in great detail, is remarkably short. Precisely because Unonius' memoir offers us such vivid glimpses of his life and ministry in those days, it is easy to forget that from the time of his arrival, to his seminary training at Nashotah House, to his ordination and the beginning of his ministry, to the time of his departure to serve other congregations first in Manitowoc and later in Chicago, was a span of less than seven years.

Yet, even in that brief season of ministry, Unonius planted and nurtured seeds of faith and community that have endured and flourished and borne fruit—at St. Olaf's Lutheran and St. Paul's Episcopal near Ashippun, at St. John's Lutheran Church in Stone Bank, and here, at St. Anskar's Episcopal Church where the legacy of Holy Innocents Episcopal Church endures. In all of these places, and in our common life, the ministry of Gustav Unonius to the Scandinavian Parish at Pine Lake lives on. This marker helps us to remember with gratitude and thanksgiving.