

## **125 Years Harburg Congregation**

125 years - more, much more than a life time, but a mere split second in the history of our universe. For you as Harburg Congregation it covers the total life span of your congregation. At the same time it is but 6% of the age of the Church of Christ.

On the one hand it makes us grateful to look back and see the many things that God has done in Harburg. On the other hand I am awestruck by the thought that this is just a tiny bit of what God has done and is doing all over the world.

Looking at the 125 years from these various perspectives gives me a new perspective. When we focus just on the congregation and perhaps on ELCSA (N-T) we can easily be overwhelmed by the challenges we have to deal with: decline in numbers, poor track record in winning and keeping our youth, financial burdens, land reforms. But then, focussing on the Church of Christ spanning centuries and continents I see that something is happening, that the Church is growing, that world powers have come and gone - but the Church continued! We are part of an exciting, global, eternal movement!

Of course, during these almost 2000 years, many congregations have come and gone, and in some cases even whole countries, formerly Christian, have changed religion. But still, the Church of Christ continues and grows.

You as congregation have undergone significant changes and developments during these 125 years. A wonderful infrastructure has grown and is well maintained. Yet you also had to go through the pain of closing the school.

A walk through the cemetery reminds us of many, many people who, during the 125 years contributed in countless ways to what you are today. We are grateful for them.

At the same time, during a "walk through the congregation" I would come across many, many people who are now busy shaping the congregation and helping it move into the future. Thank you for your involvement.

Although you have lost many a member due to people moving away from the area, you have also managed to reach out to a wider community, becoming a spiritual home to people from outside the Lutheran or German family. This is a vital step for any congregation, since our calling and commission goes far beyond our traditional and existing membership.

You have also experimented with and implemented new forms of services and worship. This is in line with John 1, which states that in Christ the Word became flesh to dwell among us, so that we can see His glory. May you continue to find new and good ways to bring the gospel of Christ to as many people as possible.

Over these 125 years Harburg Congregation and its members have also time and again been active in the larger Church and during the last 30 years in ELCSA (N-T). It is vital that you continue and even expand this involvement, since it is not only to the benefit of the Church, but also a blessing for your own congregation.

In closing I remind you of the promise that Jesus gave to Peter. Peter had stated: You, Jesus, are the Son of the Living God. Jesus responds: On this foundation the Church shall stand, and the gates of hell will not overcome it! (Matthew 16,18) May you for many years to come, experience the blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ, and, most of all, be a blessing to countless people that are still to come!

Horst Müller  
(Bishop, ELCSA (N-T))