

Pastor retires after 30 years

Norden says students kept him on his toes

By Reid Warren

Thirty years ago, the "Chapel on the Mall" was the "Chapel in the Hall." The hall was in the Nebraska Union, where the Rev. Alvin J. Norden would wheel an altar out of a closet and hold services in a room on third floor.

After services were finished, Norden would wheel the altar back into the closet and the room would convert from a "chapel" back into an office.

Norden is retiring after 30 years as pastor for the University Lutheran Chapel. Things have become more convenient since his start in 1951.

When Norden took over the job, he had an office in the Temple building. Now he uses a church at 1510 Q St., called "The Chapel on the Mall" by all who attend.

Change for the Better

Norden has seen many changes since his pastoral debut. He said most of them have been for the better.

Norden said students are more mature now than when he started his ministry. "I haven't in any way lost my confidence in students over the years."

"There is more concern in wanting to know what they believe in and why they believe it," he said.

He said he doesn't see "the bad things such as drinking and the misuse of God's name" as much as he used to.

Patience, honesty

Norden said that being a pastor for students has been a challenge and one that requires patience and honesty.

Many people misjudge students, he said, because they base their feelings on the actions of a few students.

"People read papers about some students setting a bonfire and everybody gets thrown in the same category," he said.

"I've always been amazed at how most students have kept their feet on the ground."

Norden said that dealing with students has helped him stay young at heart, even though he has grown a little older and a little slower.

"Even though you grow older in years, you have to stay youthful," he said. "I just look at a student it does something to me."

Norden said he is more open to new ideas and viewpoints than when he started his ministry.

"If you're going to stay in this work you've got to learn how to relate," he said.

Indefinite plans

Norden's plans for the future are indefinite. He will take a three month sabbatical starting in the spring to "take some time and think things over."

Yesterday, a special chapel service commemorated Norden's 30 years of service.

Norden said he will miss dealing with students.

"It has been a great and thrilling challenge and I have no desire to leave. But there comes a time when you have to move on to something else."

Norden is optimistic about his future. "The Lord doesn't always let you do what you want to do," he said, "but somehow in the end He's always right."

Norden said he was grateful for the opportunity to serve in a student chapel.

"I've always felt that the Lord put me here," he said. "Being on this campus, this lively place, is what I'll miss."

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