Jenny Lind Chapel
Andover, Illinois
Landmark of Pioneer Faith

Capital Campaign

At present the Jenny Lind Endowment Trust with a balance of $190,000 is unable to produce the needed revenue to support the operating budget and the cost of essential repairs. The Northern Illinois Synod Council has endorsed a capital fund campaign to increase the endowment.

Campaign Committee

Those who are currently working on this campaign are Al Beck, Lynn Bergren, Mary Brodd, John Califf, Michel Clark, Don Johnson, John Kindschuh, John Leaf, Bob Pearson, Ron Peterson, David Renneke and Kai Swanson.

Mission Statement

To establish an endowment sufficient to preserve the Jenny Lind Chapel, the first church building of the Augustana Synod. The Chapel is a living expression of our history and of our faith in the future.

Vision Statement

The Jenny Lind Chapel continues to be a fruitful vision with these objectives:

1. To establish a permanent endowment fund of $500,000 and sufficient volunteer resources to sustain and advance the Christian faith of the Swedish founding pioneers.

2. To ensure that the chapel and the museum within it is structurally sound and the cemetery is properly maintained.

3. To advance and expand the programming of the Chapel to tell the faith story lived in the nineteenth century as it relates to twenty-first century Christians.

4. To develop cooperation with the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center at Augustana College, Rock Island, to preserve immigration records and artifacts.
Case Statement

For many years the Jenny Lind Chapel, located on the prairie at Andover, Illinois, about halfway between the Quad Cities and Galesburg has been the icon of the Augustana Synod. It was built by members of the first Augustana congregation under the pastoral leadership of Lars Paul Esbjörn. Pastor Esbjörn was the first pastor of the Swedish state church to emigrate to America. He founded the Swedish Lutheran congregation on March 18, 1850, with a charter membership of ten adults. On June 13, 1948 the Andover Lutheran congregation presented the deeds of the landmark chapel and adjoining cemetery to the Augustana Lutheran Church of North America as a historical monument.

It was named Jenny Lind Chapel in recognition of a donation for chapel construction in 1850 from the world famous singer known as the Swedish Nightingale. Jenny Lind's gift provided the majority of the building's cost. Work on the structure, measuring 45 feet long and 30 feet wide took three years and untold sacrifice to complete. There is no steeple because that lumber had to be used for coffins for those stricken in a cholera epidemic. Victims of the cholera epidemic are buried in a cemetery located on the grounds of the Jenny Lind Chapel.

Pastor Esbjörn was one of the founders of the Augustana Synod and served as the first president of Augustana College. The chapel became the mother church for hundreds of other churches of the Augustana Lutheran Church in America that primarily served Swedish immigrants and their descendents. It had over one-half million members in 1962 when it merged into the Lutheran Church in America.

In 1962 the Lutheran Church in America assumed ownership of the chapel. In 1973 the Illinois synod of the LCA became the owner of the Jenny Lind Chapel. In 1987, the Northern Illinois Synod of the ELCA assumed ownership and management of Jenny Lind Chapel. That arrangement continues to the present day. The Synod elects the members of the Jenny Lind Chapel Committees that are responsible for the maintenance of the building and cemetery, arranging worship services and the management of funds.

Today the chapel houses a museum that offers exhibits, artifacts and historical documents and papers depicting the early immigrant experience as well as video and audio presentations. Jenny Lind Chapel also hosts special events and worship services throughout the year, including services in Swedish.

The Jenny Lind Chapel Capital Campaign is dedicated to our Swedish ancestors who sacrificed so much to build our present church. It is our hope that their faith in God will inspire members of the ELCA to continue this ministry.