A brief story about the beginning of St. Elizabeth Hospital:

In 1885, the Honorable A. Hamilton Levings, Mayor of the City of Appleton, invited the Franciscan Sisters of St. Louis, Missouri, to come to Appleton for the purpose of building a hospital. It was 14 years later that the Sisters eventually made the trip to Appleton.

Father Kaster, then pastor of Sacred Heart Church, Appleton, urged the Sisters to come to Appleton in 1899 and obtained the approval of the Bishop of Green Bay for the new hospital.

Sisters Carola Lachnicht and Philippa Breidenbach arrived in Appleton on November 17, 1899, the feast of St. Elizabeth. Thus the hospital was named in her honor. St. Elizabeth Hospital began as an eleven-room frame structure on a three-and-one-half acre lot across the street from its present site. Sisters Carola and Philippa came in December, 1899, to stay in the little frame house and later that month were joined by Sisters Armella Restle and Aegidia Steinmetzer.

With the help of local leaders, the Sisters were able to raise money and planned to build a new hospital for $25,000 in the spring. The first year of fund raising proved to be a disappointment. However, despite the shortage of funds, the new hospital was begun in May, 1900, and dedicated in May, 1901.

In the first year the Sisters endured great physical hardship, inadequate funding, and opposition. Their experience in Appleton taught the Sisters being invited to a locale was no guarantee of adequate support.

The following statement defining the policies of the new hospital was drafted: “The Franciscan Sisters who are about to start a hospital here wish it distinctly understood that its doors will be open for the admission of all, no distinction being made as to class or sect, each receiving the same kindly and efficient care and nursing at their hands. Patients affiliating with any church may be freely visited by clergyman of their own denomination, the utmost freedom being granted in this respect. All regular physicians in good standing will be afforded equal activities at the hospital and their
patients receive the same care and attention." This paper is signed by the Franciscan Sisters, per Sisters M. Carola and Philippa. (The original copy of this contract was written in pencil and, except for the signatures in Dr. Rusch Winslow's handwriting, preserved on two very old and wrinkled slips of paper. One piece was dated June 17, 1899, and the other June 18th, but the statement itself was undated.)

Because of the Sisters' devotion, hard work, and love, Appleton has been blessed with a community hospital which has given 100 years of quality health care to its citizens.

As we move into the new millennium, St. Elizabeth Hospital looks forward to giving 100 more years of quality health care to the city of Appleton and its people.

On November 17, 1998, St. Elizabeth Hospital employees and volunteers celebrated with a liturgy in the hospital's chapel, with a commemorative flag raising on the hospital's front lawn. Refreshments were served in the hospital's cafeteria following the liturgy and flag raising.