

CARL FERDINAND WILHELM WALTHER

Pastor, Professor and Synod Founder

BORN: **OCTOBER 25, 1811** *Langenchursdorf, Saxony, Germany*

DIED: **MAY 7, 1887** *Saint Louis, Missouri*

OF ALL THE FOUNDERS of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the best known is C.F.W. Walther — and deservedly so. Walther was the Synod's first president; president and professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis; pastor of the first four Lutheran churches in St. Louis; and the Synod's most prominent and influential theologian.

Walther's story begins in Germany. He was born into a pastor's family, and his formal education equipped him to follow his father's footsteps into the ministry of the Lutheran church. And so he did. He was ordained on January 15, 1837, and installed as pastor of a small rural parish.

By that time, Walther was under the influence of Pastor Martin Stephan, who had given him comforting spiritual advice while Walther was a student. So when Stephan sent word that it was time for everyone to leave the corrupt Lutheran church in Germany for the United States, where they could confess the faith and practice it freely according to the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions, Walther decided to go. There were several other young pastors and would-be pastors, along with members of the congregations they served, who joined the Stephanite migration in 1838–39, about 700 people in all.

By the spring of 1839, they had made it to Missouri, founded the first Lutheran church in St. Louis, and purchased land about a hundred miles south of St. Louis in order to establish communities and congregations committed to pure Lutheranism. Then disaster struck.

A handful of women in the congregation confessed to sexual immorality with Pastor Stephan. Although he denied the charges, the clergy and lay

leadership, including Walther, believed the women and exiled Stephan from their midst.

But now what? Several of the clergy, including Walther, felt very guilty for following a hypocrite and for misleading people into abandoning their homeland. Walther himself fell seriously ill and had to give up his ministry.

During his convalescence, however, Walther devoted himself to studying the Scriptures, the Confessions and Luther himself, so that, about two years after Stephan's fall, Walther began providing biblical answers about the situation of the Saxons. At just about the same time, the St. Louis congregation called him as their pastor. A few years later he began publishing a church paper, *Der Lutheraner*, with a motto that summarized Walther's theology: "God's Word and Luther's doctrine shall never pass away." These twin commitments summarize his preaching, teaching and writing.

By the time the Missouri Synod began in 1847, Walther was already recognized as a gifted theologian. The Synod chose him to be its first president and a few years later to lead the seminary.

For more information about the 175th anniversary of the LCMS, visit lcms.org/175.



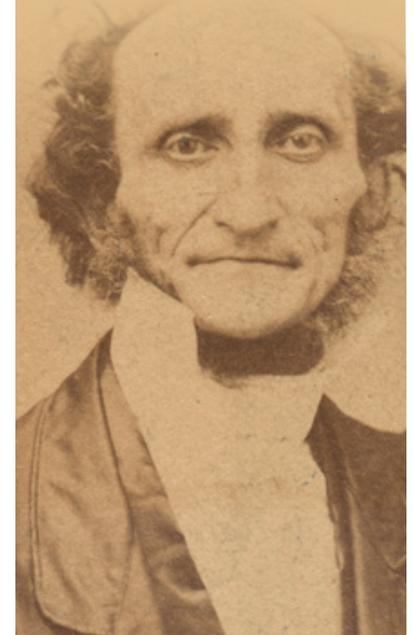
DISCOVER MORE

Lewis W. Spitz, Sr.
The Life of Dr. C. F. W. Walther.

August R. Suelflow.
Servant of the Word: The Life and Ministry of C. F. W. Walther.

Walter O. Forster.
Zion on the Mississippi: The Settlement of the Saxon Lutherans in Missouri 1839–1841.

Walther Exhibit
at Concordia Historical Institute,
Clayton, Missouri.



1847 . 2022

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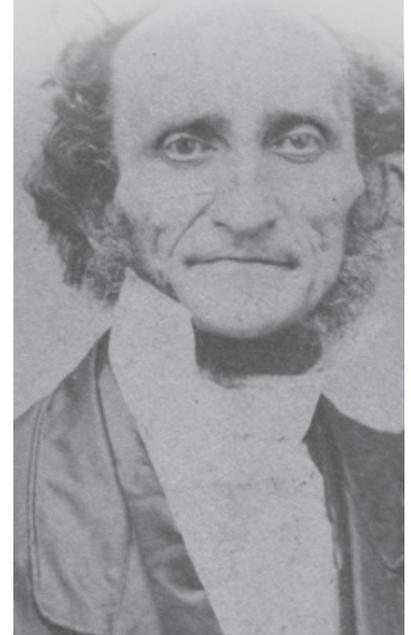
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