

CHRISTIANE BÜNGER

“Mother-in-law” of the Missouri Synod

BORN: 1788 *Etzdorf, Electorate of Saxony, Germany*

DIED: JULY 11, 1849 *St. Louis, Missouri*

CHRIStIANE BÜNGER WAS A PART OF the Lutheran migration from Saxony that left Germany under the leadership of Martin Stephan in 1838–39. By that time, she had been a widow for about two years. However, she made the trip and settled down to life on the American frontier until her death some ten years later. One of her sons became a pastor of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and four of her sons-in-law were pastors also (O.H. Walther, C.F.W. Walther, Ottomar Fuerbringer and Friedrich Lochner).

In the Lutheran territories of Germany at that time, the sons of clergy frequently married the daughters of other clergy, and that was true of Bünger. Her father was a Lutheran pastor as was her husband, Jakob F. Bünger. Jakob was pastor in Etzdorf (Saxony), located, unfortunately, in a major theater of the Napoleonic Wars. On more than one occasion, the Bünger family had to deal with marauding soldiers looking for plunder. But the couple and their family survived, and Jakob continued his ministry there until his death in 1836.

By that time, their oldest son, Johann Friedrich (“Fritz”), was preparing for the ministry too. By 1838, he had become a follower of Martin Stephan who persuaded him and more than 600 others (including two Walther brothers) that the only way to preserve the true Lutheran Church was to leave for America. Bünger and eight of her nine children left also.

But Bünger almost didn’t make it on account of the Walthers. So concerned were the brothers for the eternal well-being of their orphaned niece and nephew that they took them along over the objections of the children’s legal guardian. Because Bünger had cared for the children while final prepara-

tions for the journey were being made, she was jailed before she could leave, even though the Walthers and children got away safely. Within a few months, however, she was free and off she went with Fritz and her daughter Agnes to join the others in Perry County, Mo.

Initially, life was extremely difficult for the Saxon immigrants. Creating farms and communities out of wilderness lands was hard work, money was scarce, severe illness afflicted them and Pastor Stephan was expelled from the community on account of sexual immorality. But they persisted and less than a decade later helped to establish the Missouri Synod.

Bünger’s daughter Emilie married C.F.W. Walther, a pastor in St. Louis and the first president of the Synod. The Walthers were living with Christiane when she died in 1849 during a horrific cholera epidemic in that city.

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

DISCOVER MORE

Louise Buenger Robbert, *“Lutheran Families in Perry County, Missouri, 1839–1870,” Missouri Historical Review* 82, no. 4 (July 1988): 424–38, accessed March 23, 2021, digital.shsmo.org/digital/collection/mhr/id/43737/rec/3.

Louise Buenger Robbert, *“A Clerical Family in Early Modern Germany: the Buengers,” Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 73, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 16–31

Walther O. Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953)

Warren Schmidt, *Mama Buenger: Mother of a Synod* (Scotts Valley, CA: CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2016).



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