

FRIEDRICH PFOTENHAUER

Pastor, Missionary, President

BORN: **APRIL 22, 1859** *Altencelle, Hannover, Germany*

DIED: **OCTOBER 9, 1939** *Chicago, Ill.*

FRIEDRICH PFOTENHAUER WAS BORN into a family that had been Lutheran since the time of the Reformation. In fact, his father represented the ninth successive generation of Lutheran pastors. As Pfothenauer grew older, he knew he would become the tenth. But it would not be in Germany that he would serve. As a young man he had his sights set on America and wanted to be a pastor there.

After initial pastoral training in Germany, Pfothenauer came to America in 1875. He attended Concordia College, Fort Wayne, and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, graduating in 1880. He was called to serve the Lutheran Church in Yellow Bank (Odessa), Minn., and as a traveling missionary in the Dakota and Montana territories. In 1887, he was called as pastor to Immanuel Lutheran Church in Lewiston, Minn. In 1891, he was elected president of the Minnesota District of the Missouri Synod, which at that time comprised the congregations in Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Montana and central and western Canada. In 1894, Pfothenauer was called to serve Emanuel Lutheran Church in Hamburg, Minn., where he worked for 17 years. In 1908, he was elected vice-president of the Missouri Synod, and in 1911, he was elected its fifth president.

Pfothenauer served as Synod president for 24 years. Although he was born in Germany, it was Pfothenauer who oversaw the transition of the official language of the Missouri Synod from German to English. The change came in 1917, the year the United States entered World War I.

Pfothenauer was a skilled church administrator and expert at presiding over the Synod in its conventions. Yet he was

also known as an outstanding preacher, communicating the Gospel clearly with masterful applications of God's Word to the hearts and minds of his hearers.

Pfothenauer was remarkable for his dedication to mission work, both at home and abroad. He had started his career as a traveling missionary and remained dedicated to the task of bringing the Gospel to the unchurched. During his time as president, the Synod increased its work overseas, including in South America and China, and Pfothenauer was the first president to visit the foreign mission field, inspecting the work of the Synod in Brazil and Argentina in 1916.

In 1920, Concordia Seminary awarded him an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree.

In 1935, after his tenure as Synod president ended, Pfothenauer returned to parish ministry, serving as associate pastor of St. Andrew Lutheran Church and later Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Chicago. He died at the age of 80 after 59 faithful years of service to our Lord's church.

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

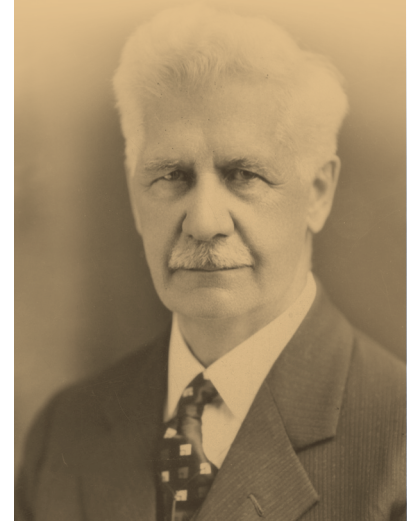


DISCOVER MORE

Henry A. Grueber, "F. Pfothenauer: The Man and the Leader," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 13, no. 1 (April 1940): 22–25.

E.A. Mayer, "Dr. Friedrich Pfothenauer (1859–1939)," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 13, no. 1 (April 1940): 1–22.

Samuel P. Schuldheisz, "Shepherd of Missouri: The Life and Theology of Friedrich Johann Pfothenauer," Part One, *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 82 (Summer 2009); Part Two, *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 82 (Fall 2009).



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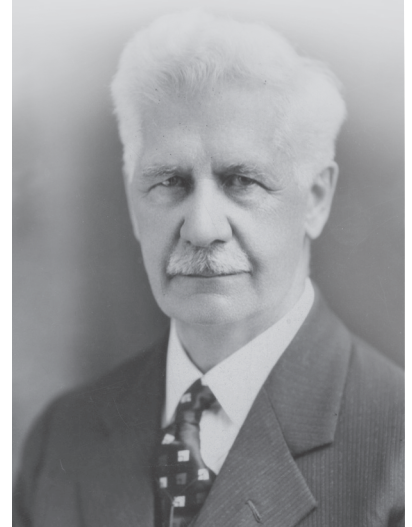


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