

HEINRICH (HENRY) NAU

Pioneer Lutheran Missionary & Educator

BORN: **SEPTEMBER 21, 1881** *Beltershausen, Hesse, Germany*

DIED: **MAY 17, 1956** *Greensboro, N.C.*

HENRICH NAU WAS RAISED ON A FARM, but his father provided him with an education that led him to the University of Marburg in Germany. But after the student was seriously injured in a duel, in spite of his father's explicit prohibition of such activity, his father disowned him. Heinrich came to America in 1902, more interested in gambling than in religion. Down on his luck and even contemplating suicide, he happened upon The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod's *Pilgerhaus* in New York City, established to help newly arrived immigrants.

The counseling he received there from Pastors Stephanus Keyl and Otto Restin changed his life, and within a few years, he was studying at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

Upon graduation, Nau, eager for adventure as well as opportunities to preach the Gospel, went to India as a missionary. On his way there, he visited Germany briefly, reconciled with his parents and became engaged!

Nau spent about eight years in India, learned the languages (including Sanskrit) and told people about Jesus. While the efforts of Nau and his colleagues were bearing fruit, Nau fell ill and had to leave, fully intending however to return to South India to continue mission work.

As before, he traveled by way of Germany. But World War I broke out and the German government forced Nau to serve in the army. After a short time on the front lines, he was stationed as a chaplain in a large hospital. When the war ended, he completed a doctorate in Sanskrit and served briefly as a pastor in Berlin. As a German national, he was not allowed to go back to India, but he could go to the United States. He did just that with his wife and seven children.

Nau became a teacher at Luther College in New Orleans and then, in 1925, president of Immanuel Lutheran College in Greensboro, N.C. He held this position until 1949. Besides hosting a high school/junior college program, the school also had a seminary program where African-American men trained as Lutheran pastors.

Nau's interest in foreign missions persisted. When Jonathan Udoe Ekong came from Nigeria to request missionaries from the Lutheran Church, Nau went to investigate the possibilities. He became so enthusiastic about the prospects that he initiated the work himself in 1936–1938. During the 1940s, Nau took up the cause of evangelizing Muslims. Not only did he edit a periodical devoted to this work, but also in 1949–1950 he explored the possibilities in Iran and India, and in 1951 accepted a call to evangelize Muslims in India. He remained there until 1954, though he hoped to return again. Death, however, intervened. Reaching the unreached with the Gospel had been his constant desire.

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

DISCOVER MORE

Henry Nau, *We Move into Africa: The Story of the Planting of the Lutheran Church in Southeastern Nigeria* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1945).

John F. Nau, *Nau! Mission Inspired* (St. Louis: Clayton Publishing House, 1978).



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ONLY JESUS
NO OTHER NAME

— 175 YEARS —



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