

# HERMAN WILLIAM GOCKEL

## *Pioneer in Lutheran Media*

BORN: **OCTOBER 11, 1906** *Cleveland, Ohio*

DIED: **MAY 1, 1996** *Santa Clara County, California*

**W**HEN HERMAN GOCKEL COULD NOT CONTINUE AS A PARISH PASTOR, God found new ways for him to serve in the Church, including television. After eight years of parochial school, Gockel began studying for the ministry at The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod’s preparatory school in Fort Wayne. Next, he entered Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and in August 1931 was ordained as a pastor in Anna, Ill. But six years later, disaster struck. Due to a throat affliction that caused the deterioration of his throat muscles, Gockel had to resign.

By 1937, however, Walter A. Maier was attracting more and more listeners to “The Lutheran Hour,” a weekly radio broadcast and outreach ministry of the Lutheran Laymen’s League — a ministry that the League still carries out today. Gockel joined the staff and was put in charge of answering the mail. Not surprisingly, as the program’s audience grew, so did its correspondence. Gockel’s position made him responsible for offering pastoral counseling and advice to a huge number of people who wrote in seeking help.

Gockel was a prolific author. He published numerous articles in church magazines as well as several books for Concordia Publishing House. With titles like *A Daily Walk with God*, *The Cross and the Common Man* and *My Hand in His: Ancient Truths in Modern Parables*, one can see that Gockel’s aim was to show the relevance of Christianity to his contemporaries, men and women from all walks of life who were confronting their own fallen nature as well as dealing with the challenges and temptations that the modern world brings.

His best-known work was perhaps *What Jesus Means to Me*, a book that many found to be a very effective introduction

to our Lord Christ and what He has done — and still does — for those who believe in Him. First published in 1948, it sold more than 300,000 copies and was translated into several languages, including Spanish, Japanese, Russian and Hindi.

When the Lutheran Laymen’s League and the Synod decided to try television as a way to promote the faith, they turned to Gockel and appointed him the program director of “This Is the Life,” a half-hour weekly fictional presentation about people caught in the problems of today and finding answers in the love of God in Christ Jesus. From 1951 to 1971, Gockel supervised the writing and production of approximately 500 episodes of this program.

He once offered advice to would-be religious writers that included two principles many would say characterized his own work: “Never take the Gospel for granted” and “Don’t communicate the Good News in a bad way.”

**For more information about the 175th anniversary of the LCMS, visit [lcms.org/175](http://lcms.org/175).**

### DISCOVER MORE

Herman W. Gockel, *What Jesus Means to Me* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1948).

Herman W. Gockel, *Daily Walk with God: Meditations for Every Day* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982).

Herman W. Gockel, *Guideposts Toward Effective Writing: For Those Who Write for the Church* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1970).

Ardon Albrecht, *Lutheran Television: Glory Years* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2018).



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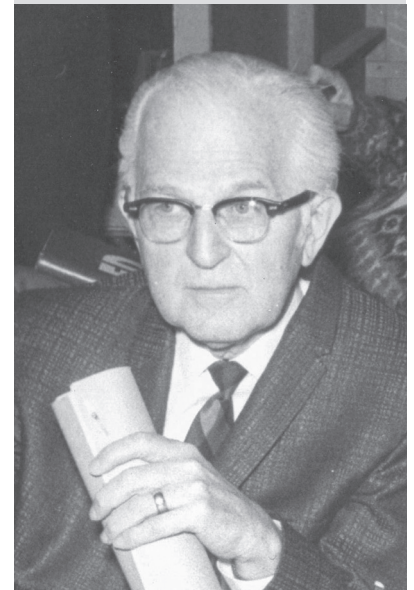
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