

# JOHANN FRIEDRICH BÜNGER

## Founder of Synod's Human Care Work

BORN: **JANUARY 2, 1810** *Etzdorf, Saxony, Germany*

DIED: **JANUARY 23, 1882** *St. Louis, Mo.*

**B**ORN IN SAXONY, Johann Friedrich Bünger was descended from a family of Lutheran pastors going back to the time of the Reformation. As a young ministerial student, he attended the University of Leipzig with C.F.W. Walther. Bünger came to America in 1839 with the Saxon immigration as a candidate of theology.

Bünger was one of the founders of the Log Cabin College. He did most of the construction work himself. Walther recalled that Bünger cut down trees, cleared the land, sawed and hewed the logs, removed the stumps, assembled the log cabin, built the split rail fence and single-handedly dug the well. Bünger was one of the first teachers in the Log Cabin College, instructing the girls in the school.

In 1841, he moved to St. Louis to teach at the school of the Lutheran congregation there. In 1844, he was called as pastor of Trinity congregation, assisting Walther. After 1847, he was pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church in St. Louis, and his reputation as a fine preacher and caring pastor grew.

Bünger was instrumental in founding the Missouri Synod in 1847, and his service to the church and the communities around him was notable.

He was a mission developer for the Synod, traveling widely to identify good locations for congregations. He also supported mission work among African Americans (former slaves) after the Civil War. He started an outreach to Chinese immigrants in St. Louis. He also was one of the first presidents of the Western District of the Missouri Synod, serving from 1863 to 1875.

In 1858, Bünger established the Lutheran hospital in St. Louis, the first in the Synod. He started a voluntary hospital association, which worked to build hospital buildings, not only in St. Louis, but also in other cities across the country.

Bünger established the first orphans' home in 1867 in Des Peres, Mo. With the help of the neighboring congregation, St. Paul's, he purchased 40 acres for an orphanage and farm. On the same ground he established a home for the elderly and the homeless, which remained for 30 years before moving to St. Louis. The orphanage was a success and met a critical need. The news spread and by 1900, the Synod had founded 11 other orphan homes across the country.

At the time of his death in 1882, Bünger was building a hospital for the mentally ill and a home for foundling infants. His concern for the well-being of others continued throughout his days.

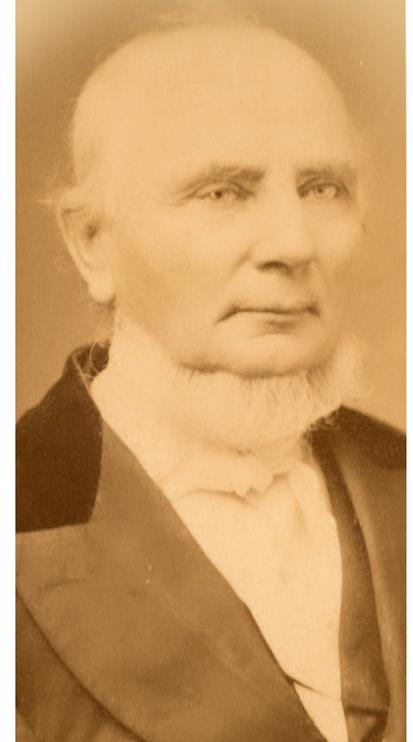
Bünger was a faithful teacher and pastor, dedicated to preaching the Gospel and caring for all members of the community in which he lived.

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

### DISCOVER MORE

Kenneth R. Molnar, "Johann Friedrich Buenger," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (Spring 1957): 1–25.

Carl S. Meyer, "Walther's Biographies of Buenger and Fick," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 45, no. 3 (August 1972): 193–07.



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– 175 YEARS –



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