

WALTER A. MAIER

The Messenger of the Walther League

BORN: **OCTOBER 4, 1893** *Boston, Massachusetts*

DIED: **JANUARY 11, 1950** *Saint Louis, Missouri*

WHILE WALTER A. MAIER WAS RENOWNED as the long-time speaker of “The Lutheran Hour” and professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (CSL), he was also a key contributor to the development and growth of the Walther League and its work.

Growing up in Boston, Maier attended a mission festival and decided to enter the ministry. After attending Concordia College in New York and CSL, he served as a chaplain during World War I. Afterward, he continued graduate studies, eventually earning his Doctor of Philosophy degree at Harvard.

In 1920, Maier was called as the first full-time executive secretary of the Walther League. Founded in 1893, the League was the first Synodwide young people’s organization. Maier’s task was to “labor for the spiritual welfare of the young people of the Evangelical Lutheran Church,” according to God’s Word (Pahl 108). He was editor of *The Walther League Messenger*, the organization’s monthly journal, and managed the business office in Milwaukee. He soon relocated the office to Chicago, the new headquarters of the League.

Within two years, Maier was called to teach at CSL. However, he continued to edit and write for *The Messenger* until 1945 and shaped its purpose and content for a generation of readers.

Maier strove to keep *The Messenger* relevant to the faith and lives of young Lutherans in America. He wanted to equip them as young adults to maintain their Lutheran identity in a time of

dramatic change. He tackled issues rising from modernity such as suffrage, prohibition and evolution, as well as music, dancing and changing roles of women. He followed current events, such as the Great Depression and the rise of fascism in Europe. He detailed the courage and sacrifice of Walther Leaguers serving in the U.S. armed forces during World War II.

The Messenger also informed its readers about the work of the Church at large in missions, outreach, education and human care. Under Maier’s influence, the Walther League raised funds for foreign mission work and sponsored five missionaries — two to China and three to India — in 1921 alone. He rallied support for the League’s Wheat Ridge Sanatorium in Colorado, caring for those suffering from tuberculosis.

During Maier’s time as editor, *The Messenger* increased its circulation of under 5,000 in 1920 to more than 70,000 in 1945. His work with the Walther League encouraged a new generation of Lutherans to active engagement in the life of the Church.

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

DISCOVER MORE

Paul L. Maier, *A Man Spoke, a World Listened: The Story of Walter A. Maier*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963).

Jon Pahl, *Hopes and Dreams of All: The International Walther League and Lutheran Youth in American Culture, 1893–1993* (Chicago: Wheat Ridge Ministries, 1993).



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– 175 YEARS –



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