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For the Life of the World

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For the Life of the World is mailed to all pastors and congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in the United States and Canada and to anyone interested in the work of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture verses are from the English Standard Version (ESV).

FEATURES

4 Gentle Encouragement

By Douglas H. Spittel

Pastor Malinsky and the congregation at Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Catonsville, Maryland, set me up to become a pastor in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. The setup was not an overt or manipulative one. Rather, it was their steady emphasis on Christian education, life-long catechesis and respect for the Body of Christ that our Lord used to create an environment that has produced many pastors and other church workers.

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My journey into the Lutheran Church began 100 years ago this August through the ministry of a faith-filled and gifted young African-American woman in rural Alabama. No, I'm not that old, but I am indebted to the ministry of this woman born into the segregated South, who dedicated her life to bringing the light of the Gospel to those sitting in darkness.

10 Your Path to the Seminary

Matthew J. Wietfeldt

If you are considering service to God's people, the best thing that you can do is to come visit CTSFW. Come and see what the possibilities are here in Fort Wayne for you and for your family. Come and experience our community. A great deal of the formation process for seminary happens through the community that is established here, through interactions and relationships with our faculty, staff and students.

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Formed for

SERVICE:

The Work of Rosa Jinsey Young

By Roosevelt Gray Jr.



Left: Rosa Young teaching at Selma Lutheran Academy.

Below: Young receiving an honorary doctorate from Concordia Theological Seminary in 1961.

Bottom right: Young instructing a class of young women at Alabama Lutheran Academy.

My journey into the Lutheran Church began 100 years ago this August through the ministry of a faith-filled and gifted young African-American woman in rural Alabama. No, I'm not that old, but I am indebted to the ministry of this woman born into the segregated South, who dedicated her life to bringing the light of the Gospel to those sitting in darkness.

Rosa Jinsey Young, born in 1890 in Rosebud, Alabama, had a dream from her childhood to provide a Christian education to "her people," who had few opportunities to go to school in the Jim Crow South. She was frail and sickly, but a lightning bolt of energy and evangelism, who convinced The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) to join her in bringing Christian

schools and congregations to the rural poor. Young's book, *Light in the Dark Belt* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), chronicles her deep rooted faith and tireless tenacity for God's truth. She records her earliest memories of teaching "school" to her brothers and sisters. When she graduated from teacher training as valedictorian, she summed up her life's mission:



Rosa Young historical photos are all courtesy Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.



St. James Lutheran Church and School, Buena Vista, Alabama. Founded by Young in 1917.

Rosa Young historical photos are all courtesy Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

“He that is greatest among you shall be your servant,” is the language of the Great Teacher. To serve is regarded as a divine privilege as well as a duty by every right-minded man. Do something worthy for mankind, is the cry of the civilized world. Give light to those who are in darkness; sustain the weak and faltering; befriend and aid the poor and needy. ... There is nothing more reputable to a race or nation than Christian service. So let us not hesitate, but grasp every opportunity that will enable us to do some good for others. (pp. 40-42)

In 1916, without hesitation, the LCMS and Young together began establishing 30 schools, 35 congregations and a college in rural Alabama. Through these institutions they began educating hundreds of children and raising up pastors, teachers and devoted laypeople who have taken the Lutheran Church to cities all over the country. Young noted that some 3,200 souls were added to the membership of the LCMS and the kingdom of God by 1950. “I hunted lost souls for Jesus somewhat as I hunted for money to build and maintain my first school. ... I walked in prayer all along the way from one person to another, asking the Lord to bless the message of His Word as I delivered it” (p. 162). She walked hundreds of miles every summer, from

small, isolated communities to steamy-hot cotton fields to the backwoods homes of elderly ex-slaves, sharing the Good News of salvation in Christ.

Her service began in her hometown of Rosebud in 1912, where she built a school with her own money and gifts from friends and neighbors, both black and white. This school became Christ Lutheran Church and School where Young was confirmed by the Rev. Nils Bakke on Easter Sunday, April 24, 1916. From there, the glorious Gospel light spread to communities throughout the Black Belt (central Alabama named for its rich soil) that without schools and Christ-centered churches was “as dark as a thousand midnights.”

Four months after she was confirmed, Rosa traveled to a small community named Buena Vista, 30 miles away, which was begging for her help. She writes:

I first went to Buena Vista on August 20, 1916, having been invited there by a man who wanted a Lutheran mission. I rode in an oxcart with Sister Luella McCants. ... The following evening I spoke to a large crowd. Quite a number expressed the desire to have a mission there. After making a second trip, I organized a Lutheran Sunday school and called it St. James Sunday School. (p. 129)

My own Lutheran journey took root

in Buena Vista, although I didn’t know then how deeply this small church in a tiny community of rural Alabama would impact my life. The first Lutheran I ever met was a cute clarinet player in the Alabama A&M marching band, where I played tuba. I had grown up in Baptist and African Methodist Episcopal traditions, but Otelia Vanessa Stallworth, the clarinet player, was a third-generation Lutheran. Her father, Rodger Stallworth, and her grandfather, Skinner Stallworth, had both attended that one-room Lutheran church-school, St. James Lutheran, Buena Vista.

Otelia and I were married at her home church, Faith Lutheran in Mobile, Alabama, by her pastor, the Rev. James P. Marshall, who also grew up at St. James Lutheran, Buena Vista. Faith Lutheran was founded in 1920 by the Rev. R. O. L. Lynn, who had earlier served as pastor of St. James. Two years later, in 1922, Rev. Lynn would become the first president of Alabama Lutheran Academy in Selma, now Concordia College Alabama.

Soon after I joined the LCMS, while attending St. Paul Lutheran Church in Jacksonville, Florida, I was encouraged to go into the ministry. I prayerfully chose to attend Concordia Theological Seminary (CTSFW), Fort Wayne. One of my close classmates was Stephen

Wiggins Sr. He grew up at St. James Lutheran, Buena Vista, where his father, the Rev. James Wiggins Sr., was pastor.

Stephen's earliest memories of the elderly Young were the home visits his father made to offer communion. "Every Sunday afternoon my brother (James Wiggins Jr.) and I went with him. We would greet everyone, then go outside and stay out of the way while my dad visited and gave communion. When it was time for us to leave, we'd go inside to say goodbye. When we visited Miss Young, she always offered us a word of wisdom and encouragement to be about kingdom work and kingdom building. She always told my brother and me 'You are going to be wonderful pastors one day.'"

In fact, St. James, Buena Vista, produced 10 Lutheran pastors, many still serving today:

- Frank T. Marshall, 5th Vice-President, Florida-Georgia District
- James B. Marshall (retired)
- Ulmer Marshall, Trinity Lutheran Church and School, Mobile, Alabama
- Elder McCants, Holy Cross Lutheran Church, San Antonio, Texas
- Jimmy McCants, Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church, Mobile, Alabama
- Reholma McCants, Unity Community Lutheran Church, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- Coleman Montgomery (retired)
- Frazier Odom (retired). His daughter, Monique Nunes, serves as director of International Programs at Martin Luther School, Maspeth, New York
- James Wiggins Jr., St. Paul Lutheran Church, Jacksonville, Florida
- Stephen Wiggins Sr., Christ Lutheran, East Point, Georgia

The Rev. Dr. Ulmer Marshall remembers studying at the Alabama Lutheran Academy in Selma under Young, who was his eighth grade religion teacher. Memory work was a requirement. "You memorized the creeds, the catechism, the petitions to the Lord's Prayer. She told us memorizing Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions put it into your heart and once you know it, no one will be able to take it from you."

Young was a strict teacher, Marshall recalls. "You didn't do anything during

religion class but sit with your hands on your desk and pay attention." Marshall learned that lesson the hard way when he was punished one day for twirling a pencil on his desk.

Like most of his classmates, Young encouraged him to become a pastor. "Once Dr. Young laid hands on you, you knew you were headed to the ministry," Marshall said.

In 1961, Young received an honorary doctorate (LL.D.) from Concordia Theological Seminary, then in Springfield, Illinois, now in Fort Wayne, in recognition of her remarkable life of service to God, His church and His people. She was the first African American woman to receive the award.

As an Alabama native, I was thrilled to learn about this remarkable woman when I was working in Detroit and met the women who wanted to produce a film on her life. Since then, I continue to be amazed and astonished at the ministry of this woman, just one generation out of slavery, who dreamed a God-sized future for her people. I am proud to have played a small part in overseeing the production of the film, *The First Rosa*, and I encourage all my colleagues in the pulpit to share her story with your congregations. For more information on *The First Rosa*, go to www.lcms.org/TheFirstRosa.

I see in my life an extension of her dream for service, and I'm grateful to God for my calls to serve at Mt. Calvary Lutheran in Houston, to recruit students to study for the ministry at CTSFW, to serve the Church, city and district offices in Detroit, and to serve in the national office. I am grateful and humbled by my wife and my roots in Alabama and for the hundreds of African-American teachers, pastors and laypeople who are rooted in this rich soil!

As we continue our centennial celebration of Young's work with the LCMS, I am pleased to announce a new scholarship opportunity for future pastors and deaconesses: **The Rosa Young Scholarship Endowment Fund**. This fund is a collaborative effort to the glory of God between CTSFW and the LCMS Office of National Mission. The Seminary will manage this endowment



CTSFW President Dr. Lawrence Rast with the Rev. Ulmer Marshall who received a Doctor of Divinity honoris causa from CTSFW in May 2014.

fund to offer the Rosa Young Scholarship to qualifying students who wish to attend CTSFW. To learn more about the scholarship connect with Gary Nahrwold in the CTSFW Advancement Office at Gary.Nahrwold@ctsfw.edu or 877.287.4338.

I know Young would be pleased that her life is remembered with this legacy of sharing the Gospel Light and raising up pastors to tell the Good News to all. She wrote:

As we go from university halls into the battle of life, where our work is to be done and our places among men to be decided, we should go in the spirit of service, with a determination to do all in our power to uplift humanity. ... I also asked the Holy Spirit to cause the pure Gospel message I would deliver to sink into the hearts of all to whom I would that day tell it. (pp. 40 and 161) 📖

The Rev. Roosevelt Gray Jr. (Roosevelt.Gray@lcms.org), CTSFW 1988, serves as director of LCMS Black Ministry, serving predominantly black communities and ministering to African immigrants. He also serves as liaison to the churchwide Black Clergy Caucus.

