

# WALTER A. MAIER

## Voice of “The Lutheran Hour”

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

DIED: **JANUARY 11, 1950** *St. Louis, Missouri*

**W**HEN WALTER ARTHUR MAIER DIED in 1950, he was by far the best-known Lutheran in the United States. For twenty years, he had been the voice of “The Lutheran Hour,” and at the time of his death, “The Lutheran Hour” was being broadcast weekly by more than a thousand radio stations around the globe with an audience of around 20 million people. During Maier’s radio ministry, the country experienced the Great Depression, World War II and the dropping of the atom bomb, but Maier consistently brought God’s Word to bear on the lives of hearers no matter what the circumstances.

Maier was born in Boston to Emil and Anna Maier, immigrants from Germany and pious Lutherans. When young Walter indicated an interest in becoming a pastor, they sent him to the synodical prep school (high school and junior college) in New York, where he excelled. He spent an additional year at Boston University completing his bachelor’s degree and then went to Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Again he excelled, especially in Hebrew, and therefore decided to do post-graduate work back home at Harvard, from which eventually he obtained both a Master of Arts and doctorate (in Semitic studies). But he was still committed to church work.

In 1920, he was called to serve as the national director of the Walther League (the Synod’s youth organization). This included editing its monthly magazine, *The Walther League Messenger* — work that he continued to do until 1945 even after accepting a call to the seminary to teach Old Testament in 1922. Besides writing for the *Messenger*, Maier wrote a marriage manual, a commentary on Nahum, a wartime prayer guide and twelve years of brief “day by day” devotions. He also published edited versions of his Lutheran Hour sermons.

Very early in his career, Maier realized the potential of radio and was instrumental in establishing a Lutheran radio station on the campus of the seminary in 1924. A few years later, he worked with the Lutheran Layman’s League to purchase time on CBS to proclaim the Gospel each week in 36 American cities. “The Lutheran Hour” began on October 2, 1930. Unfortunately, the money ran out after its first season, but Maier and the League persisted and were able to begin again in 1935. This time they succeeded and the program began a period of remarkable growth with Maier as its spokesman.

Walter Maier was also a popular public speaker and preached to audiences in the tens of thousands at assemblies and rallies all over the country. His career exemplified the motto of his program, “Bringing Christ to the Nations.”

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

Paul L. Maier, ed., *The Best of Walter A. Maier* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1981).

Kirk Farney, *Ministers of a New Medium: Broadcasting Theology in the Radio Ministries of Fulton J. Sheen and Walter A. Maier* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2022).



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