

# ROSA JINSEY YOUNG

## *Pioneer Educator and Founder of the Alabama Lutheran Academy*

BORN: **MAY 14, 1890** *Rosebud, Ala.*

DIED: **JUNE 30, 1971** *Rosebud, Ala.*

**O**N OCTOBER 27, 1915, Rev. C.F. Drewes, a pastor of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, received an unexpected letter. Rosa Jinsey Young, a twenty-five-year-old African American woman with a passion for education, had written to inquire whether the Missouri Synod might consider overseeing the school she had established in 1912 in Alabama. While the LCMS was still a largely German-speaking church body centered in the Midwest, it had been interested in parochial school work from its inception in 1847. The Synod sent the Rev. Nils J. Bakke to meet with Young, and, impressed with Bakke's earnestness and clear proclamation of the Gospel, Young was catechized and joined the LCMS in short order.

The impact of her work is still evident today. She established at least 13 schools in congregations and missions, including the following Alabama locations: Christ, Rosebud; St. Paul, Oak Hill; Our Savior, Possum Bend; St. Andrew, Vredenburgh; St. James, Buena Vista; Mount Olive, Tinela; Mount Carmel, Midway; Zion, Tait's Place; Bethany, Nyland; St. Philip, Catherine; Gethsemane, Hamburg; Grace, Ingo-mar. More importantly, she personally encouraged hundreds of young African Americans to consider service in the church as pastors and teachers.

Young is best remembered, however, for her role in helping establish the Alabama Lutheran Academy and Junior College in Selma, later Concordia College, Selma. The academy was established as a specifically African American institution with the mission to train pastors and teachers for the Lutheran church. Classes began in 1922, the campus was dedicated in 1925 and it continued in service until its closure in 2018.

Young's impact on the LCMS was substantial. In 2004, the LCMS recognized "the pioneer work of Dr. Rosa Jinsey Young" and its importance for the mission of the Synod, particularly

among African Americans (LCMS Proceedings, 2004, Res. 2-06, p. 125). In 1961, the faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Ill., had awarded her an honorary doctorate. Noting her "dedicated, unselfish and intelligent service to the Lutheran church," the seminary also recognized that she was "probably the first woman to be awarded an honorary degree by a Lutheran Seminary" (PR Release, CTS, 1961).

Young's schools had been largely segregated (apart from the Anglo clergy that taught in them), specifically established for African Americans. She approached the topic cautiously, noting that "neither race is ready for it (integration) yet," but that she was "for integration 100 per cent, and I believe it will come, but it must come through the power of the gospel—from within." That Gospel emphasis characterized Young's life and remains her extraordinary legacy to the LCMS.

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



### DISCOVER MORE

Rosa Young, *Light in the Dark Belt* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1930).

Thomas R. Noon, "Rosa Young," *Encyclopedia of Alabama*, October 23, 2007, accessed May 9, 2022, [encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-1373](https://encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-1373).



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