

DOROTHEA BENTHIEN CRÄMER

Courageous and Caring Servant to Church and Community

BORN: **FEBRUARY 18, 1817** Achim, Germany

DIED: **NOVEMBER 11, 1884** Springfield, Ill.

DOROTHEA BENTHIEN, FROM ACHIM near Bremen, was in her mid-twenties when she caught the attention of Pastor August Crämer. Dorothea was among a group of Lutherans who were on their way to Fort Wayne, Ind., when an outbreak of fever on the ship led her to selflessly care for the sick, even at personal risk and despite having a child of her own. It was suggested to Pastor Crämer that she would make a good wife, but he thought it proper to put her to the test first. He challenged her as to whether she would be willing to join him and his group of Franconian colonists as a missionary helper to the Indians. She agreed, and Crämer decided to marry her as soon as the shipped docked in New York — which he did on June 10, 1845!

“Mother Crämer,” as she was called by the Native Americans of the Bethany Indian Mission and later by the seminarians, worked shoulder to shoulder with her gifted husband at Frankenmuth, Fort Wayne, St. Louis and Springfield. She consistently served the students of the seminary and cared deeply for her husband and children. In the face of cholera outbreaks in Springfield in the 1880s, she bravely cared for both her immediate and extended family. However, after the deaths of several children and grandchildren, she herself succumbed on November 11, 1884, aged 67. This faithful servant of Christ had helped ensure that The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod would have sufficient pastors for the proclamation of the Word and the administration of the sacraments according to Christ’s institution.

Dorothea Benthien Crämer characterizes the selflessness of the women who helped found the Missouri Synod. She served quietly out of gratefulness to God for His grace and mercy given freely through the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Moreover, she shared the Gospel of Christ with her missionary husband in word and in deed as Jesus enabled her. We, who have her as an example of the response of faith to the mercy of God in Christ, are deeply thankful that God shared this wonderful gift with the people of our Synod.

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

DISCOVER MORE

Julie Stiegemeyer, *Hero of Faith: Dorothea Craemer* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2012).

Walter P. Schoenfuhs, “‘O Tebe-ningeion’ — ‘O Dearest Jesus,’” *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (October 1964): 100–102.



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