

RALPH BOHLMANN

Professor, Seminary & Missouri Synod President

BORN: **FEBRUARY 20, 1932** *Palisade, Neb.*

DIED: **JULY 24, 2016** *Saint Louis, Mo.*

RALPH BOHLMANN HAD A PASTOR'S HEART. He learned this at a young age by watching his father serve the Lutheran church in Palisade, Neb. Bohlmann was a good student and loved learning about the teaching of God's Word.

After studying at St. John's College, Winfield, Kan., he attended Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (CSL), graduating in 1956. A Fulbright Scholar, he then continued his studies at the University of Heidelberg, Germany. From 1957 to 1958, he taught at Concordia College, Milwaukee, Wis. He earned his Master of Sacred Theology degree at CSL before being called as pastor at Mount Olive Lutheran Church in Des Moines, Iowa.

Bohlmann had distinguished himself as a scholar and at age 28 was called to teach Systematic Theology at CSL in 1960. In 1968, he earned the Doctor of Philosophy degree from Yale University. While a seminary professor, Bohlmann also served as assistant pastor at Grace Lutheran Church in Pagedale, Mo., until 1971.

Bohlmann served on several boards, committees and commissions in the Synod, including the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) from 1965 to 1981, where he also was executive secretary from 1971 to 1974. He was a member of several inter-Lutheran dialogues and commissions on church fellowship.

Bohlmann remained a scholar and educator, especially on the teachings of the Lutheran Confessions.

The 1960s and 1970s were a time of conflict in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). Bohlmann remained a faithful faculty member during the turmoil at CSL when the teaching of God's Word — even the Gospel itself — was contested in the Synod. While on the CTCR, Bohlmann wrote *A Statement of Scriptural and*

Confessional Principles, which was adopted by the LCMS in 1973 as a doctrinal statement and which presented the clear teachings of God's Word on controverted doctrines in the Synod.

In 1975, after the worst of the conflict, Bohlmann was elected president of CSL. In his inaugural address, he reminded the seminary students and professors of their commitment to the truth of the Holy Scriptures: "We are dedicated to learning the Truth and living it, even when it may be uncomfortable or unpopular to do so, for we are persuaded that the Truth does indeed make us free."

Bohlmann remained the seminary president until 1981, when he was elected as the 9th president of the LCMS, serving until 1992. He was president emeritus of the Synod until his death in 2016. Bohlmann is remembered as a dedicated servant of Christ's Church, a gifted scholar and a gracious leader who never set aside his pastor's heart.

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

DISCOVER MORE

Samuel H. Nafzger, "An Encomium for Ralph Arthur Bohlmann: The Passing of a Leader," *Concordia Journal* 42, no. 4 (Fall 2016): 283–287.



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ONLY JESUS
NO OTHER NAME

– 175 YEARS –



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