



# Happy 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday, LWML!

By Carolyn Blum

*White gloves. Hats with veils. Nylon stockings with seams down the back. Even though the morning of July 7, 1942, promised to be a hot and humid Chicago day, 100 LCMS women from around the country dressed carefully in the latest style for this important event: They were to attend a meeting at St. Stephen's Lutheran Church to give "birth" to the Lutheran Women's Missionary League.*

The 30 delegates and 70 guests had long looked forward to bringing together the hundreds of women's groups from each of the Synod's congregations to support mission work on a national and international scale.

Historically, women had always supported God and the Church by performing deeds of kindness, mercy, and charity and by giving of their financial blessings. Women had followed Jesus since His time on earth. Think of Mary and Martha, the group of women who supported Christ's ministry with their finances, and the women at the tomb on Easter morning. Think of Katie Luther supporting her husband's work in his attempts to reform the Roman Catholic Church. LCMS women in the 1800s and early 1900s served the Lord in their own congregations, communities, and districts. But as they looked at the needs of the world, they saw an additional, more excellent way, to support

worldwide missions. The idea for a national LCMS women's organization took root in 1929, but it was in 1942, during WWII, that these pioneer women met to officially launch the LWML.

Today, 70 years later, the women of the LWML look and dress differently than in 1942. But the original mission emphasis remains: "to develop and to maintain a greater mission consciousness ... mission education, mission inspiration, mission service ... to gather funds for mission projects sponsored by the Synod."

On the opposite page, please read and enjoy tidbits of LWML's origins and pay tribute to these pioneer women who, brick-by-brick, built the LWML's foundation. Say a prayer of thanks for the opportunities to share God's Word through mites, and ask God to guide the LWML during the next 70 years of serving the Lord with gladness! **Q**

*Thanks to Barbara Huggins, LWML Archivist-Historian, and Marlys Taege, author of "WINGS Women IN God's Service," for their assistance in developing this article.*



LUTHERAN WOMEN'S MISSIONARY LEAGUE  
 3259 California Ave.  
 St. Louis -18- Mo.

I received \$5.00 from Rev. G. A. Schmidt, pastor of First English Lutheran Church, 1028 Port St. New Orleans La. He writes that two groups of his church The Earnest Workers and The Franke Missionary Soc. have decided to become members and also states that our organization is being favorably discussed by the women of the 13 congregations there and the pastors are in accord. Now there is as yet no district group in the Southern Synodical Dist. So I am sending him the 250 Mission Boxes and he says that the balance should flow into our Mission Treasury. I am enclosing the \$5.00 and you might acknowledge it to him. He seems to be very enthusiastic.

This typewriter is not behaving very well or perhaps it is the typist. I am writing this at 11:30 P.M. as I just could not find time during the day. We are so short of help that I am busy in our business, to say nothing of the home and the added responsibility of this office.  
 So I admit I am tired and wishing you God's blessing in your work and expressing my gratitude for your efficiency, I will say Good Night.

Sincerely  
 Clara Schmitt

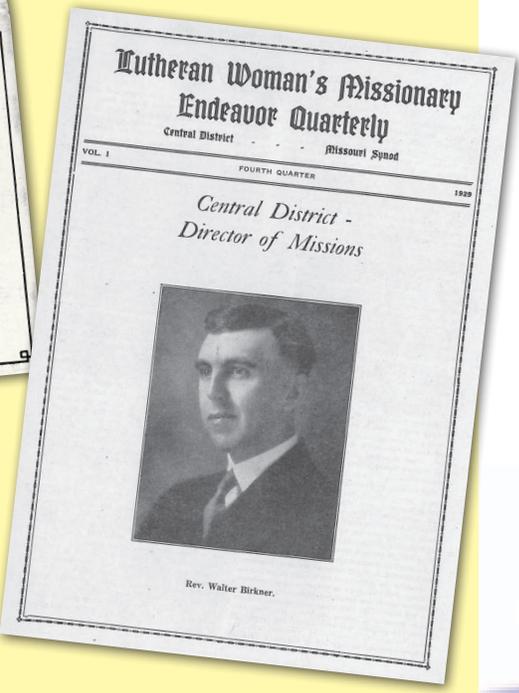
Butte Montana  
 Dear Mrs. Schmitt - 3/5/43  
 We find that demand for mite boxes is greater than we had anticipated.  
 If possible would you please send 500 more to Mrs. Rud. Hettel - Power Montana  
 3/8/43  
 Sincerely  
 Mrs. Wm. Bethke  
 President

▲ Clara Schmitt worked in the family business in St. Louis and raised three children while serving as the first LWML President. She handled most early LWML correspondence, which included mailing Mite Boxes and Quarters from her home.



▲ This "Mission Box" was the first mite box of its kind.

Published in 1929, this was a forerunner of the Lutheran Woman's Quarterly magazine.



# First Mission Grant

In 1943, the first mission project (now called mission grant), using funds collected in Mite Boxes, was to construct a chapel for the Deaf near Cleveland, Ohio. The grant amount was \$15,000. The excerpt below is from a statement written by the missionary to the Deaf in Cleveland, Ohio.

"During the organization Convention of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, held last summer, the Convention went on record that the first fruits of the financial proceeds were to be contributed toward the erection of a chapel for the Deaf. This resolution surely is most pleasing to God, because, whatsoever our Christian women will do for the unfortunate, will be done as unto Christ.

"The undersigned is your Cleveland missionary to the Deaf, and he has been requested to write these words to the Marys and Marthas of our new Lutheran Women's Missionary League. ... When God's people, under Moses, needed their first tabernacle, the Holy Spirit, by the Word of God, mightily moved believers to bring more than necessary, and we read in Exodus 35:29, *The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the Lord, every man and WOMAN, whose heart made them willing.*

"Christian women of our League, may God mightily move also your hearts so that your faith in Jesus and your fervent love for lost souls will induce you to carry out your resolution, namely to help Synod build a chapel for the Deaf to the greater glory of God and the salvation of many more immortal souls!"