

RICHARD Wm. MUELLER
THE MISSIONARY

by
Timothy P. Mueller

Professor Edward Fredrich

April 24th., 1984

Church History

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library

11831 N. Seminary Drive. 65W

Mequon, Wisconsin

RICHARD Wm. MUELLER: THE MISSIONARY

"How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news."
These are the words that the apostle Paul quoted from the Old Testament book of Isaiah to point out the honor and the respect that is to be given to those who follow the great command of our Lord. That command which He gave when He said, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

The more I researched the material needed to complete this paper, the more I understand why we are to honor such people who are messengers of the Gospel. This paper will center around the life of one who has dedicated his whole life to the work of the Lord. As you read this paper, I am sure that you also will come to respect and honor even more those men who have dedicated themselves and their whole lives to the spreading of the Gospel.

It must be said, however, that this paper is not written so that we might idolize these men and set them on a pedestal. For surely these men of the public ministry, and we also, know that all credit for their effort must go to the Lord. It is as our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ says, "I am the vine: you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

These men, such as the one who I will concentrate on, do all

that they do out of the love that they have for their Lord. They are motivated by the Gospel message which tells that Jesus Christ has suffered and died for not only the forgiveness of their sins, but for the forgiveness of the sins of the whole world.

But yet these men, as I said before, and as Paul wrote in Romans, deserve our respect and honor. For they are men of God who are letting their lights shine forth by dedicating their lives to the Lord. This paper, then, will serve a two-fold purpose. It is written to honor one of those individuals who has dedicated his whole life to his Lord. I hope and pray also that this paper will serve to encourage others to do the work of the Lord diligently and earnestly and out of love for their Lord.

As I carry out these objectives, I would like to bring out what I feel is unique about this certain individual. As I thoroughly studied his life there was one distinct theme that I think covers his entire life. It is this theme then that I have chosen as the theme for this paper.

RICHARD WILLIAM MUELLER: THE MISSIONARY

It is true that the word missionary is a very broad term. For at heart every Christian is a missionary. For Christ's command to teach all nations was given not only to full time workers in God's kingdom but also to all the children of God. Therefore in order to narrow down my theme, I would like to define what I mean by the term "missionary".

As I studied the life of Rev. Richard Mueller, there was one God-given talent that kept reoccurring. The Lord has blessed him with the courage to get out to those who are ignorant of their Savior and to bring the Gospel message to them. The Lord has bles-

sed him with a personality that can relate to anyone of any culture. He has become all things to all people and is still continuing to do so. I believe that Rev. Richard Mueller would easily become frustrated in a larger congregation where much time is given to organization and structure. For he is a man who needs to be out and among his people. Throughout his whole life, the congregations that Rev. Mueller has served have been young and in need of constant nurturing. As we unfold the life of Richard Mueller, you will see that the Lord has led him to places where these strengthes of his can be used to their utmost to do the work of the Lord.

So when I use the term "missionary", I use it in a broader sense, that is to say that Rev. Mueller, throughout his life, is a man who is dedicated to getting out the Gospel message to those who have never heard it.

His life began on September 7th in the year 1929. He was born in Lacross, Wisconsin. He was the son of Pastor Richard Wm Mueller SR. and Helen Mueller(nee-Laesch). The Mueller family lived in Arcadia, Wisconsin from 1928-1934. In 1934 his father accepted a call to Wilson, Minnesota. It was there that Richard Mueller JR. began his education in a one room school house eight miles from Wilson in the town of Winona. The Mueller family lived in Wilson, Minnesota for six years until Rev. Richard Mueller SR., in the year of 1940, accepted a call to Medford, Wisconsin. In 1943 Richard Mueller JR. was sent by his parents to attend high school at Northwestern Preparatory School in Watertown, Wis. It was the hopes of Rev. Richard Mueller SR. that his son would also enter into the public ministry.

In 1945 Richard Mueller JR. met Irene Kuckkan whom he later mar-

ried. Upon graduation from Northwestern Preparatory School, Richard Wm. Mueller JR. enrolled at Northwestern College. And four years later, in the year of 1951, he graduated from Northwestern College and enrolled in the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

At that time the Seminary was a three year course. Vicaring was optional. Richard Mueller JR. decided that he would pass up the option of being a Vicar. His thoughts were on finishing his studying at the Seminary and getting out to the work of the Lord as soon as possible.

There is one incident that happened during his years at the Seminary that I feel should be mentioned because it plays a part in evaluating Richard Mueller JR.'s personality. As I have said earlier, Richard Mueller has been given the courage to try new things. He is the first to do much of what he does. It was a rule at the Seminary that no student could get married until he had graduated. Because of his love for Irene Kuckkan and because the two of them had been going together for so long and because he was not afraid to change old ways and do new things, Richard Mueller JR. requested that the Seminary allow them to get married while he was attending his second year at the Seminary. J.P. Meyer, who was President of the Seminary at that time, along with the Seminary faculty granted them permission to be married.

In 1954 Richard Mueller JR. graduated from the Seminary. But before call day Richard Mueller JR. requested if he could be considered for a call to Africa. The Synodical Conference had been very active in Nigeria doing the work of the Lord and word of this work done in Africa, especially the work of Missionary Scheweppe, reached the ears of Richard Mueller JR. He honored and

respected Missionary Scheweppe and he wanted to show his love for his Lord by following after the footsteps of Missionary Scheweppe. On call day, however, Richard Wm. Mueller JR. was not assigned to Africa but rather his first call was to a small mission congregation in Crivitz, Wisconsin. The name of the church was Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church. The congregation numbered one hundred and forty communicant members.

At first the area in which the church was located seemed to give no indications of possible growth. There was not much happening in the area. No one was moving into the area. There was hardly any industry to encourage people to move to Crivitz. Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church seemed to be a church that had reached its peak in numbers.

Pastor Mueller, however, noticed that Crivitz had become quite a tourist area. During the summers the population in Crivitz greatly increased. The congregation noticed that this gave them a great opportunity to give even more people the opportunity to hear the Gospel message.

Pastor Mueller instructed his elders and congregational members to keep track of the people who visited the church during the summer months and also the people who moved into the area during the summer months. Under the leadership of Pastor Mueller the congregation got into the habit of inviting tourists to Sunday services. The response proved to be so great that the congregation decided that they had to go to two services during the summer months. Eventually both services were filled. The little congregation in Crivitz came to be known as the home congregation away from home.

Although Pastor Richard Mueller JR. enjoyed the work immensely

at Grace Lutheran Church in Crivitz, Wis., it was still known that he desired to do mission work in Africa. And so in 1956, after serving the Crivitz congregation for two and a half years, Rev. Richard Mueller was called to serve in the mission field in Africa. After being told that their Pastor had received a call to Africa, the congregation in Crivitz came to Pastor Mueller to try to persuade him not to leave. It was very hard for Pastor Mueller to make such a decision. He knew that he had only been at Crivitz for two and a half years, but yet he longed to serve the Lord in Africa. At first Pastor Mueller decided to return the call to Africa. But this decision bothered him greatly for he still thought that the Lord wanted him in Africa.

After a great deal of thought Pastor Mueller made a phone call to the board for world missions and requested to be reconsidered for the call to Africa. The call to Africa was once again sent to Pastor Richard Mueller. This time Pastor Mueller accepted the call to serve his Lord in Africa. He was commissioned on Epiphany Sunday, January 6th., 1957.

Preparations now had to be made for the trip overseas. Everything had to be sold except for the bare necessities. Visas had to be obtained and shots of all different kinds were needed. It wasn't until three months later that everything was prepared for this journey ten thousand miles away. Rev. Richard Mueller, his wife Irene and their two children, Debbie and Richard, left for Africa from New York City.

Their first stop in Africa was in Nigeria where the Synodical Conference had made its headquarters. Here Missionary Mueller remained for two weeks while he underwent an intensive training

of the different customs in Africa and different ways the work of the Lord was carried out in Africa. As I talked with Pastor Mueller he indicated to me that these two weeks in Nigeria were the most productive two weeks of training for mission work in Africa that he ever had. He was taken out into the village congregations and shown what work had to be done and various ways of carrying out that work.

You see outwardly the work of the Lord is different in many ways in Africa compared to the work done in the United States. Unless one actually lives and works in a mission field, one cannot appreciate this fully. Every land and people have their own peculiarities. The chief difference is in the language one must learn to speak. "We can't preach Zulu to the Eskimo," is the way one missionary expressed it.

Native law and customs also contribute to the difference. To demand our parliamentary procedure in a village church meeting can end in hopeless frustration. To offer a gift with only one hand is an insult, for so one gives a bone to a dog; and to receive a gift with only one hand is to despise the gift and the giver.¹ Missionary Mueller had to learn such customs and more to prepare for his work in Africa.

On April 13th, 1957, Missionary Richard Mueller and his family arrived in Lusaka, Zambia. (At that time Zambia was called Northern Rhodesia) Here the work of Missionary Richard Mueller was to begin.

For Rev. Mueller and other missionaries who were there with him, the work must have been at first quite frustrating. For he had virtually no tools with which to work, no means to spread the love of God in Christ among people sitting in extreme spiritual darkness. They had not even the tongue with which to communicate the

simple Bible stories because, although the official language of Zambia is English, 90% of the people know only their own native languages. Bearing Christian witness was first of all a matter of finding a man educated in the English language, winning him for Christ, establishing him in Christ, and then using him as a voice to shatter the silence of centuries with the sound of Salvation. There were times when God's Word had to ricochet through three languages to reach the ears of souls which Christ wanted for Himself. There were times when an interpreter was more of a filter than a mirror to reflect the faithful message of the missionary. As Missionary Mueller began to understand somewhat the African language, he noticed that at times the interpreter was telling the people something other than what he had said. It was obvious that steps had to be taken to establish lasting roots and well grounded roots in the Lutheran Church of Central Africa.²

Missionary Mueller and other missionaries who were there in Africa representing the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod decided that they would spread the Word of God using the so called "Missioner" program. The idea of this program was to train the native people to preach and teach the Word of God to their own people. It was the objective of Missionary Mueller ^{to stay on the} ~~to stay on the~~ side lines, to take a back seat in the role of becoming shepherds to the Africans. There was more than one reason for taking this approach. It was a fact that the Africans would ^{more} ~~not~~ readily listen to their own people than men from the United States. Also it was thought that if ever the Americans were banned from working in Africa, there would be natives who had been trained to teach the Word of God to their own people. Another reason for training individual natives to teach the Word of God to their own was to have

them realize that this Gospel message was given to them from God. It was theirs. The missionaries did not want to give the impression that this religion was a white religion. And as was mentioned before the use of an interpreter had proved to have its problems and so if native men were trained to teach the Word of God themselves, this problem would be removed.

But what were the missionaries like Missionary Mueller to do until these native teachers were ready to teach? The Lord had given Missionary Mueller the gift of learning the African language of Chinanja by experience. Yes, for a time the interpreters were still used for there was no other choice, but it was not too long after Missionary Mueller had arrived in Africa that he was able to communicate to the people in their own language.

Having learned the language himself, Missionary Mueller then used the interpreters as evangelists. These evangelists actually were the ones who became the shepherds of the congregations. For as I said before the American missionaries wanted to take a back seat in shepherding the congregations. And so Pastor Mueller instead was there only to supervise and to make sure that the Gospel was being taught in its truth and purity.

The number of congregations began to grow. The Lord was blessing the work of men like missionary Mueller. It is true that if one takes a look at the statistical reports of the congregations in Africa, he will notice that the membership in each congregation did not grow very fast at all but this is not the way one can gauge expansion and spreading of the Gospel in Africa. One sees expansion by looking at the total number of souls won for the Lord in the African missions and the increase in the number of congregations established in Africa. For a congregation would peak out

in numbers very quickly because transportation for the people was limited to walking. The Word had to be taken right to the people instead of expecting the people to travel great distances to hear the Word.

The number of congregations grew so rapidly that it was decided that a Bible Institute had to be set up to train more thoroughly and more efficiently these evangelists who had become shepherds to the people.

In December of 1961, Missionary Mueller returned to the United States for his first furlough. However his furlough was in no way a vacation. For during this time he was instrumental, with the help of the Lord, in raising funds to build the Bible Institute in Africa. For he was constantly giving sermons and lectures on Africa, so that the people in the United States were aware of how the Word of God was being spread in Africa and the need for the Bible Institute.. Also while Missionary Mueller was furloughing in America he sharpened up his linguistic skills by enrolling at Michigan State University for a course in linguistics and the Swahali language which was a language closely related to Chinanja.

On his return to Africa in September of 1962, Missionary Mueller found that the Lord had even more blessed the work in Africa. For there were people who had moved to the neighboring country of Malawi from Zambia who were asking for missionaries to come there.

In 1962 Missionaries Mueller and Cox went to the neighboring country of Malawi (then called Nyasaland) to visit with those Lutherans who had moved there. They were happy to find many who desired to have the Lutheran Church in Malawi. The Lutheran Church of Central Africa started its work in Malawi in 1963 with Missionaries Mueller and Cox as the first Lutheran Missionaries. They lived in Blantyre but

concentrated their efforts on the people of the villages surrounding Blantyre.³

In 1966 Missionary Mueller was called back to Zambia to assume the responsibilities of Assistant Superintendent of the Lutheran Church of Central Africa. By this time the Bible Institute that was mentioned before had been built and was in operation. Missionary Mueller, along with supervising individual congregations, was asked to teach full time at the Bible Institute.

Because Missionary Mueller knew the language so well, he also conducted regular language classes for his colleagues and their wives. He compiled a course two hundred pages long that was used to teach these classes.⁴

But the Gospel motivated Missionary Mueller to do even more for his Lord. In 1960 a mailing program had begun. When members of our missions moved to outlying areas Missionary Mueller kept contact with them by sending them sermons and other materials that he had prepared. In this way several new Lutheran groups were formed which gathered on Sunday with the Christian material and held church services.

On September 29, 1968, a publications building was dedicated. It is located on the Lutheran Bible Institute and Seminary property. ~~The publications building made it possible to do many new things.~~ Tracts were prepared like the one attached to this paper, and thrown out of Missionaries car windows so that the African people could pick them up and read them. Also because of the Publications building Missionary Mueller was able to prepare and compile a hymnal that he had translated into the language of the people. The hymnal contained 176 hymns and five separate orders of service. This hymnal was widely and gratefully accepted by the people.

The Word continued to spread extensively through Africa. As more and more people heard of the Gospel message or read of it, there came more and more requests to open new mission fields. Missionary Mueller would periodically travel to the Congo and to the Northwest Province of Zambia to supervise new missions that had started in those areas because Christians had moved there or heard of the Gospel in one way or another.

One of the areas that was beginning to open up to the Gospel was the copperbelt, a region north of Lusaka known for its copper mining. Mr. Josiah Chisambwe, who had been receiving Christian literature from the Lutheran Church of Central Africa for a long time begged for the Gospel to be brought to the copperbelt. Missionary Mueller was then sent as the first missionary to the copperbelt to explore the situation and find a way to begin work in this new vineyard of the Lord.⁷

Yes, the fruits of Missionary Mueller's labor certainly were there. I am attaching an article written by Missionary Mueller. This article shows the joy that had come to the heart of Missionary Mueller as the Lord blessed his work and as other souls were brought to faith.⁸

But in the fifteen years that Missionary Mueller had been in Africa things had drastically changed in his family life. While in Africa his wife Irene had given birth to four more children. His six children, in order of birth, are: Deborah, Richard, Timothy, Susan, Stephanie and Steven. In 1969 Deborah and Richard had been sent to the United States to attend a perochial high school there. And in 1971, Timothy was also sent to the United States for schooling. Now half of their children were in the United States and so when the Lord called Missionary Mueller to teach at Lakeside Lutheran

High School while he was in the United States on furlough in 1972.

Missionary Mueller thought it time to return to America, so he accepted the call.

But Reverend Mueller was at heart a missionary, and he could not get the thought of mission work out of his mind. For the Lord had intended Rev. Mueller to be a missionary. This is where the Lord had given him talents. And so in 1974 the Lord called him to Crystal Lake, Illinois to be the shepherd of a small mission there.

The congregation was meeting in a hotel room. It was small, but at that time it was adequate. But under the guidance of Missionary Mueller the congregation began to grow very rapidly. The congregation soon felt it necessary to move their place of worship to a larger area so they began services across the street in a large vacant building which they rented. The building was soon sold by the owners and so their house of worship was moved again. Lord and Savior Evangelical Lutheran Church moved their place of worship to the basement of a house where they worshipped until the new church had been built.

Today Pastor Richard Wm. Mueller is still the Pastor of Lord and Savior Evangelical Lutheran Church in Crystal Lake, Illinois. The congregation has grown to a good size congregation of about two hundred souls.

As I studied the life of Richard Mueller, I was amazed as to the amount of work that he has already done in his life and the amount of souls that he was instrumental in bringing to hear the Gospel message. Intending to learn from the experience of this man of God, I asked him what must a person do to get people to hear about their Savior.

He pointed out to me that a Missionary must always keep in mind that every soul that does not believe in Jesus Christ as his Savior will be damned. If one always remembers this he will always want

to do all that he can to spread the Gospel message to those unbelieving and condemned people. A love for God must also be the motivation behind spreading the Gospel message to others. For it is our gracious Lord God who has given us the command to spread the Gospel to all nations.

As to the technique involved in the spreading of the Gospel, Pastor Mueller pointed out that the spreading of the Gospel cannot be work done only by the Pastors and Missionaries. For God has commissioned all of His children to spread His Word. Pastor Mueller pointed out that this was the way that the Gospel spread in Africa. People heard the Gospel and they told others who in turn told others and so on and so forth. It is necessary then for a Missionary to get his people involved in mission work.

Pastor Mueller also pointed out that there are many ways to spread the Gospel. What must always be kept in mind, however, is that one must never put a stumbling block or a hindrance in the way of the spreading of the Gospel. One will put a stumbling block in the way of the Gospel just by sitting back and doing nothing. As servants of our Lord, we must all get out and do the work of the Lord so that others too can hear and believe the Gospel message and have the hope of eternal life.

~~Throughout his life, Pastor Mueller has shown his love for his Lord by getting out and doing His work. There is much that can be learned from such a man as this. I know that by writing this paper I have learned a great deal, and more importantly I have been even more encouraged to do the work of the Lord.~~

Up until this time I have purposely remained anonymous. I did not wish my identity to affect the attitude of one who reads this paper. For I wanted the reader to see Pastor Mueller as he truly

was and is. Pastor Richard Mueller is my father, and it is true that because of my relationship to him, I am especially proud of the work that he has done. But I hope that you, the reader, have through the life of my father, also been encouraged to do the work of the Lord. For his work that has been outlined in this paper is a direct reflection to his love for his Lord. May the example of this man encourage all of us to show our love for the Lord by continuing to spread the Gospel message in any way that we can.

By

Timothy P. Mueller

F O O T N O T E S

1. Edgar Hoenecke, Our Mission Is Global. p. 12.
2. E.H. Wendland, From Darkness To Light. p.2.
3. Ibid. p. 3.
4. Edgar Hoenecke, They Come To Thee. p.15.
5. E.H. Wendland. op. cit. p.5.
6. The Lutheran Christian. ^{DL}1969, p.6.
7. The Lutheran Christian. Feb. 1970, p.10.
8. The Lutheran Christian. Dec. 1968, p.8.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

- Hoenecke, Edgar. Our Mission Is Global. Published by Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 1970.
- Hoenecke, Edgar. They Come To Thee. Published by Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 1965.
- Lutheran Christian. A Bi-monthly periodical published by The Lutheran Press, Lusaka, Zambia. 1968-1972.
- Mueller, Richard Wm. An Interview conducted on April 10th, 1984.
- Wendland, E.H. From Darkness To Light. The Lutheran Press, Lusaka, Zambia, 1970.

A Fruit of Faith

When Missionary Wraalstad and I visited our religious workers of the Lutheran Church of Central Africa in the Kabompo District, Pastor Muyangana and Evangelist Njamba took us to some of their instruction classes and introduced us to many of the members of their congregations.

As we returned from meeting some people who Pastor Muyangana wanted us to know, we passed a house in front of which a long stick, sharpened at the top, had been set into the ground. Next to the stick, near the door, were two small branches, also stuck into the ground, and between them was fastened a tiny boat.



African JuJu placed before the house to scare away evil spirits.

Under the boat, on the ground, was a little pawpaw fruit and a handful of maize meal.

I asked Pastor Muyangana what it was. He told me it is placed there by the owner of the house to scare away evil spirits, to protect the people who live there.

Then I asked Pastor Muyangana whose house it was. He pointed to a woman standing near him and said it was her house. "But," I asked, "Isn't she your member? Wasn't she with us in your instruction class?" "Yes," answered Pastor Muyangana, "But she does not live there any longer."

Why? Because after she had been taught the full and true meaning of the Second Commandment and after she had become a member of the Lutheran Church, she told her son, who had put the sticks, boat, and food at the door in front of the house, to take them away. And when he refused, SHE moved out of the house. She refused to live in a house where witchcraft is practiced.

God grant all of us the courage to do the same and, so, show forth the fruits of our faith. R. W. Mueller

THE *Lutheran* CHRISTIAN

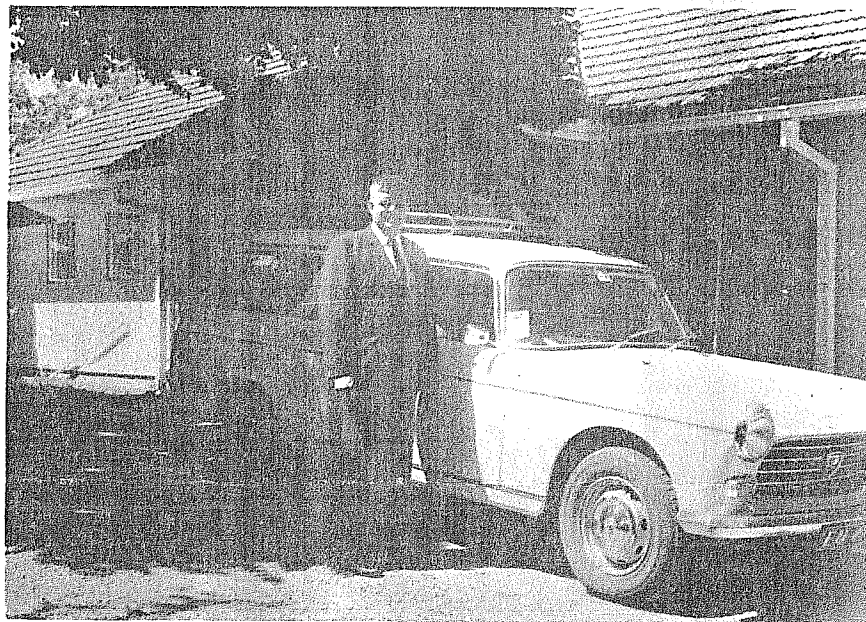
Vol. 2 December 1968 No. 3

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE
LUTHERAN CHURCH OF CENTRAL AFRICA
PUBLISHED BI-MONTHLY BY
THE LUTHERAN PRESS

P. O. BOX 49
LUSAKA, ZAMBIA
THE PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE
R. G. COX, CHAIRMAN
E. H. WENDLAND, SUPERINTENDENT
R. W. MUELLER, ASSISTANT SUPT.
E. SCHNEIDER, PUB. DIRECTOR
A. S. MUYANGANA

J. TONGA
CONTRIBUTING MISSIONARIES:
T. E. KRETZMANN
J. M. JANOSEK
O. E. WRAALSTAD

THE LUTHERAN PRESS
P. O. BOX 49
LUSAKA, ZAMBIA



Missionary Richard Wm. Mueller in front of the parsonage in Lusaka.

LUTHERAN



CHURCH

The emblem adopted by the Lutheran Church of Central Africa.