

PIONEERS OF THE FAITH

Missionary Heroes of the Faith

District Blessed with Inspired

Editor's note: This month we continue our presentation of the Florida-Georgia District's Pioneers of the Faith. These profiles are taken from the 60th Anniversary Booklet that debuted at the Circuit Convocations held earlier this year. Already profiled have been Edward "Papa" Fischer, Dallas and Susan Gibson, Herman Glienke and Harold Storm. This month we present Conrad Kellerman, Theodore Ahrendt and Wyatt Kimberley. The profiles were written by Charles R. Hofman, St. Mark's Lutheran-Hollywood, Historian-Archivist.

Conrad F. Kellermann

"Kelly, you be the preacher. Use your preacher voice!" cheered the young boys playing church on the wind-swept plains of Missouri. Years later, the powerful voice of that preacher resounded across the crowded congregation, broadcasting the good news of God's grace. It was a booming voice that resonated for years. The forceful, formal oratory of Rev. Conrad F. Kellermann reverberated down the decades as it spread the gospel of Christ to thousands of people. His voice became his hallmark.



Conrad Kellermann was born August 5, 1897, in Little Rock, MO, the son of Pastor Herman Kellermann. Conrad was named after his grandfather, a prominent St. Louis Lutheran whose construction company helped build Concordia Seminary. As a little boy in dusty overalls imitating his father, "Kelly" loved to preach to his childhood buddies. Conrad received his elementary

education in a one-room Lutheran school taught mainly by his father.

After graduating from Concordia Seminary in 1919, he was called to guide a mission field of five stations covering about 100 miles of wilderness on the prairies of western South Dakota. Congregations were organized at Philip and Milesville. He spent nine years as pastor of Trinity-Mansfield, SD.

Kellermann accepted a call to St. Matthew's-Miami in 1932, mainly because he sensed the enormous missionary challenge in the growing area. When Kellermann, his wife, Caroline, and their six children arrived in November 1932, in the depths of the Great Depression, St. Matthew's

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was the only Missouri Synod congregation in Dade County and had 69 struggling members. He began an aggressive campaign to build membership and start missions in the Miami area.

One of the high points of his ministry was the baptism of 36 adults and children on Palm Sunday in 1935. There were 200 in Sunday School in those early days. In 1937 Kellermann was a key figure in the organization of the District Walther League. That year St. Matthew's started a mission on Miami Beach. In 1940 Kellermann conducted the first Lutheran service in Key West and helped start Redeemer-Miami Shores. During World War II he served as chaplain to German prisoners of war in three POW camps in the Miami area.

In 1947, with an impressive 10-year record of coordinating South Florida mission work, he was a pastoral delegate to Synod's Centennial Convention in Chicago where the petition for the formation of a new Florida-Georgia District was presented. His booming voice and oratorical style im-

ploded that Christ's work be further facilitated through this new endeavor. At the Florida-Georgia District organizational convention in Orlando in February 1948, Kellermann was elected President.

While serving as District President, Kellermann's powerful voice echoed everywhere throughout the Miami area as he continued the mission expansion that resulted in 16 additional LCMS churches in Dade County by 1964.

Kellermann led the District for nine strategic years, from 1948 to 1957, and was named Honorary President in 1959. He was recognized for having successfully led the fledgling District through difficult

and challenging years with patience, optimism, faith and unflinching courage.

After 48 years of unflinching Christian service, 35 of them spent at St. Matthew's and in vocal District leadership, Kellermann retired on March 1, 1967. His ongoing efforts for the Lord were recognized on April 24, 1981, when the District granted him the *Doulos tou Christou* award for his distinctive service as a trailblazer.

On January 15, 1984, Concordia Seminary-St. Louis, conferred upon Kellermann the Doctor of Divinity degree in recognition of his "concern for the proclamation of the Gospel, his labor as a trailblazing pioneer, the establishment of Lutheranism in South Florida, his expansion of mission work in a burgeoning population, and his leadership in shaping and serving the Florida-Georgia District."

In the evening of his life, an operation reduced his once-powerful voice to little more than a whisper. Pastor Kellermann said, "My voice is gone, and you know how important a voice is to a preacher." Today, however, that powerful voice resounds through the years in his lasting contributions, which still speak to us.

**Theodore G. Ahrendt**

Rev. Ted Ahrendt rejoiced that his ministry was spent laboring in fields of "high cotton." The phrase first graced his ears in the fields of Georgia, where he worked to plant missions for almost forty years. Years later he shared the meaning of the saying in his book *High Cotton for a Georgia Preacher*. When the cotton was high the pickers had less back pain and rejoiced. As Ahrendt sowed seeds of the Gospel, high cotton sprang up through God's grace and brought joy to this well-respected patriarch of LCMS Georgia missions.

Theodore G. Ahrendt was born in London, England, on February 23, 1903, and came to the United States during World War I. After graduating from Concordia Seminary-St. Louis, he studied Early Christian Art at Columbia University and joined the staff of the Fine Arts Department of the New York City Public Library where he catalogued the largest Life of Christ picture collection in the world.

He was ordained and installed at Trinity-Monroe, LA, and thereafter his entire



ministry was in the South. He accepted a second pastorate at Grace-Atlanta in 1930, where he remained for four decades faithfully serving that congregation. Ahrendt held the first Sunday School rally day, initiated the first local VBS and faithfully fulfilled all the responsibilities of a parish pastor. Grace soon became the LCMS "Mother Church" in Georgia.

During the Depression years, he traveled throughout Georgia sowing seeds for Georgia missions and praying for a high-cotton

yield. In 1937 Ahrendt organized a small group of Lutherans into a worshipping community in the Columbus and Albany mission fields. He was assigned to start a mission station in Athens in 1939 and began ministering to university students and others who later formed Trinity-Athens.

During World War II he was the key contact pastor of the Atlanta and other Georgia areas for the Armed Services Commission of the LCMS and Chaplain to the Prisoner of War Command at the Atlanta General Depot. In 1941 Ahrendt held services for servicemen at a nearby military base, an activity he continued through the war years. During the last years of the war, he faithfully visited Battey State Hospital to minister to service personnel. In 1946 Ted Ahrendt served as visitation pastor at Redeemer-Columbus. This meant boarding a bus in Atlanta, traveling to Columbus, preaching there, then boarding the bus back to Atlanta each Sunday.

High cotton years of joy continued as the Atlanta area expanded rapidly during the post-war boom, and more mission congregations in Georgia were planted. This suburban growth fostered daughter congregations in Atlanta. Ahrendt initiated services for members of Grace who lived in the East Point area, and in 1953 the group became Christ-East Point. Ascension-Atlanta was founded in 1954. Ahrendt also founded additional mission congregations in Georgia: Lutheran Church of the Holy Trinity-Macon, Faith-Marietta, Peace-Decatur, Holy Trinity, St. Michael-Doraville. By now he was well known as a planter of churches and the pioneer of LCMS Georgia missions. As Ahrendt himself wrote, "I consider the joys of the ministry as being in high cotton."

Ahrendt was extremely active in District affairs. He was Counselor of the Georgia-North Alabama Circuit of the Southern District from 1950-1957 and a member of its Board of Directors. He also served as member of the Florida-Georgia Board of Directors and was elected as Third and Second Vice President of the District from 1960-1965 and First Vice President in 1968.

Ted Ahrendt remained at Grace-Atlanta for 39 years until his 1969 retirement. He moved to Stone Mountain, but joyfully continued his high cotton ministry as pastor emeritus, serving in vacancies, lecturing and



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