

Lutheran Historical Society of the Mid-Atlantic Newsletter

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The Newsletter is issued twice a year by the Lutheran Historical Society of the Mid-Atlantic in the interest of the preservation and cultivation of the history of Region 8 of the ELCA and its congregations.

Notes of announcements, projects, historical celebrations, genealogical concerns, notes of church or Synodical activities, and notes from other historical societies are solicited. Address correction are helpful.

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Zion's Foundation

Ed. Note: Following is an excerpt from the history of one of the oldest churches in the Lower Susquehanna Synod, Zion Lutheran Church (1764), in Hummelstown. This excerpt concentrates on the difficulty of pastoral leadership in the colonial period.

Frederich Hummel wanted to provide for the financial and spiritual welfare of his family by buying land and recreating the society he had left behind in Germany, which included a town and the German Protestant churches, Lutheran and Reformed. He was a Lutheran and it is this church that benefited most from his stewardship. In the deed transferring land from Hummel to the church on June 24, 1766, he stipulated that "the German Evangelical Lutheran Congregation professing the Doctrine Worship and Discipline agreeable to the Invariable Confession of Augsburg" was the holder of the deed. To "apostatize" from this doctrine would forfeit the deed. The deed also provided for a school and a cemetery. The church was a large log structure built on the southwest corner of the present cemetery. It served as a place of worship for both the Lutheran and Reformed congregations and as a school during the week. It stood to 1817.

Although financial issues required constant attention in the early years of the church, more concern was expressed for acquiring a pastor so that worship and catechism could be reliably conducted. For this business, the church appealed

to the Ministerium, a recently organized (1748) association of German Lutheran clergymen who sought to impose some order on the scattered Lutheran churches in Pennsylvania. The outstanding leader of the Ministerium was the missionary preacher Henry Melchoir Muhlenberg. It is from his journals that we catch a glimpse of the life of the new congregation in Hummelstown. When the church received its deed upon the completion of its log church on June 24, 1766, the pastor of record was Theophilus England (ger., Engelland). However, England was not a pastor approved by the Ministerium. In fact he appeared to be one of the rogue pastors who often appeared on the frontier. According to the Ministerium records, before coming to America, England had disappeared "from Wurttemberg (and) he had entered the French service in Strassburg, became Catholic, deserted and entered Dutch service, and exchanged the Catholic for the Calvinistic religion, thence he went to the Spanish Netherlands, etc." Needless to say, the Ministerium roundly rejected England's request for licensing in the colonies. Aside from his name on the deed for Hummelstown, there is no other evidence of his ministry in the records, although Muhlenberg mentions in his journals that "the buck and the wolf" had been there for several years. His departure left Hummelstown and the three churches with which it was joined without pastoral leadership. Consequently in 1768 these churches, Hummelstown, Maytown, Donnegal, and Middletown, appealed to the Ministerium for a pastor. Muhlenberg notes that the original request for Candidate Jung was rejected because the churches did not seem prepared to financially support a pastor. The financial issue was a critical one and new for the colonial churches who had come from Germany where churches were supported by the state. The churches were placed under the supervision of Pastor John Caspar Stoever, Jr. who was the nearest pastor, although he already was serving a regular charge. In 1769 Muhlenberg himself visited these congregations in response to their appeal which as yet had not been met. Finally, in 1771 Hummelstown and its joined congregations were regularly served by Johann Michael Enderlein.

Since clergy served multiple congregations throughout this period, services were held at the most once a month in any congregation. On the Sundays when a Lutheran pastor was not available, a Reformed pastor would preach at the church. The principle duties of the clergy were to preach, perform the sacraments of baptism and communion, and to catechize the youth. A typical

Sabbath service included hymns, prayers, scripture reading, and preaching. An example is given from Hummelstown on Friday, May 5, 1769 in Muhlenberg's journal. He "preached in a practical way on Hosea 2:14, 'Therefore behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.' The hearers seemed to be quite moved and hungry. After the sermon I called up the children who were present and catechized them." The church records give the baptisms and some communion records for this period. However, communion was held only infrequently, possibly only twice a year. The focus of the worshipping service was on the sermon and hymn singing. Muhlenberg's experience appears to be typical of the Hummelstown congregation. Many years later (1794) another young clergyman, George Lochmann, who served the Lebanon parish and preached occasionally in Hummelstown, recorded the warm reception he received. He also describes worship that was not confined to the church or the Sabbath. Lockmann recalls that he spent the night in Hummelstown with a church family with whom he sang and prayed all evening, an experience he repeated on several subsequent visits that year.

From 1770 to 1795 Hummelstown continued to be served by clergy assigned from the Ministerium. Pastor Enderlein served from 1771 to 1779 when he moved up the Susquehanna to Shamokin. He was followed by Wilhelm Kurtz whose father and brother were already leaders in the Ministerium. He was not merely licensed but ordained by the Ministerium in 1768. Although Kurtz was a more highly qualified pastor than Pastor Enderlein, who was never ordained, both men suffered financial difficulties while serving the Hummelstown church. In 1778 Muhlenberg gave Enderlein 2L5sh because he had no money, and the Church Book records in 1788 this resolve: "Pastor William Kurt (sic) preached now 8 years and the congregation did not furnish him with a residence nor paid him anything towards it, we herewith grant him out of the money in the treasury L5.00." Kurtz continued his service to Hummelstown at least until 1794 when the church was again without a pastor. From 1795 to 1804 there is no record of a regular pastor at Hummelstown although baptisms and confirmations were recorded. In addition to Pastor Lochman who substituted at Hummelstown occasionally, his journal refers to a Mr. Lupp who was serving the church in 1795. Without any regularly assigned clergy, it fell to the lay people of the church to maintain its health and vitality, which they apparently did because the church emerges from the shadows in 1804 with a new pastor and plans to build a new church.

President's Corner

Annabelle S. Wenzke

The membership drive reminds me that another year has passed in the life and work of the Lutheran Historical Society of the Mid Atlantic. Once again it has been a great year with new projects and stimulating programs. However, keeping abreast of history is like cleaning house, you never catch up. You spend weeks dusting and sweeping, washing windows and pruning the lawn, and just as you are finished, you realize dust is gathering in the corners and spots are marking the windows. It is in this spirit that we offered our fall program because all of us need to keep sweeping the house. As written archives, such as letters and diaries, become rarer, there is a need for all of us to get our stories into the record. Dave Michel offers us some suggestions of how to do this, but we need not be so systematic. I have many friends who are collecting and writing family histories. So must we also write our religious history as it is being made. Has your church changed pastors? Have you retired from the ministry? Is your church rebuilding? Have you joined a mission congregation? In the evenings when there is nothing to watch on TV (most evenings) write the stories, collect the pictures and remembrances, get it down.

Clearly the work of the LHS/MA is also never finished. We are concerned about tapping into congregational history, about preserving and supporting the archives of the ELCA, extending the consciousness of history to our young people and new leaders, and promoting programs that will help our members do history. We are proud of what we have done, and we are grateful for the support of our members, but there is always more to do. Unfortunately, I will not be able to continue to serve as the President of the Society as we push forward in our mission. My husband and I are planning to serve a five month mission in Tanzania (June to November 2004), and I must step down as president. I will continue on the board and will resume those duties when I return. We will be electing board members at the Annual Meeting in April and new officers in May. We hope all of you will be at the April meeting, give us your ideas, and continue to support the Board as we work to fulfill the mission of the LHS/MA.