Schwarzwald Church — Kim-Eric Williams

One of the most scenic areas in Germany, the Black Forest, gave its name to a congregation that has ministered in Pennsylvania for 375 years. If you can imagine a small rural congregation that shared its building with another denomination for over 200 years and did not have weekly worship until 1954, you may be amazed to learn that this congregation now has the largest worship attendance of any Lutheran church in the Reading area. Located east of Reading in Berks County, its historic location in Exeter township is now a suburb five miles east of the city of Reading.

The story began when German Lutherans and members of the German Reformed faith began to move west of Philadelphia and up the Schuylkill River to the Oley Valley in the early 1700’s. Swedish Lutherans had a congregation (St. Gabriel’s) at Morlatton/Amityville by 1720. The Schwarzwald congregation was founded in 1737 and supplied by a schoolmaster, Philip Streiter. The first pastor to serve the congregation was Tobias Wagner who had come to Pennsylvania from Waldoboro, Maine (1744-1752). He served Schwarzwald and another nearby congregation which had been founded at the same time and was called Alsace and founded a congregation (Trinity) in the new county seat of Reading in 1752. While also pastor of Christ, Stouchsburg, he presided at the marriage of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg and Eva Maria Weiser, daughter of the famed jurist and Indian interpreter, Conrad Weiser.

Land was purchased for a log church in 1753 and the local German Reformed congregation cooperated in its costs. Since neither congregation had a church service more than once every 6 weeks and at times less often it was a practical arrangement to build a “union church” although the congregational rolls were separate and the identities continued on page 2
 Schwarzwald Church Celebrates (continued from page 1)

of each denomination were maintained. A cemetery soon surrounded the church and a parochial school was supported by both congregations and existed from 1754 until the advent of public education in 1849.

In 1810 a stone church replaced the original log church, and it was replaced by a large brick edifice in 1870. This structure served until the union arrangement was severed and the Schwarzwald Lutheran congregation built a stone parish education building (1953) and then a sanctuary of their own in 1963. The commanding complex on five acres also has a stone tower housing a carillon of 24 bronze bells cast in the Netherlands, and faceted glass windows designed by Latvian artist, Leonids Linatts.

For most of its history the pastors served two other congregations in the same area but sometimes as many as nine congregations in one rural parish. Among the well-known pastors was the second son of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, Frederick Augustus Conrad Muhlenberg for a year. This son was later the first Speaker of the House of Representatives of the U.S. Congress. Pastor B.D. Zweizig served from 1863-1903 and led the congregation in building its third union building although Lutheran services were held only once a month. By the end of World War II, the congregation grew and moved to weekly worship and eventually the end of the union arrangement and the erection of separate facilities during the ministries of Pastors Morris F. Houck, Jr. (1952-1960) and Marvin L. Harding (1961-1991).

Today Schwarzwald Lutheran has a very active ministry that has been led since 2006 by the clergy couple, Pastors Amy and John Miller. There are three choirs, an active youth program, a new web site and a presence on Facebook.

From The Editor, from page 1

As I have moved during the last few months, I found a number of things in my “attic” that I have given to the Archives: Annual reports from Bethany, North Bergen, NJ, pictures of the church council and pastors from Holy Trinity, North Caldwell, NJ, a history and description of the faceted glass from Concordia, Manchester, CT, annual reports from St. Mark’s in Bridgeport, CT. Since we have in the Archives a “Vertical File” on every congregation in the Northeast, all of these items have found a home.

So, pastors before you move, or when you retire, think about how what you have saved can benefit those who will follow us and will want to know what we did and how we witnessed for the Faith.

Kim-Eric Williams
wkimeric@aol.com.
October Historical Conference in Philadelphia

Dr. Jon Pahl

The Lutheran Historical Conference (LHC) is the national “guild” of individuals who care about Lutheran history. The group—with representatives from many locales—will gather on the campus of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia this coming Fall, from Thursday, October 11-Saturday, October 13. The theme of the conference is “Choosing the Lutheran Narrative: Commemorating, Remembering, Forgetting?”

Lutherans grapple with their history in a number of ways. At times, their past is lifted up and celebrated. Still other parts are simply remembered. Perhaps more disturbing, Lutherans also forget their history, sometimes through neglect and other times quite deliberately. This conference will explore these themes while also celebrating the life of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg.

In addition to scholarly presentations, a banquet on Thursday night is planned, and a bus tour of Lutheran sites in the Delaware Valley for Friday. More details about registration, which is open to members of LHC, is forthcoming.

Membership in LHC, which costs $35/year, is open to anyone, and can be secured by contacting: Marvin A. Huggins, Membership Secretary, 5732 White Pine Drive, St. Louis, MO 63129-2936. Email: marvinh@pobox.com

This is a great opportunity to support Lutheran historical studies, and to get to know other Lutheran historians and archivists. For more information, contact Professor Jon Pahl at LTSP jpahl@ltsp.edu, or Archivist John Petersen at The Lutheran Archives Center mtairyarchives@ltsp.edu.

For information on the program, contact Program Chair, David A Settje, David.Settje@uchicago.edu.

Congregational Heritage Workshop in Gettysburg

The Lutheran Historical Society of the Mid-Atlantic, an ELCA historical organization dedicated to the preservation and promotion of Lutheran heritage and historical resources in the Mid-Atlantic region, will host a series of Congregational Heritage Workshops on the campus of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, on Saturday, September 15, 2012 from 9 to 3 PM. Registration will be 8:30-9:00 AM with a continental breakfast in Valentine Hall, followed by welcoming remarks and opening devotions, and a catered lunch is included. Workshop sessions include:

1) Archives for Small Churches,
2) Local Lutheran Records,
3) Oral History,
4) Archival Preservation,
5) Congregational Anniversaries,
6) Pennsylvania German Baptismal Records,
7) Library Resources for Lutheran History,
8) Writing Congregational Histories, and
9) Dealing with Dirty Linen (troubleshooting the negative aspects of congregational history and anniversary planning).

Workshop leaders include professional historians, archivists, and ordained clergy. Registration is $40 for Historical Society members, or $45 for non-members. Congregations sending multiple attendees may register the initial person at the full rate, then all subsequent attendees at a reduced rate ($35 for each non-member, or $30 for each Society member). Registration forms and payment are due by September 1, 2012, with checks made payable to the Lutheran Historical Society of the Mid-Atlantic.

Mail to: Lee E. Knepp, P.O. Box 76 McClure, PA 17841.

Muhlenberg Fund Update

George E. Handley

Since November 1st and the listing in the Advocate Advent 2011, an additional 12 contributions totaling $7,270 in cash has been received for the Journal Restoration Fund. We gratefully acknowledge them by category:

Volume
Lutheran Seminary in Gettysburg and the Lutheran Historical Society in the Mid-Atlantic
Completion of the joint pledge with an additional amount of $2450, acceding the $6000 goal by $75.
Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod - $4,000 completing one volume contribution
Restorer
Christ Lutheran Church, Whiting, NJ - $500 Given in honor of their pastor, J.F. Watson, upon election as LACAP President.
Founder
The Rev. John Brndjar, Allentown, PA Given in honor of the ministry and faithfulness of George E. Handley.
The Rev. Paul & Pamela Brndjar, Macungie, PA
The Rev. Calder A. Gibson, II, League City, TX
The Rev. Dwight A. Huseman, Gettysburg, PA
Donor
Levern & Joyce Lee, Inverness, FL
Other
Betty Anderson, Harleysville, PA
Sandra L. Bonser, The Villages, FL

Please note that the Appeal Fund concludes the end of June. There are pledges yet to be completed and we expect to receive them by June 30th.
President’s Letter

The Lutheran Archives Center at Philadelphia is a regional ministry of the Synods of the Region Seven of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The archives maintained at our Center contain many treasures from congregations and ministries within the Synods of the Northeast. One such treasure that has now found a home at LACAP is one that we had only known about previously through a microfilm copy at the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania – the Dreifaltigkeit Records from the old Trinity German Evangelical Lutheran Church in Camden, NJ (see the All Saints 2003 issue of the Archives Advocate). This congregation was the first Lutheran congregation founded in Camden, NJ. From 1857 until it closed in 1995 the congregation ministered to the Camden community, but after it closed its doors its original parish register was thought to have been lost to history. Thanks to the sharp eyes of our parish pastors, and thanks to the partnership that we share with the congregations and Synods of the Northeast Region, even in the Archives we can expect the unexpected!

As she went through the records of the now-closed Grace Lutheran Church in Camden, Pr. Giselle C. Coutinho, pastor of Bridge of Peace Community Lutheran Church in Camden, located this book and she made sure that it was delivered (through the NJ Synod Treasurer, Tom Kull) to LACAP. In my communication with Pr. Coutinho this past December (2011), I mentioned that there was much rejoicing among the staff and LACAP Board members when we learned this news, as we regularly receive inquiries about the records of this congregation. Pr. Coutinho offered a very appropriate Advent reflection on this discovery. She noted that this was, quote: “a great story about expecting the unexpected.” That observation is right on the money. Thanks to the sharp eyes of our parish pastors, and thanks to the partnership that we share with the congregations and Synods of the Northeast Region, even in the Archives we can expect the unexpected!

Thank you for your continued partnership and support!

Sincerely in Christ,

J. Francis Watson
President, LACAP Board of Directors