

WORSHIP NOTES: EVANGELICAL LUTHERANS IN PENNSYLVANIA IN THE 1700'S*

A SHORT HISTORY OF LUTHERANS IN PENNSYLVANIA, 1700-1786

- Cir. 1700+ Evangelical Lutheran immigrants from Europe arrive and settle in North America, the majority being from Germany. While the German Lutherans settled primarily in Pennsylvania, the Dutch Lutherans settled in New York, the Swedish Lutherans settled along the Delaware, and other Lutherans came from Norway, Denmark, and Finland. These latter groups eventually settled in the upper Midwest.
- Fall of 1732 Pastor John Christian Schultze came to America to work to organize Lutheran adherents in Philadelphia, New Hannover and Providence into three congregations. He united these congregations into a single parish known as "The United Congregations in Pennsylvania."
- Spring of 1733 Schultze and two laymen, Daniel Weisiger and John Daniel Schöner went to Europe to seek ministers and funds.
- 1742 Pastor Henry Melchior Muhlenberg answered the appeal for ministers to serve the Evangelical Lutherans in Pennsylvania.
- 1748 Lutheran clergy and lay delegates, representing 10 congregations, met at St. Michael's Church, Philadelphia to form the first permanent Lutheran synodical organization in America: The Ministerium of Pennsylvania.
- 1748 A common liturgy in German ("The Church Agenda") for the Ministerium churches was approved. This liturgy was prepared by Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, Peter Brunnholtz and John Frederick Handschuh. The only objection by the assembly was that the public service lasted too long, especially in the cold winter, and the pastors were asked to "strive after brevity" which they agreed to do. The Agenda of 1748 was never printed, but each pastor had a written copy of the liturgy for his own use.

The text of the liturgy we are using today was printed from the oldest and most complete copies of The Agenda that survived. These copies came from the hands of Pastor Jacob Van Buskerk (1763) and Pastor Peter Mühlenberg (1769). Most of the hymns we sing today were chosen from suggestions prescribed by those who developed The Agenda.

HOLY COMMUNION PRACTICES IN THE COLONIAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

"Ordinarily, whenever circumstances admit of it, the Supper of the Lord shall be administered on Christmas, on Easter, on Pentecost. It may also be administered at other times as the necessities of the congregation may demand." One or two weeks before the date communion was administered, the pastor gave notice "from the pulpit." In addition to a short exhortation regarding preparation for communion, the pastor would inform the congregation of the day when they "shall report themselves to him and have their names recorded." These communion records were permanent records that the pastor of the congregation had to maintain. Anyone who reports to the pastor for Holy Communion that is known to be "living in strife, or occasioning public scandal" but has not responded to the pastor's counsel may be required by the pastor to meet with the vestry of the congregation for their judgment in

the matter.

A special service was held the day before administration of Holy Communion, and all communicants were expected to attend. The names of all congregants who had reported for Holy Communion were read. The service included penitential hymns, an exhortation of the pastor, the Lord's Prayer, and questioning of the applicants, first the men and then the women. Afterwards, one of the communicants led those present in repeating the confession of sin aloud followed by a statement of absolution by the pastor. The service ended with a hymn and the benediction.

*Information and quotes in this article are taken from the sixth edition of *A History of the Evangelical Lutheran Church In the United States* by Henry Eyster Jacobs published in New York by Charles Scribner's Sons in 1917. The original copyright date is 1893.