

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 26, NUMBER 1

SPRING 2015

2015 Spring Program - "Homecoming" Observing the 150th Anniversary of the End of the Civil War

By Mark Oldenburg

The Spring Meeting of the Society will once more take place at Gettysburg Seminary during the Spring Academy Week, Tuesday, April 28, 2015. This partnership allows us to meet surrounded by students, faculty, and alums and to expose them to our excitement about the Society and its mission.

Our offerings that morning will fit in with the Seminary's theme for these days, "Homecoming," taking its cue from the 150th anniversary of the end of the Civil War. Our presentations will be part of two days of consideration of later homecomings, either from military service or incarceration. It will begin with a presentation by Mark Oldenburg on the work of Lutherans to resettle displaced persons in Europe following the Second World War. That will be followed by a panel of two combat veterans reflecting on their own experience of returning to civilian (and church) life: Nathan Huffman, a veteran of the recent conflicts in the Persian Gulf, and Marlin Plymette, who served in Vietnam.

The morning will close for us with our annual meeting, including

the election of members to the Board. Members may also register for a lunch at the Seminary refectory, and are welcome to remain for the afternoon's programs at the seminary. A registration form was mailed to Society members, and is included in this newsletter.

The Spring Academy theme for Thursday, Friday, and Saturday of that week is "Away," and those days will include attention to the global mission of the church. More information is available at <http://www.lts.edu/academics/lifelong-learning/spring-academy>.

You may be getting a separate registration form for all of the Spring Academy from Gettysburg Seminary. You're welcome to use that form if you're planning to attend the events on Tuesday evening, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, or Saturday, but **please use the society's registration form for Tuesday morning and afternoon**—it will allow us to get credit for our members attending that day. Please mail your registration form and check to Lee Knepp by April 14—we will be unable to of-

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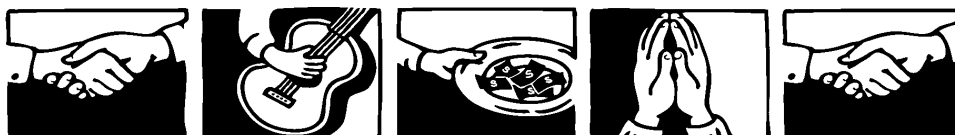
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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- LHS Spring Meeting will again coincide with Seminary Academy Week
- In Memoriam: The Rev. Dr. Frederick K. Wentz
- Several speakers & panelists scheduled for Spring program
- Hartman siblings win Lutheran history youth contest
- Ira Sassaman prepared for the ministry at Susquehanna more than a century ago



President's Corner - Spring 2015

In Memoriam: The Reverend Dr. Frederick K. Wentz (January 21, 1921–October 24, 2014)



died this past October, the Lutheran Historical Society of the Mid-Atlantic lost one of its most dedicated supporters. Fred, a board member emeritus, helped lead the 1989 reorganization of our society then known as the Lutheran Historical Society, Gettysburg. The son of American Lutheran historian, Abdel Ross Wentz, Fred developed the same interest and passion for the study of Lutheran history, especially in the United States. He was a tireless advocate for Lutheran history in America, encouraging all historians both young and experienced, professional and amateur alike. Fred was born and raised in what once was the Seminary home of Samuel Simon Schmucker. A champion of Schmucker and

When the Reverend Dr. Frederick Kuhlman Wentz

that particular tradition of American Lutheranism, Fred sought to ensure that new generations of historians would understand and appreciate the nuances and strengths of this tradition.

Fred's career included degrees from Gettysburg College, the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, and Yale Divinity School. He would serve as professor at Hart-

"The society gives thanks to God Almighty for the life, faith, service, and witness of Fred Wentz. We mourn his death while celebrating his life and its many contributions. May Fred's legacy continue to inspire..."

wick and Gettysburg Seminaries, a mission developer in Southern California, pastor in Kansas City, and the president of Hamma Divinity School. In addition to history, Fred championed the role of the laity in the life of the church.

His contributions to the Lutheran Historical Society of the Mid-Atlantic were many. Fred's vision and energy helped bring about the reorganization of the society twenty-six years ago. He served on its board for many years and rare-

ly missed a LHSMA program. Furthermore, he and his family established the Abdel Ross Wentz prize in American Lutheran History. Each year the society can award a prize to a first degree seminarian or graduate student for a paper in American Lutheran history. The prize continues to serve as an inspiration and encouragement to future generations of American Lutheran historians.

The society gives thanks to God Almighty for the life, faith, service, and witness of Fred Wentz. We mourn his death while celebrating his life and its many contributions. May Fred's legacy continue to inspire the society in its mission to promote and preserve Lutheran history in the Mid-Atlantic region and beyond.

Rest eternal grant him, O Lord. And may light perpetual shine upon him!

Sincerely,

*Pastor Stephen Herr,
LHSMA President*

February 28, 2015

Birthday of Samuel Simon Schmucker, 1799

LHSMA 2014 - 2015 Board of Directors

Officers

Stephen Herr	John Deeben
<i>President</i>	<i>Secretary</i>
Mark Oldenburg	Lee Knepp
<i>Vice President</i>	<i>Treasurer</i>

Other Board Members

Brian Bohleke	Kevin Hepler
Marianne Brock	Susan Hill
Maria Erling	Barbara Luebke
John Fehring	Judy Simonson

Board Emeriti

Donald Housley
Michael Kurtz

2015 Spring Program - “Homecoming”

(Continued from page 1)

fer lunch to any registration sent later than that.

Note that the registration fee will include your participation in the afternoon sessions, should you wish to stay. These afternoon sessions are interesting and important, and will provide a Biblical basis for our presentations and those of Wednesday:

2:00 PM: “When the Old Land is New: Return from Exile” (Presenter: Robert Robinson, Professor of Old Testament, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia)

3:00 PM: “A Prisoner of Christ: New Testament Images and Implications of Imprisonment” (Presenter: Richard Carlson, Professor of New Testament, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg)

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL NOTICE

We send a big THANK YOU to all who have sent their membership renewals, for they provide extensive support for the ongoing work of the Society.

However, if you have not yet done this for 2015 we hope you will use the Renewal Form on the back page of this newsletter and send it with your dues. Your continued membership support is important. **LHSMA Annual Membership Renewal**, with dues (\$20 per household or institution), is requested between January 1 and March 31.

If you're not a member, Come Join Us! An application form is on the back page of this newsletter. If you have never been a member and join between October 1 and December 31, the last quarter of the year, your annual dues will also include all of 2016! We'll be delighted to welcome you!

To all LIFE Members and Annual Members: If there is a change in your contact information (street address, e-mail, home telephone, cell phone) please let us know. We want to maintain contact with you. Mail any changes to Lutheran Historical Society, Lutheran Theological Seminary, Attn: Rev. Stephen Herr, 61 Seminary Ridge, Gettysburg, PA 17325. We deeply appreciate the involvement and support from our present members, and we are always eager to greet new members.

IMPORTANT NEWSLETTER NOTICE!

Dear LHSMA Members:

The cost of producing the society's newsletter consumes most of our annual budget. Due to escalating printing costs, the Lutheran Historical Society of the Mid-Atlantic will start issuing the newsletter in electronic form (PDF file format) **ONLY** to all members who have provided an email address. This decision is being implemented to make more effective use of our limited income resources. Members with no email address on file **will continue** to receive the newsletter by mail. We will dispense with professional printing and revert to desktop publishing, and therefore only a limited run of hardcopies for each issue will be produced.

If you would like to continue to receive the newsletter in **print**, please send an email to newsletter editor John Deeben at jdeeben@aol.com. If you did not provide an email address with your membership application or renewal and would like to receive the newsletter electronically, please contact the editor as well.



2015 Spring Program / Annual Meeting / Luncheon

Seminary Chapel, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg

Tuesday, April 28, 2015

*The Spring Program will take place as part of Gettysburg Seminary's Spring Academy,
but please register for the program using this form.*

Program Agenda

8:30 AM – Registration and Coffee

9:00 AM – Opening Prayers

9:15 AM – Recognition of the Winners of the Society's Awards

9:30 AM – Lecture

"Homecoming When There Was No Home: Re-settling Displaced Persons after WW2"

Speaker: **Mark Oldenburg**

Professor of Worship and Dean of the Chapel (LTSG)

10:40 AM – Panel

"When Johnny Came Marching Home: Homecoming after War "

Panelists: **Nathan Huffman**, and **Marlin Plymette**

11:30 AM – Annual Meeting

Lunch in the Seminary Refectory (to follow the Annual Meeting) may be purchased on this form.

Registrants are welcome to attend the Tuesday afternoon lectures
at the Seminary at no additional charge.

**You may also be receiving a registration form for Gettysburg Spring Academy Week from
LTSG, which you are welcome to use to register for the other days and events.**

Please complete this form and your check made payable to LHSMA and mail by April 14 to:

Lee Knepp, LHSMA
P.O. Box 76
McClure, PA 17841

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number or Email Address: _____

Registration Fee (Spring Program): (\$20 per person) x _____ persons _____

Lunch at the Seminary Refectory: (\$8 per person) x _____ persons _____
(space is limited for this lunch)

Total Enclosed: \$ _____

Hartman Siblings Win the Lutheran History Contest for Youth

By Stephen Herr

The Lutheran Historical Society of the Mid-Atlantic (LHSMA) is pleased to announce the winners of this year's Lutheran Church History Contest for Youth. Zachary Hartman won the senior high school student prize for his history on the origins of the Tree of Life Lutheran Church, 1492 Linglestown Rd, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania (www.tree-of-life.us). Alexa Hartman received the middle school student prize for her submission on the history of the youth group at Tree of Life.

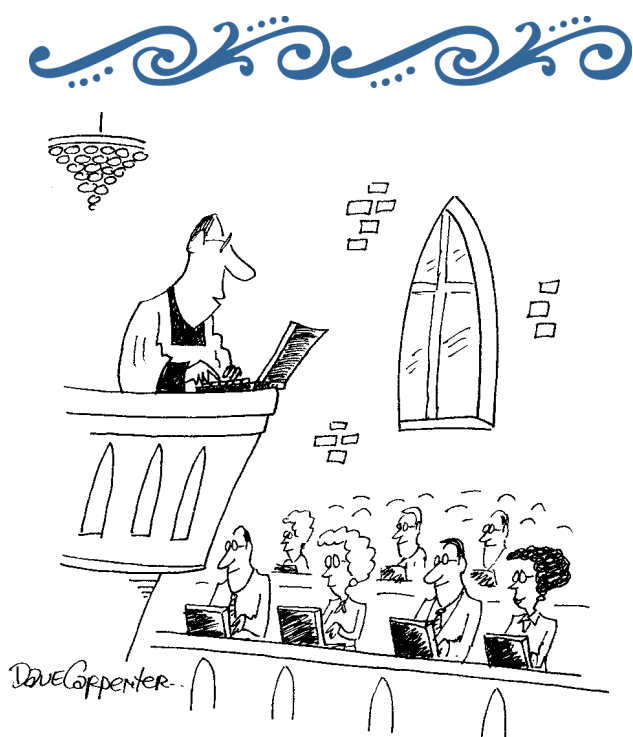
Tree of Life Lutheran Church, a congregation of the Lower Susquehanna Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, began as a mission congregation in May of 1987. "It's a thrill to have two of our members, and siblings at that, as contest winners" commented Pastor Richard Geib. "Zach and Alexa will add this recognition to their list of accomplishments and good service to the Church."

The siblings presented their winning projects during the Christian Education session at Tree of Life Lutheran Church on Sunday, November 23, 2014, during the Adult Sunday School class. LHSMA board members Kevin Heppler and Annabelle Wenzke recognized the winners at the 11:00 AM worship service.

Both students, children of April and Ed Hartman, received a cash prize of \$250 for their work submitted in the form of video documentaries. They have been invited to attend the annual meeting of the society this Spring. Dr. Annabelle Wenzke, who serves on the LHSMA board, indicated "how exciting it is to see youth take an interest in history and their congregation's heritage."

For five years the Lutheran Historical Society sponsored this contest for students in grades 6 through 12 to foster awareness of the importance of local history and culture in the life of their congregation. Participants are invited to construct multimedia projects that tell a story either about the history of their congregation, a particular person in the congregation who has played a significant role in its life, or an important event, mission or ministry that has shaped the congregation. Winners are chosen on the basis of significance, creativity, use of supporting sources and coherence of the presentation. Separate prizes are awarded to middle school and high school age groups.

Society president Stephen Herr reported that the board of directors recently suspended the contest in order to evaluate it along with the society's goals for its youth programming. He expressed the society's appreciation to all who submitted projects through the years and to the board for its support of the contest.



"Please pull up page 184 and double click Numbers 15:32 ..."

Ira Seebold Sassaman: A Consistent Witness to the Christian Faith and Life, Part II

By Annabelle Wenzke

Susquehanna University had remained true to its roots in preparing men for ministry and offered free tuition and room rent to students in the Theology School. However, Ira still had to earn his education since his father, disappointed that his son would not succeed him on the farm, refused to pay for any schooling. Consequently he worked during the summer in lumber camps and it was here that his ministerial career began. It was through the Y.M.C.A. at Susquehanna that he became a missionary to the camps. During the summer he would work during the day and preach at nights. He tells this story:

Joe, a Swede, was the biggest man in those woods. His hands, as large as country hams, were at knee level at the end of his incredibly long arms. When I first arrived in the camp, Joe came up to me and said: 'I'm a fighter. I can lick anybody in the woods.' I said to him: 'Good for you. I'm not a fighter and I'll need one here.' The first night during my church service Joe and two pals started to file saws near where I was trying to preach. The second night he ground his axe. The third night he was sitting inside the lobby, listening. The fourth night he joined the congregation and worshipped. The fifth night he was converted. After I left that camp, Big Joe did evangelistic work on his own in that and other nearby lumber camps. (Williamsport Grit, April 17, 1949)

By 1908 Ira was serving a congregation in Burnham, so that when he received his BD in 1909 he was already established in a call. It was at this time, therefore, that he was ready to start a new family life. On May 12, 1909 he married Mary Agnes Caspar of New Berlin, a woman he had first met at Union Seminary. Mary Agnes was an accomplished organist who had studied at the Philadelphia Conservatory of Music. Her

family was prominent in the New Berlin community. Her grandfather, Adolf, had been a Reformed pastor in what is now Snyder County and her father was on the board of Union Seminary. She was intelligent, proud, reserved and a bit of tease. She was a perfect mate for a young pastor beginning his ministry. Soon there would be three sons, Ira C. (b. 1910), William A. (b. 1912) and Robert S. (b. 1914) filling the parsonages of, in quick succession, Burnham (St. Paul, 1909), State College (Grace, 1911) and Turtle Creek, PA (Alpha, 1913). In each location Ira not only fulfilled his duties as a pastor and a father, but he also attended school at Penn State and the University of Pittsburgh. However, the increasing duties of the former precluded any further formal education for him.

In 1916 Ira accepted a call to St. John's Lutheran Church in Northumberland, PA. The family was now established directly across the Susquehanna River (on the east side) from their family in New Berlin. It was here that Ira would have the first of his two longest ministries, 1916-1925. We can get glimpses into the life of a pastor both from church records and personal history. In 1917 the church celebrated its 100th anniversary and the new pastor reported that there were 794 baptized members, 650 confirmed, and 461 communing. But then he went on to a different calculation, one he would continue in his ministry, "St. John's church has grown in influence and power until today there are under her influence and care more than 1600 souls, while under that of the whole pastorate there are fully two thousand souls." (Commemorative booklet, November 7, 1917) It appears that Pastor Sassaman did not believe the rolls of his church constituted his congregation. Indeed in an earlier letter that year to a former parishioner in Turtle Creek (April 5, 1917) he reports that in addition to his 728 members "I have a list of 342 persons

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Ira Seebold Sassaman

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who are material to work on outside of the church. So that with our children and all I have about 16 or 18 hundred people to look after" (Letter in possession of family). This habit of thinking beyond the borders was probably a strong factor in his evangelistic work. That this was a continuing concern is in the letter when he mentions that the previous Sunday he had received 77 members into the church, 17 by adult baptism.



Celebrate Our Heritage

But the letter also shows a father, husband, provider and a good friend. To feed his family he and Mary Agnes tended a 70 by 60 foot garden that at that time needed to be dug for spring planting. This he did in addition to the two funerals and two weddings that week! Nor was the garden the only property to cultivate because the lawn was behind the house at 60 by 90 feet. This allowed plenty of room, he reported, for the two younger boys he could hear playing in the yard. Fortunately, members supplemented the family pantry with food, such as a chicken for Easter, milk, butter and fruit, for which he was most grateful. And yet Ira apologizes in his letter that he hasn't had time to write to thank the former parishioner for her Christmas gift. One wonders how he ever got the time, but this letter beautifully captures my grandfather's tremendous energy and dedication to his church

and to his family.

This cheerful mood disappeared the next year (1918) when a few days after Christmas, Willie died of diphtheria. He had only been sick a few days and was just six years old. His brother Ira remembered the family crossing the Susquehanna River on the ice to New Berlin to bury the body in the family plot. This is the kind of loss that one never forgets, but the life of the church and the family resumed, albeit a sadder one. In 1920 a

fourth son, Charles Herbert, was born and then, finally, in 1923 a daughter, Mary Agnes, called Mur. Also, in 1921 Ira received an honorary degree from Susquehanna University, Doctor of Divinity. The circumstances are a little murky for this degree since he had been nominated for a MA by the faculty committee. However, the Board of Commencement overruled the committee and awarded the higher degree. Although it seems a little premature in his ministerial career, it reflected the high regard he already held among his peers. His next call to St Matthew's Lutheran Church in Williamsport would demonstrate the full abilities of the young pastor and show that the degree was well rewarded. In 1925 Ira moved his family to Williamsport to take up his new call at St. Matthew's.

Lutheran Airlines, Inc.

If you are traveling soon, consider Lutheran Air, the no-frills airline. You're all in the same boat on Lutheran Air, where flying is an uplifting experience. There is no First Class on any Lutheran Air flight. Meals are potluck. Rows 1-3, bring rolls; 7-11, bring a salad; 12-18, a main dish; 19-21, fruit or vegetable jello dish; and 22 & higher, a dessert. Basses and tenors please sit in the rear of the aircraft. Everyone is responsible for his or her own baggage. All fares are by freewill offering and the plane will not land until the budget is met.



LHSMA NEWSLETTER

Lutheran Historical Society of the Mid-Atlantic

61 Seminary Ridge
Gettysburg, PA 17325

Email: lhsmidatlantic@gmail.com
Web: www.lhsmidatlantic.com

*"Preserving, documenting,
and sharing the history of
Lutherans and Lutheranism in
the Mid-Atlantic and
surrounding areas."*

We're on the Web!
www.lhsmidatlantic.com

Lutheran Historical Society of the Mid-Atlantic Newsletter

ISSN 1049-6424

The Lutheran Historical Society of the Mid-Atlantic, in the interest of the preservation and cultivation of Lutheran history in Central and Western Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, West Virginia, and the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. area issues this newsletter two to three times a year.

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

Address corrections are helpful.

Send replies via email to:

Stephen Herr

lhsmidatlantic@gmail.com

Subject: LHS Newsletter



VOLUME 26, NUMBER 1

Lutheran Historical Society of the Mid-Atlantic MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Congregation (if applicable): _____

I desire membership in LHSMA as a: _____ New Member or, as a: _____ Renewal.

_____ \$ 250 Life Membership

_____ \$ 20 Regular Membership (renewable annually by March 31)

_____ I wish to give a Special Gift. Please send me more information on the Special Gift Program of the society.

I am interested in:

_____ Research

_____ Reading

_____ Publishing

_____ Other: _____

Please complete this form and your check made payable to **LHSMA** and mail to:

Lee Knepp, LHSMA
27 North Brown Street
PO Box 76
McClure, PA 17841

Spring 2015