

LUTHERAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE MID-ATLANTIC (LHSMMA)  
61 Seminary Ridge, Gettysburg, PA 17325 [www.lhsmidatlantic.com](http://www.lhsmidatlantic.com)  
contact: Rev. Dr. James B. Vigen at: [pastor@hopecp.org](mailto:pastor@hopecp.org)

March 7, 2012

## **Press Release from the Lutheran Historical Society of the Mid-Atlantic, Gettysburg, Pa**

### ***Mark Dixon Wins 2011 A.R. Wentz Essay Prize***

Mark Dixon, a Ph.D. Student at Princeton Theological Seminary, has been named the winner of the 2011 A.R. Wentz Essay Prize by the Lutheran Historical Society of the Mid-Atlantic.

Dixon's winning essay is entitled *Henry Melchior Muhlenberg: A Biographical and Market-Historical Examination*, a paper which he also presented at the American Academy of Religion's 2011 Upper Midwest Regional Conference. Dixon's essay examined Muhlenberg's theology, homiletics and polity through the lens of the patriarch's *Journals* and *Korrespondenz*. Dixon then went on to analyze Muhlenberg's ministry using the historical-sociological methods of Roger Finke and Rodney Stark as set forth in their 2008 work *Churching of America 1776-2005: Winners and Losers in our Religious Economy*. Dixon concludes his analysis by declaring Muhlenberg a "winner", albeit, "by accident" by which the author means, Muhlenberg did not set out to be successful at church planting, but "to serve Christ's church, which as he understood it was shaped by Lutheran symbolical documents...the ideal 'winner' or church growth pastor is one who does not focus on growth, but on the central things: God's eschatological activity, the Bible's power to move people to faith and repentance, and an immediate pastoral concern for the flock".

Dixon is a 2006 graduate of Concordia College in Moorhead, MN, of Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN, 2011, and currently a Ph.D. student at Princeton Theological Seminary. Dixon is a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Dixon currently serves as an editorial assistant to the Rev. Dr. Paul Rorem, editor of *Lutheran Quarterly*. Other honors include the Goethe Stipend (2012), a Princeton Theological Seminary Fellowship and Merit Tuition Scholarship (2011), an ELCA Grant for Advanced Theological Education (2011) and the G.M. and Minnie Bruce Prize in New Testament Studies from Luther Seminary (2011).

Dixon hopes to attend the April, 2012 LHSMMA Annual meeting, where he will be recognized for his award. The Abdel Ross Wentz Prize (\$2,000 award) is presented annually to the author of the most outstanding essay or research paper dealing with American Church history. The award is in honor of Abdel Ross Wentz (1883-1976), a leading historian, teacher, pastor, administrator and international world figure. Dr. Wentz was a professor and past President of Gettysburg Seminary and also taught for two years at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, in Columbia, SC.

**End**