

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 36, NUMBER 1

SPRING 2025

The Founding of St. Elias Lutheran Church, 1850 - 1851

by John Deeben

On the day after Christmas in the early winter of 1850, a group of Lutheran and Reformed members met at the home of Samuel Kauffman in the Hallowing Run district of Lower Augusta Township, Northumberland County, Pennsylvania to plan the organization of a union church.

This gathering represented yet another splinter group from the Zion Stone Union Church in Augustaville. Like their brethren who founded the nearby Lantz Emmanuel Lutheran and Reformed Church only two years before, these faithful had de-

ecided to oppose new measures then being advocated at Zion by Pastor John Peter Schindel, and instead establish their own church along more conservative Lutheran and Reformed principals. The group determined to purchase a lot of ground from Henry Reitz, located not too far from the crossroads of Asherton in Lower Augusta Township. Pastors Christopher J. M.

Neumann and Richard A. Fisher again provided the guiding leadership for this effort, and thus became the founding pastors of the new union congregation, which the

membership determined to name St. Elias, in honor of the prophet Elijah. [Thereafter, the pastorate of both congregations followed the same succession as those of Lantz Emmanuel, with a minor exception on the Lutheran side during the 1860s, when Rev. John T. Hornberger served for only two years from 1860-62 and was

then succeeded by Rev. William R. Hasskarl until 1864; after that there is no record of a Lutheran pastor until Rev. Louis G. Eggers began his pastorate at both Lantz and St. Elias in 1869. Rev. John Henry Schmidt, who served the Lantz Church between 1864-68, appears not to have held a similar position at St. Elias during that time.]

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Welcome To our Church

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- *St. Elias was originally founded in Lower Augusta Township, Northumberland County, PA*
- *After 1898, St. Elias and Emmanuel Lutheran at Wolf's Crossroads formed a distinct two-church parish*
- *Volunteers needed for assemblies / conventions*
- *Membership renewal reminder*
- *Members encouraged to consider a Life Membership to LHSMA*
- *Frank Buchman arrived at the seminary in Philadelphia in 1899 and graduated in 1902.*

President's Corner - Spring 2025

At our most recent Board of Directors meeting, a question came up regarding our presence at synod assemblies.



What are we doing about it? Well, nothing for this most immediate round. It's too late to get into most of the assemblies/conventions that are going to be taking place in the next few months. West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod, which has one of the latest deadlines for reports and exhibits, closed submission for both on April 7. Fortunately, I have a little pull there and can conceivably get a report slid into its Pre-Assembly Bulletin of Reports.

The board decided to set its sites upon the Allegheny Synod Assembly to be held in six months. This allows us to trial run the three phases of

involvement with any convention: prep, presence, and follow-up. There are rumors of three LHSMA displays that had been used for assemblies at one time, and the search is on to locate them. We'll need to figure out what our current message is. There is also a

report to write and get submitted on time. For this first one, Paul Tomkiel has volunteered to be our representative, but Paul can't do every assembly/convention;

we'll need other volunteers should we move forward—you may consider this a hint or a warning (whichever way you prefer to take it). Even if we prep well and are present in a fashion that makes us look good, without follow-up, that work may prove largely wasted, meaning we must prep fol-

low-up as well. This is going to require thoughtful work.

The more philosophical question is: Why be present? What is it that our society offers at ecclesiastical judicatory and those who attend the deliberative assemblies of such judicatories? What is it that our society hopes to gain by being present? I invite you to share your answers to these questions with me by email-

*"Why be present?
What is it that our
society offers at
ecclesiastical
judicatory
assemblies?"*

ing me at riegel@wv-wmd.org.

The Rt. Rev.
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St. Elias Lutheran Church, cont.

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St. Elias followed the same parish affiliation as the Lantz Church. It is probable that the Lutheran congregation was part of the Lykens Valley Charge until about 1860. Then, the above-mentioned pastors, who also served churches in Mahanoy, Line Mountain and Trevorton, served St. Elias and Lantz Emmanuel as well. After 1868, St. Elias comprised the Trevorton Charge along with Lantz and Zion Lutheran in Trevorton, until 1898. After that, St. Elias and Emmanuel Lutheran at Wolf's Crossroads formed a distinct two-church parish.

Work quickly began on a new wooden frame church building in the early spring following the meeting at the Kauffman homestead, with the cornerstone of the foundation being laid on April 20, 1851. There is no definite record relating how long it took to complete the construction of the church. On the same date as the cornerstone ceremony, the Lutheran and Reformed membership also entered into formal articles of agreement for the organization of the joint congregation. In many respects, and for obvious reasons, the new constitution mirrored that of Lantz Emmanuel. Beginning with an interesting preamble that declared the need for a new Lutheran and Reformed house of worship as well as a graveyard for inhabitants of Lower Augusta township. The First Article of Agreement called for the new congregation to be named and forever known as Elias Church (the name of course being later referred to more formally as St. Elias.) Article 2 gave the Evangelical Lutheran and German Reformed denominations sole and equal right to use the new house of worship. Also, ministers who served either congregation had to be

members of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod or the German Reformed Synod of North



America respectively (Article 14). Reflecting the prevalent cultural traditions of the day, Article 3 allowed services to be conducted in both English and German languages, as long as four members of either denomination desired it. Article 4 pronounced the conservative theological position of the union church by forbidding the teaching of "so-called New Measures" which had heretofore caused rifts in other area churches (and which inspired the founders to organize St. Elias in the first place.) The next several articles outlined administrative procedures, such as setting voting eligibility guidelines for communing members, allowing each denomination to elect their own ministers, providing a simple majority for such elections, and directing both congregations to maintain separate register books. Articles 9-11 specified guidelines for the election and composition of the Lutheran church council as well as the Reformed consistory, each body to contain one Trustee, Two Deacons, and Two

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St. Elias, cont.

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Wardens who would serve for two-year terms. Public notice of elections would take place four weeks prior to the event. Article 12 allowed members in good standing of either congregation to select a minister of their own choosing to perform funerals. The treasuries of the two denominations were to be kept separate (Article 13), and finally, these Articles of Agreement were to be read publicly once a year by the presiding pastor or member of the respective council or consistory.

A brief set of by-laws was later attached to the original constitution. First and foremost, the by-laws granted all confirmed members of the congregation who had reached the age of sixteen and were in good standing, the right to vote in all matters pertaining to the congregation. The by-laws expressly stated that female

members would have equal standing with male members in the matter of voting, except on questions involving legal points or statutes. In that case, only “the male members who have reached their majority shall be allowed to vote.” Another operating rule declared that all male members should contribute no less than \$1.00 per year, and female members fifty cents per year, towards the support of the church in order to retain good standing. As well, all regular congregational and council meetings were to be conducted in accordance to the articles of agreement established between the Lutheran and Reformed congregations as joint tenants of the St. Elias church building. After requiring that proper parliamentary procedure should govern the adoption of any future amendments, the final statute once again reiterated the need for the said constitution and by-laws to be publicly read once a year by the presiding pastor or the church council.

The first elected leaders of the two congregations, all of whom appeared as signatories on the 1851 Articles of Agreement, included Trustee Joseph Folk, Elders Daniel Schmeltzer and Daniel Kauffman, and Wardens Jacob Krebs and Peter Ferster on the Lutheran side, and Trustee Jacob Shipe, Elders Adam Renn, Henry Shipe, Samuel Kauffman, and Henry Reitz, and Wardens Daniel Conrad and Daniel Martz for the Reformed denomination. A few years later, on May 9, 1859, a combined deputation of these officials, including Daniel Schmeltzer, Daniel Kauffman, Henry and Jacob Shipe, Daniel Martz, and Daniel Conrad, had the Articles of Agreement duly recorded and notarized at the Northumberland County Court House by Justice of the Peace T. M. Schindel.





Lutheran Historical Society

Of the Mid-Atlantic

Application for Membership/Membership Renewal

(Please submit this Annual Membership Renewal form.)

(Please print or write clearly. Thank you!)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Congregation (*if applicable*): Please list name, town, and denomination.

I desire membership in LHSMA as a ____ New Member or as a ____ Renewal.

Date of application: _____

____ \$250 Life Membership for an individual or institution

____ \$ 20 Annual Membership for an individual or institution

(Annual membership is for a calendar year.)

____ I wish to give a donation to the society (see below for details). Amount \$ _____

I am interested in the following:

____ Research

____ Reading

____ Publishing

____ Other: _____

Financial gifts to further the work of the Society are always welcome and greatly appreciated. Such gifts may be mailed to LHSMA, in care of the treasurer, Lee Knepp, at the address below. LHSMA is a 501C-3 organization and your gift is tax deductible as permitted by law.

Please complete this form and your check made payable to LHSMA. Mail to:

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

Featured Lutheran:

Rev. Frank Buchman (1878-1961)

by Maria Erling

Famous and Forgotten, Frank Buchman should be remembered by Lutherans in the Mid Atlantic for a short-lived spiritual awakening among Protestants around the world. The man himself had what Ernest P Pfatteicher, the president of the Pennsylvania Ministerium, called a 'roving disposition' for Buchman could not thrive in a constrained ministry setting but sought always to help individuals, especially those who were down and out, and to do this through cultivating ties with and money from men with social prestige, and to travel far and wide in first class.

Educated at Muhlenberg College in Allentown, Pa, Frank Buchman arrived at the seminary in Philadelphia in 1899 and graduated in 1902. There was a regular stream of men from Muhlenberg College who attended Mt Airy seminary and Buchman enjoyed his time as a seminarian very much as a continuation of friendships formed in Allentown. Highlights from his ministry among Lutherans include his first call to a mission start in Overbrook, and then an immersion in Inner Mission work running a hospice for young men in the city of Philadelphia. The board of the Inner Mission needed more reports from Buchman than he provided, so a new job at the YMCA ministry at Penn State awaited him, but this too was brief. An important visit to a Keswick Convention in England [an evangelical meeting dedicated to promoting the Higher Life] then set Buchman on a new path, and while his ties to Lutherans continued to expand, his anchor in Lutheranism failed to hold him close to the church. Moving beyond the confines of parish and regular reporting, Frank started his own program and organized 'Group meetings' that in an informal context challenged individuals to devote themselves to a higher life, and to trust the Holy Spirit to guide them in taking risks and following whatever guidance they felt they received from their daily prayer sessions.

Buchman repeatedly invited Lutherans to attend the group meetings he organized. Some did, others took their time to try them out. Charles Jacobs, professor and then the president of Philadelphia Seminary after 1928 was one target of Buchman's frequent appeals. He avoided capture. Edward Trail Horn, however, was an enthusiastic participant and helped to organize group meetings among Protestant missionaries in Japan, where he served as a missionary. In 1918 Buchman's secretary advised him and disclosed Buchman's method: "It might not be wise to bring in all the evangelists as Mr. Buchman feels that the best and most lasting results are to be had when the groups are small and well selected. He is trying to reach the key men only and large groups are often a hindrance." Frank Buchman paid for his 'Bungalow style house' and Horn named a son after the famous benefactor. Monetary gifts came frequently, as Buchman felt guided to support the missionary's work. The 'guidance' might not be entirely selfless thought some of the Ministerium of Pennsylvania's leaders, and this caution was *published in a short pamphlet written by E.P. Pfatteicher entitled: "The Man from Oxford."* It was distributed free of charge to all the ministers in the ministerium at Christmas, 1934, and based on lectures given at Paradise Falls, a vacation oasis for Lutherans north of Philadelphia.

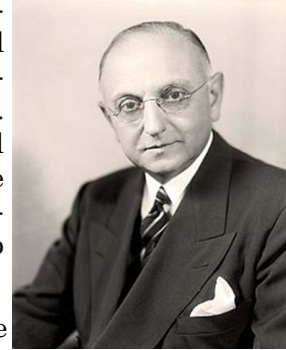
The group meetings that Buchman ran in cities around the world made him famous. The local religious paper in Allentown, Sweet Charity, published an article about Buchman's return to the city in May, 1934 and described his methods. "The Buchman meetings were attractive in their extreme simplicity. They are so different from all other forms of Evangelism. There was no shouting, very little singing, praying or public reading of Scripture, but simple, plain, honest testimonies of what the Lord had done for

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them.” A further note addressed the issue of funding, for evangelistic meetings usually drew attention to these non-spiritual aspects. “No offerings were taken; money is never mentioned. “Who pays the expenses for these meetings?” is a question often asked. We cannot answer these questions, but there are no unpaid hotel bills, etc., etc., reported against the ‘Group’ after they left the city.” Allentown was smitten. The secret of these meetings was the intimate, forthright sharing of conviction. “With a delightfully informal yet convincing manner Dr. Buchman pictured every phase of life under the influence of Divine guidance and called “life changing” on a colossal basis the solution to the problems of the world. Canada, he predicted, would be the first country where the influence of the group would be nationwide.” Buchman was wrong about that!



Buchman moved to England, where his movement took the name of the Oxford Group [Not to be confused with the Oxford Movement] because of its headquarters in Oxford, England. Later, the Oxford Group reorganized as the Moral Rearmament Association and this group ties Buchman to the development of Alcoholics Anonymous. Buchman’s papers are now in the Library of Congress because of this chain of associations. To these several constellations of inspirational methods could be added the 1950s enthusiasm for positive thinking. Buchman’s followers among Lutherans in the Mid Atlantic were eager adopters of new and expansive ideas. They were not sticklers for Lutheran polity, nor interested in the development of Lutheran worship or Lutheran theology. These Lutherans joined other Protestants who were instead drawn to personal and world changing spiritual growth, and during the years between the World Wars there were many problems to solve. Buchmanism provided a means to address these ambitions in small group meetings near home and requiring only a willing spirit and hope-filled action.

Source: Frank Buchman papers, Library of Congress, Box 4, 46, correspondence files.

Membership Renewal Due

Dear Lutheran Historical Society of the Mid-Atlantic Members and Friends:

This is your friendly reminder that membership renewals for 2025 are now due. Payment of annual dues (\$20 per household or institution) is requested between January 1 and March 31, 2025; however, we accept new members anytime! Please feel free to use the membership form in this issue to renew or join.

For those members who have already renewed, we send you a very big **THANK YOU!!**

Don't want the hassle of remembering annual dues? Then we encourage you to consider a one-time payment of \$250 for a **LIFE MEMBERSHIP!** Both annual and LIFE memberships provide important financial support for the essential activities of the Society, including our annual meeting, scholarly programs, awarding of the Wentz and Biglerville prizes for worthy Lutheran scholarship and publications, recognition of historic Lutheran sites, and Congregational Heritage Workshops, to name a few.

Friends, if you are not a member or have received a complimentary or trial membership, we encourage you to **COME JOIN US!** We are very happy to welcome you! LHSMA is very appreciative of the involvement and support of our current members, and we are always eager to greet new members!

*Friendly
Reminder*

Lutheran Historical Society of the Mid-Atlantic

61 Seminary Ridge
Gettysburg, PA 17325

Email: info@lutheranhistoricalsociety.com
Web: www.lutheranhistoricalsociety.com

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

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**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:

Matthew Riegel

info@lutheranhistoricalsociety.com

Subject: LHS Newsletter



VOLUME 36, NUMBER 1

From the Region 8 Archives

Among the diverse holdings of the ELCA Region 8 Archives at the A.R. Wentz Library, Gettysburg Campus, United Lutheran Seminary, are noncurrent records of Lutheran congregations, including historical records of disbanded congregations from five Region 8 Synods, including Alleghany, Delaware-Maryland, Lower Susquehanna, Metropolitan Washington, DC, and Upper Susquehanna Synod. In this issue, we highlight the records of the following congregation:

**BETHLEHEM EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN
CHURCH, BENDERSVILLE, PA**

(Lower Susquehanna Synod)

- Council Minutes
 - o 1938–1950
 - o 1950–1962
 - o 1962–1976
 - o 1976–1988
- Directory and Financial Report
 - o 1925
 - o 1927
 - o 1934
 - o 1936–1938
 - o 1939
 - o 1956
 - o 1961
- Ladies Bible Class Minutes
 - o 1958–1961
 - o 1961–1969
- Membership List (n.d.)
- Miscellaneous Papers
- Parish Registers
 - o 1879–1923
 - o 1924–1965
- Sunday School Treasurer's Records
 - o 1947–1957
 - o 1957–1964
- Treasurer's Book 1900–1911
- Videotape: 150th Anniversary, 1990

For more information, researchers should consult the guidelines to Research Inquiries for the Region 8 Archives Collections on the United Lutheran Seminary website at <http://library.uls.edu/subjects/guide.php?subject=region8policies>.