

= Pennsylvania Ministerium =

The Pennsylvania Ministerium was the first Lutheran church body in North America . With the encouragement of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg , the Ministerium was founded at a Church Conference of Lutheran clergy on August 26 , 1748 . The group was known as the " Ministerium of North America " until 1792 , when it adopted the name " The Ministerium of Pennsylvania and Adjacent States . "

The Pennsylvania Ministerium was also the source of the first Lutheran liturgy in America . Because of its unique place in the history of North American Lutheranism , the Ministerium continued to influence the church politics of Lutherans in America into the twentieth century .

= = Lutherans in North America = =

In 1638 , Swedish settlers , colonizing north along the Delaware from the New Sweden colony , established residences in what would become Philadelphia , at a place called Wiccaco by the local Lenape tribe , meaning " pleasant place " . These Swedish settlers were Lutheran . The Gloria Dei ( Old Swedes ? ) Church was completed in 1700 . Colonization extended to present @-@ day Trenton .

German settlers began arriving in North America in the mid @-@ seventeenth century . They were particularly attracted by William Penn 's promise of religious freedom in the colony of Pennsylvania , and came to the Philadelphia region in significant numbers . By 1683 , the German population was large enough to form communities such as Germantown ( now a neighborhood in Philadelphia ) . Many of these immigrants brought with them their Lutheran faith and formed congregations in their new homeland .

= = Ministerium Founding = =

By the mid @-@ eighteenth century , there was a growing need for well @-@ trained Lutheran clergy in the colonies . With the goal of creating closer union between the preachers , elders , and deacons of the area congregations , a conference was proposed .

The Pietist foundation at the University of Halle in Germany sent 24 clergymen to minister in the colonies in 1742 . Among those sent was Henry Melchior Muhlenberg . Tension between pious and orthodox religious interpretations was present in Europe and North American Lutherans at this time . The conference intentionally excluded congregations critical of pious interpretation . A conference was assembled , but disrupted by the orthodox Swedish preacher Rev. Nyburg , of New Sweden colony . Tension around this conference extended beyond Pennsylvania . Open remarks from William C. Berkenmeyer against John C. Hartwick of New York were published in a booklet . Carl M. Wrangel was criticised by his Swedish colleagues in Delaware for having piestic leanings .

Five years later , a conference was again assembled . At Muhlenberg 's request , Lutheran pastors met together in Philadelphia on August 26 , 1748 , for the first Church Conference . Six pastors and lay representatives from ten congregations attended the meeting , where they agreed to work together as the " ministerium of North America . " They successfully adopted a common liturgy to be used in North America . This meeting has become known as " the most important event in the history of North American Lutheranism . " Attendees came from Philadelphia , New Hanover , Providence , Germantown , Tulpehocken , Lancaster , Upper Milford , and Saccum congregations .

The fifteenth Church Conference , of 1762 , led by Muhlenberg , was held at St Michael 's Church , Philadelphia . Four Swedish and ten German preachers represented area congregations .

Muhlenberg 's influence went beyond those congregations he served ; he organized other Lutheran congregations in Pennsylvania so that they might work in cooperation . Such was his influence that Muhlenberg became regarded to be " the patriarch of the Lutheran church in North America .

The Ministerium remained a relatively informal association until a constitution was drawn up and agreed upon in 1781 . Along with a formal constitution , it adopted the name of the " German Evangelical Lutheran Ministerium of North America . " The churches of the ministerium followed a

polity influenced by the Dutch Reformed model and by Muhlenberg 's Pietism , and did not insist on strict adherence to the Lutheran Confessions . During these early years , there were not only German pastors , but also Swedish pastors in the Ministerium . Members of the Ministerium could be found in Pennsylvania , New York , New Jersey , Maryland , Virginia , and even the Carolinas .

In 1784 , Frederick A. Muhlenberg ( second son of the earlier patriarch ) organized the growing number of Lutheran congregations and clergy in the state of New York into the Ministerium of New York . Mindful of this and other Lutheran church bodies being founded in North America , in 1792 the group in Philadelphia renamed itself " The Ministerium of Pennsylvania and Adjacent States " .

= = General Synod = =

In 1818 , the Pennsylvania Ministerium began talks of organizing the various Lutheran church bodies in America , so that they could " stand in some or another in closer connection with one another . " At a meeting in Hagerstown , Maryland in October 1820 , just such an organization was founded in the General Synod ( formally titled the " Evangelical Lutheran General Synod of the United States of North America " ) . At the outset , this group consisted of the Pennsylvania Ministerium , along with the New York Ministerium and the Maryland @-@ Virginia Synod .

The General Synod served largely in an advisory function ? each church body within the Synod retained its own constitution and independence . The primary role of the Synod was to facilitate cooperation among the various church bodies . It was under the auspices of the General Synod , with the leadership of Samuel Simon Schmucker , that a Lutheran seminary and college were founded in Gettysburg , Pennsylvania .

Despite its role in establishing the General Synod , the Pennsylvania Ministerium withdrew from the inter @-@ Lutheran organization in 1823 . Within the Ministerium , there was a close relationship between Lutheran and Reformed congregations , and many felt that the General Synod might jeopardize that relationship . In addition , many in the Ministerium were wary of a centralized organization , and the control that it might exert over individual congregations .

Thus , in the years following , the Pennsylvania Ministerium remained an independent Lutheran church body . However , the Ministerium sought to maintain a relationship with the Synod , including continuing to send its ministerial students to the General Synod 's seminary in Gettysburg , which was headed by Samuel Schmucker .

In the decades that followed , the Ministerium became less concerned with its relationship with the Reformed church and saw a significant increase in Lutheran identity and the importance of the Lutheran Confessions . Thus , in 1853 , the Ministerium rejoined other Lutherans in the General Synod . However , this renewed relationship would prove to be short @-@ lived .

= = General Council = =

As with many Protestant churches , the General Synod was split on the issue of the American Civil War in the 1860s . Yet this was not the biggest challenge to Lutheran unity in the middle of the 19th century . As the importance of the Lutheran Confessions grew among American Lutherans , Samuel Schmucker ? who was once seen confessionally conservative ? found himself on the outside of the consensus of other Lutherans . In 1855 , Schmucker , along with two other theologians from the Gettysburg seminary , penned the Definite Synodical Platform . This document downplayed the importance of the Confessions ? indeed even suggested an edited " American Recension " of the Augsburg Confession ? and sought to establish a distinctly American Lutheranism that was more at home with other Protestants in the country .

The Definite Synodical Platform was not enough to cause the Pennsylvania Ministerium to leave the General Synod , but it was a foretaste of things to come . When the Frankean Synod , a Lutheran church body noted for its progressive politics and its utter disregard for the Lutheran Confessions , was admitted to the General Synod , the leadership of the Ministerium had seen enough . At the 1864 gathering of the General Synod , at which the Frankeans were admitted , the delegates from the Ministerium left in protest . Unfortunately , the delegates left before the General Synod passed a

resolution affirming and strengthening their commitment to the Augsburg Confession .

It is not clear whether the members of the Ministerium intended for this to be a permanent break , or a temporary protest . Regardless , it became permanent when the officials at the next Gathering of the General Synod refused to admit the delegates from the Ministerium . Thus , the Ministerium found themselves on their own .

In 1864 , unhappy with the direction of the General Synod and its seminary at Gettysburg , the Ministerium established a new seminary in Philadelphia , and asked Charles Porterfield Krauth to head the seminary ( now known as the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia ) . This was followed , in 1867 , with the Ministerium being joined by thirteen other church bodies in a more conservative and confessional organization known as the General Council .

= = United Lutheran Church in America = =

The Pennsylvania Ministerium remained a constituent church of the General Council from 1867 ? 1918 . In 1918 , following the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the Reformation , the three Lutheran church bodies of Eastern America ( The General Synod , the General Synod ? South , and the General Council ) reunited to form the United Lutheran Church in America . This event , while marking a watershed of unity among American Lutherans , also marked the end of the Pennsylvania Ministerium . The ULCA would later join with other American Lutherans , in 1962 in the Lutheran Church in America , and in 1988 in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America ( which continues to be an active church body and is a direct descendant of the Pennsylvania Ministerium ) .