

HISTORY MINUTE

presented by Edward Spannaus

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Reverend John Andrew Krug

John Andrew Krug, who succeeded Samuel Schwerdtfeger as our part-time pastor from Frederick, served the longest of any pastor in our first 200 years. He was our pastor during a turbulent period—that of the War of Independence and the creation of our federal Constitution. The American Revolution was a difficult time for any pastor and for the church in general.

John Andrew Krug was born in Saxony in 1732. He studied at Halle and for a period, he taught in the Orphan House there, as had Henry Muhlenberg. Halle was extraordinarily important for the Lutheran Church in America, but also for the American Revolution.

The Frankean Institutions at Halle were a major scientific and educational center in Europe. Its founder, August Hermann Francke, corresponded with Cotton Mather in Boston, especially on the question of what were called "charity schools" and the education of poor children—a radical notion at the time, and one vigorously opposed by those in England who believed that the poor were only suited for menial labor. Cotton Mather not only established charity schools in Massachusetts, but published a number of books based on his study of the Halle model. Benjamin Franklin—our nation's most important Founding Father—also established charity schools, and said that Mather's book, *Essays to Do Good* (which was based on his correspondence with Francke), was the greatest influence on him.

Back to Krug. He came to North America in 1764, sent by the fathers at Halle in response to Muhlenberg's request for more ministers, and Muhlenberg sent him to Reading, Pa. In 1770, while Schwerdtfeger was absent without leave in Europe (as you may remember from a couple of weeks ago), Krug had visited Frederick and conducted confirmations, held communion, and preached.

Impressed with him, ELC offered him a call, which created an embarrassing situation when Schwerdtfeger returned. And the congregation in Reading didn't want to let him go. But ultimately, the Synod (the Pennsylvania Ministerium) decided in favor of Krug going to Frederick, where he served them, and us, for a quarter century.

Now, although our congregation was founded in 1765, our own records don't begin until 1784.

What happened before that is to be found in the records of Evangelical in Frederick—many of which have not been translated and transcribed. We—that is, particularly Mike Zapf—are working with ELC to help translate some of their—and our—early records. It is known that Pastor Krug kept meticulous records. It is also recorded that in 1772, he confirmed a catechism class here, at what was then called "the Short Hill." Likewise in 1773 and 1775. (It will be most interesting to see the names.) During those years, he also did confirmations in Strasburg and Woodstock in the Shenandoah Valley.

After 1775, then Pastor Krug stopped travelling to New Jerusalem and his other "preaching points" until the end of the war, which is generally attributed to his health. In 1783, he returned here and confirmed forty-seven catechumens. The next year, 1784, is when a separate parish register is begun (which Mike and I recently brought back here, from the archives at Gettysburg.)

Over time, some people in the congregation at Frederick began to murmur and complain against Krug. (We don't know about here.) One of their actual complaints was Krug's piety and moral discipline; as church historian A.R. Wentz puts it, they disliked the Halle spirit, and wanted moral relaxation. However, they put their formal complaints in terms of Krug's health, and later with his age.

Interestingly, it is during this time, in 1786, that New Jerusalem's first congregation constitution is written—probably by Krug—and adopted. As we will see in March, when we talk about that constitution, it reflects Krug's piety and moral strictness.

In the late 1780s, the malcontents at Frederick took their complaints to the Pennsylvania Synod. But when the matter was put to a vote in the congregation there, 90 votes were cast to retain him, and only 22 against him. (Wentz attributes much of this to the revolt against authority, and the moral relaxation and the general rebellious spirit of the times; similar things were happening in other congregations and other denominations.)

On March 30th, 1796, in his sixth-fifth year, Pastor Krug died, and was buried—European style—beneath the aisle of the church in Frederick. The Pennsylvania Synod appointed three ministers to go to Frederick and conduct a memorial service about eight weeks later; Dr. Henry Earnest Muhlenberg of Lancaster delivered the memorial address.

In his history of Evangelical Lutheran Church in Frederick, historian Wentz devotes a twenty-page chapter to Krug, entitled "The Treasure in an Earthen Vessel." He concludes: "Like the Apostle Paul, John Andrew Krug was in bodily presence weak but in labors abundant. He finished the course and to the end he kept the faith."

Sources

M.W. Kretsinger, *A People of God and their Country* (1975), pp. 37-42.

A.R. Wentz, *A History of Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1738-1988* (Frederick, Md. 1988), pp. 132-154.