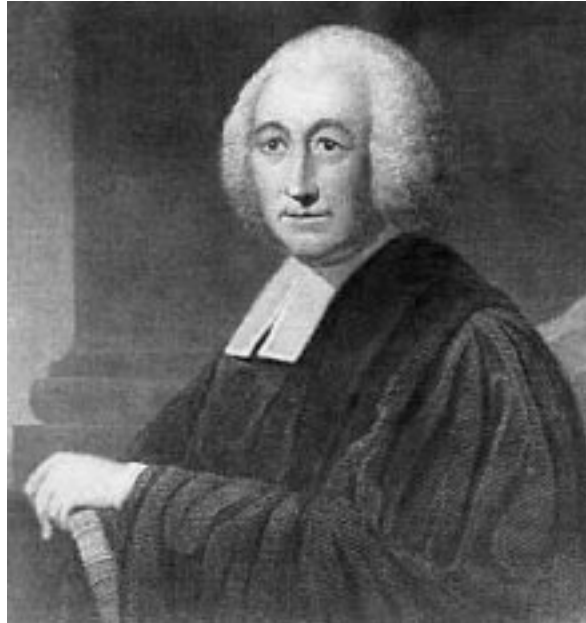


Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, Patriarch of American Lutherans (1711-1787)

Observed 7 October



Henry Muhlenberg was born, studied, ordained, and served briefly in Germany. At the age of 30 he was sent to serve the German-speaking Lutherans of the Pennsylvania colony. The lay-founded and -led congregations were concerned that members were being won away by other churches and asked that ordained leadership be sent to them. Soon after arriving in the colony, Muhlenberg married Anna Maria Weiser, the daughter of the remarkable Conrad Weiser (remembered on the calendar on July 13). Muhlenberg had direct personal charge of three congregations, but over his 45 years also traveled to help congregations from Georgia to New York, ministering in Dutch and English, as well as German. Like his father-in-law, he was a gifted arbitrator, and was often asked to settle disputes among religious groups. Muhlenberg is justly called the patriarch of American Lutherans, not only because he was the first ordained leader. He also created a uniform liturgy and the beginnings of a hymnal, and gathered the first official synod of Lutherans in North America, creating for them the basis for a constitution. To further the work and growth of his church, he worked to recruit ordained leaders from Europe and to raise up candidates for ordination among the colonists. The Muhlenberg family was prominent in colonial and revolutionary affairs providing leadership in many fields. Among Henry and Anna Maria's descendants are generals, college presidents, and numerous members of Congress (from the first Continental Congress well into the 20th century), as well as the renowned Episcopal priest and leader, William Augustus Muhlenberg (remembered on the calendar on April 8th). Henry Muhlenberg's legacy includes that outstanding family, a thriving

American Lutheran Church, a college named in his honor, and an example of untiring service to the good of others.

Lessons Isaiah 60:1-5; Psalm 111; Galatians 5:22-6:10; Matthew 18:15-20

Collect Loving God, Shepherd of your people, we thank you for the ministry of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, who left his native land to care for the German and Scandinavian pioneers in North America; and we pray that, following the teaching and example of his life, we may grow into the full stature of Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.