

Andreas Kappler, 1802-1877: An Independent Lutheran Pastor

by John Noack,

presented at the celebration of the LCA's 175th Anniversary at the Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Lutheran Archives in Victoria (FoLAV), on Tuesday 19 November 2013 at 8pm at the Hall, Trinity German Lutheran Church, 22 Parliament Place, East Melbourne.

Introduction:

Pastor Andreas Kappler was the third ordained Lutheran Pastor to arrive in South Australia in the 1830s and 1840s. He did not arrive like Pastors Kavel and Fritzsche, with a pre-arranged congregation of "Old-Lutherans" but he came with no congregation and he soon assumed the role of an Independent Lutheran Pastor.

Kappler has been acknowledged as a Wendish Lutheran Pastor or at least as a Pastor for the emigrating Wends, who had arrived from both Upper or Saxon Lusatia and from Lower or Prussian Lusatia from 1848 and onwards.

Dr Henry Proeve has transcribed and translated Pastor Kappler's meticulous records of Births and Marriages and these reveal entries made over wide areas of South Australia and Victoria and which include many Wendish settlers from Lusatia. Dr Proeve, who has used these records to track the movements and the Pastoral work of Pastor Kappler, has prepared a valuable and interesting biography of Pastor Kappler titled "*ANDREAS KAPPLER: An Independent Lutheran Pastor (including his ministry at Hope Valley, c. 1849-1860)*", which is published in the *Journal of Friends of Lutheran Archives* No 17 October 2007 pp. 5-21. These highlights from this Biography and from other records will help to remind us all of the caring contribution which was made by this pioneering but independent Pastor Andreas Kappler from Lusatia.

Kappler's Life in Upper Lusatia, Saxony, 1802-1848

Andreas Kappler was born on 15 November 1802 and he was a native of Kleinhänchen near Bautzen in Upper Lusatia in Saxony. He attended the Latin School at "Budissa", the Wendish form of Bautzen and he studied Divinity at the University of Leipzig.

He passed the examination of the Lutheran Consistorium at Dresden and was ordained on 16 March 1834.

Kappler was appointed the Curate at Neschwitz, located 12 km north-west of Bautzen and in 1835, he was appointed as Pastor at Weissenberg, located 15 km east of Bautzen. . He married Henriette Wilhelmine, nee Berger, of Leipzig, who was born on 23 March 1814

and they had six children. He served this mainly Wendish congregation from 11 Jan 1835 to 12 June 1848. [Proeve, p. 6]

The scholarly aspect of Kappler was widely noted and this is illustrated in the names of his children, several of whom were named Eusebia Sophia and Eurenus Theophistus. His son who was born in Australia was named Johannes Eirenikos Acoluthos Immanuel. [Proeve p. 12]

The Emigration, Sea Journey and Arrival in 1848

In relation to his migration to Australia, Kappler indicated later in 1851, in his application for a “Grant-in-Aid” from the Government, that he had heard from his friends that the Germanic settlers (which included Slavic Wends) in South Australia were seeking Pastors for their new congregations. The young Pastors who were approached in Germany were not interested in going to Australia, so Pastor Kappler decided to go and he resigned his position at Weissenberg on 12 June 1848.

However, it appears that he was the victim of some deception. Edward Delius had informed him that he would be the Pastor attached to a group of emigrating Silesians but in the meantime, some of these Silesians had been detained for being involved in political disturbances as part of the 1848 revolutionary movements in Prussia. Consequently, Mr Delius had filled the ship with other passengers. Despite this deception, Pastor Kappler continued his emigration with his family and on 25 June 1848, he boarded the ship “Victoria”. This Sea-journey created its share of problems for the Kapplers. Pastor Kappler was sick “twice unto death” and one of his children, possibly his eldest son, died. [Proeve p. 6]

However, a fellow passenger named G. Julius Rechner greatly appreciated the company and the impressive scholarship of Pastor Kappler during this sea-journey and no doubt there were deep discussions about the contents of sermons preached, along with other theological issues. Proeve notes that Rechner held Pastor Kappler in the highest regard. [Proeve, p. 12]

Mr Delius further recorded that “Messrs J. C. Godeffroy & Son had advanced Kappler the cost of the passage and that Kappler “is most beloved and mild. He has excellent testimonials as to his qualifications both as a theologian and scholar”.

The ship “Victoria” arrived at Port Adelaide on 6 Nov 1848. Kappler was soon invited by the Lutherans in Adelaide to form a congregation, so during the next two months, he preached every Sunday in several places. He commenced services at the Scotch Church in Grenfell Street at Christmas 1848 through the kindness of its minister Rev Robert Haining, and he conducted Sunday services there until March 1852.

The Synods of Pastors Kavel and Fritzsche

Pastor Kavel had arrived in South Australia on the ship “Prince George” in November 1838 with members of his former congregation at Klemzig in Brandenburg Prussia. From 1838 to 1841, he was the only Lutheran Pastor in South Australia. Lacking a traditional ecclesiastical hierarchy in this colony, Kavel established his own Apostolic Constitution, which he claimed was biblical and which, in the absence of a traditional Hierarchy, elevated the role of the elders to a high position, even above the Pastor. In the tradition of literalistic orthodoxy, he had stressed a literalistic understanding of the biblical millennium in Revelations 20 and of the conversion of the Jews. In the tradition of Pietism, he had stressed a very strict code of biblical behavior, which tended to be imposed legalistically and with little evidence of Christian love. [Proeve p.7]

In contrast, when Pastor Fritzsche arrived on the ship “Sjkold” in 1841 with his congregational members, Pastor Fritzsche viewed the Millenium in less literalistic terms and more in line with the flexibility displayed in the Lutheran Confessions. He along with the Dresden Missionaries Schürmann, Teichelmann and later Meyer, preferred the tradition of the Consistory or academic assessment of Theology, in contrast to Kavel’s Rule of the Elders.

By the time of the Bethany Synod in 1846, Kavel saw little chance of reconciliation between himself and both Fritzsche and the Dresden Missionaries, so he continued his own Synod at nearby Langmeil and was party to the division in Australian Lutheranism which lasted for 120 years until 1966.

The message from some of the pioneering settlers, which was passed on to Pastor Kappler as he left his ship at Port Adelaide in 1848, was naturally that the two Pastors in the colony were attacking each other from their pulpits, with each claiming that only he possessed the truth and the sure and certain faith that alone saves.

Kappler’s Lutheran Position and his Independent Pastoral Career, 1848-1877

In such a situation where disruption and hostility held sway amongst the Lutherans, Kappler refused to accept the offers of the Pastoral positions which were offered to him by both Kavel and Fritzsche. He declared in a letter to Pastor Fritzsche that “from the bottom of my heart, I desire peace”. He pointed out that he wished to continue in the worship patterns of the “Saxon Evangelical Lutheran Church”. No doubt, this stance provided ammunition for a charge against Pastor Kappler of being a “Unionist”. [Proeve p. 9]

Kappler then went on to point to his criticism of “local synodical resolutions” which, in his view, were human regulations and follies concocted in South Australia, which were in part very restrictive and lacking “totally the spirit of Christian love and sympathy”.

In relation to Kavel's request for an "academic discussion on dogma" in the Company of the Elders at Langmeil, in order to enable Kappler to preach there, Kappler's response was logical. Since Kavel rejected the academic and ecclesiastical Colleges or Consistories as authoritative, Kappler in turn would have nothing to do with Kavel's "College of laymen". [Proeve, p. 10.]

The Wends were also not of one mind about Kappler. Michael Deutscher at Rosenthal/Rosedale declared that Kappler did not have any confidence among the Evangelical Lutherans and the Wends at both Rosenthal and at Ebenezer did not contemplate a call to Kappler. However, in contrast to these Saxon Wends, Proeve notes that at least 47 Wendish families in the Adelaide area and particularly at Hope Valley, were happy to accept Kappler's ministrations from 1848 to 1860, and even beyond. These Wendish families were mostly from Lower or Prussian Lusatia, including the Spreewald, and they had turned their backs on these disputes and were happy to remain aloof from the "warring Lutheran factions". (Proeve p. 11]

Kappler's Pastoral Work at Widespread Locations

When Kappler landed in November 1848, he conducted worship services in Adelaide Central, using the Scotch Church in Grenfell Street until 1851.

In suburban Adelaide, he visited the settlement of Germanic and Wendish settlers at Hope Valley, which had first received the attention of Pastor Kappler for a Baptism on 18 March 1849. This area was given its name "Hope Valley" by William Holden, whose house had burned down in a bush-fire but who still saw that there was hope in this valley.

A very early settler was Wilhelm Wilksch, one of Kavel's People, who moved here after the Glen Osmond settlement was closed in the early 1840s. Johann Gramp and Eduard Kalleske were also early settlers. Hermann Koch, who arrived on the ship "Pauline" in 1846 and Heinrich Klöpffer, who arrived in 1847 on the ship "Hermann von Beckerath", moved into this area.

More ships arrived, which brought settlers from rural areas in Europe including the Spreewald in Lower Lusatia and these settlers sought areas where land was available for agriculture. Also in 1849, William Holden formed a local Committee to establish a school. This land was vested in trust in a committee consisting of William Holden, Heinrich Klöpffer, Joseph Farrow and Heinrich Wöhlers. This school was used on Sundays as a house of worship. [Proeve pp.16-19]

Germanic surnames in this district of Hope Valley and Dry Creek, included Borgas, Büssenschütt, Erfurth, Schäche, Waldhüter, Wöhlers and Würfel and some some Wendish surnames included Domaschenz, Dutscke/Duschka, Huppatz, Kruger, Lehmann/Wicaz,

and Proposch.

Kappler at Happy Valley, Black Forest, Tabor in Tanunda and Burra

Kappler's records also mention his work in other congregations. At Happy Valley, a congregation came into existence at Easter in 1850. At Black Forest, Kappler visited and performed baptisms in homes between October 1850 and the end of 1851. [Prove p. 13]

In the Barossa Valley at Tanunda from 1849-1850, Kappler, who had earlier sought to preach at the Langmeil church connected with Pastor Kavel, was requested to take part in an academic discussion on dogma in the company of the elders or the "College of laymen", as Kappler called it. Kappler refused. [Proeve p., 10]

Kappler's later visit to the Barossa Valley included a baptism at Rowland Flat on 19 June 1849 and worship services were advertised for August 1849 at Tanunda. By July 1850, a church was ready. However, on 7 October, 1850, the congregation chose as their new Pastor, Dr Carl W. Muecke. Kappler's founding role here at this Tabor Lutheran congregation had been mostly forgotten. However, in the 1970s, Dr Proeve helped to uncover and to restore the foundational role of Pastor Kappler. [Proeve pp.9,13]

After this Tanunda experience, Kappler visited Burra Burra and from 1850 to 1852, he helped in the formation and functioning of a congregation there. The foundation stone for a German Lutheran Church was laid on 20 March 1851

Home Visits and a Melbourne Visit in 1852

Kappler found that the constant search for more land or richer soil took the Germanic and Wendish settlers to more remote areas of the State. This involved much travel on horseback and many visits to homes which were located in Adelaide's suburban and outlying village areas and also in South Australia's vast country areas. Most of his 708 Baptisms, which he performed from 1848 to 1860, took place in the homes of the settlers. [Proeve p. 14]

A brief interlude in Melbourne in 1852 resulted in 7 baptisms between April and May, four months of digging for gold and 3 baptisms in October and November. He then returned to Adelaide.

At Home in Hope Valley, 1853-1860.

Following his return from Melbourne in 1853, Kappler had to face the breakdown of his marriage, with blame being attributed variously to his wife Henrietta's adultery and to Kappler's "morally not model private life". This seems to reveal assumptions rather than facts. Fortunately for him, Kappler was able to use the Teacher's residence at the school as his manse and home at Hope Valley. Since his worship services in Central Adelaide had

ceased in about May 1854, he now focused his attention on the 146 Lutherans in this district. The Hope Valley school/church increasingly became the centre of his ritual activities for persons here and in other areas of Adelaide. [Proeve p. 15]

When Kappler left Adelaide and headed for Mount Gambier, Pastor J C Maschmedt assumed pastoral duties at Hope Valley but Kappler also continued to travel to Adelaide, in order to visit his former Hope Valley flock.

Although the St John's congregation closed in 1906, the Lutheran presence later continued with the purchase by the Lutheran Homes Incorporated on Section 829. The road-way name "Kappler Court" in this complex now stands as a reminder of the caring work of Pastor Kappler in this area. [Proeve p. 20]

St Martin's Congregation at Mount Gambier, 1860-1877:

Pastor Kappler's final 17 years were spent at Mount Gambier. He visited the town in November 1860 and baptized 9 children, including the Sandmeyer's 4th child of the Sandmeyer's, who were his members at Hope Valley. Kappler conducted worship services in the National school.

Dr Edward Wehl, whose child had been baptized, persuaded Kappler to stay in Mount Gambier, although he still returned to Adelaide for several weeks early each year to visit his Adelaide friends.

By February 1862, the foundation stone for a new church was laid and the church was dedicated for use on 5 October 1862 as St Martin's. In the early 1860s, he had to share Mount Gambier with an opposition Lutheran Pastor J.F. Meischel. However, Pastor Kappler's congregation ultimately absorbed Pastor Meischel's congregation.

In order to supplement his income, Kappler bought 80 acres of land, which he worked on during the week. During Christmas in 1876, Pastor Kappler developed dropsy, which is the accumulation of watery fluid in the tissues of the body. He died on 3 June 1877 and his funeral was conducted by Pastor G. J. Rechner. The local newspaper at Mount Gambier called "The Border Watch" offered an interesting outsider's view that Kappler was "a man who belonged to the pure Lutheran church". [Proeve p.17]

No doubt Pastor G J Rechner, while conducting this funeral, would have cast his mind back to the lengthy discussions, which he had engaged in on board the ship "Victoria" in 1848, with this scholarly yet caring and loving Theologian and Pastor, Andreas Kappler of Weissenberg, Upper Lusatia, Saxony. The St Martin's Church at Mount Gambier is still in use and is a lasting contribution by the Independent Pastor Kappler to the present Lutheran

Church of Australia. [Proeve p.16]

Wendish descendants in turn can ensure that this Independent “Pastor of the Wends”, who did not join either of the existing Lutheran Synods in Australia, made a valuable contribution both to the spiritual lives of many pioneering settlers in the 1800s and to our knowledge today about these settlers, which is available in his excellent written records. These valuable records alone, which have been transliterated and translated by Dr Henry Proeve, and which will continue to be of great value to posterity, will ensure that Pastor Andreas Kappler will never be forgotten.

This article, which has been prepared for the 175th Anniversary of the Lutheran Church of Australia, 1838-2013, is therefore a tribute to both Pastor Andreas Kappler and to Dr Henry Proeve.

John Noack, 14 November 2013.
President, Wendish Heritage Society Australia
Secretary, Friends of Lutheran Archives in Victoria
Email: johnnoack@yahoo.com.au