

November 24

Commemoration: William Passavant, 1894, pastor in North America

William A. Passavant (October 9, 1821 - January 3, 1894) was a Lutheran minister noted for bringing the Lutheran Deaconess movement to the United States. He is commemorated in the Calendar of Saints of the Lutheran Church on November 24 with Justus Falckner and Jehu Jones.

He was born in Zelienople, Pennsylvania, the youngest son of Phillipe Louis Passavant and Fredericka Wilhelmina Basse. His mother, known as Zelig Passavant, was the daughter of Baron Dettmar Basse. Baron Basse, a former diplomat, arrived during 1802 from Frankfurt, Germany to become the founder of the city of Zelienople, Pennsylvania.

Passavant attended Jefferson College and later Gettysburg Seminary in preparation for a career in the ministry. William Passavant began his ministry in Baltimore, Maryland in 1842. He became a publisher of the first *Lutheran Almanac* and in 1845 *The Missionary*, which in 1861 was merged into *The Lutheran of Philadelphia*, where he remained for many years as co-editor. Dr. Passavant was pastor of Christ Lutheran Church of Baden, Pennsylvania from 1858 until 1879, a period of 21 years.

The life of William Passavant was devoted principally to the founding and administration of benevolent institutions. William Passavant is credited with bringing the first deaconesses to the United States. During a trip to Germany he came in contact with Pastor Theodore Fliedner who, as founder of the modern diaconate, had opened a hospital and training school for deaconesses in Kaiserswerth. At Passavant's request, in 1849, Fliedner brought four German deaconesses to Pittsburgh to work in the Pittsburgh Infirmary (now Passavant Hospital).

Thiel College, an independent institution related to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America started in 1866 followed a meeting between the Rev. Dr. William A. Passavant and A. Louis Thiel. At the Pittsburgh Synod convention in Greensburg, Pennsylvania in 1869, it was decided that Thiel Hall would become a college and serve western Pennsylvania. Thiel College began its corporate existence on September 1, 1870

Passavant would go on to found many other missions, hospitals, orphanages, colleges, and seminaries throughout the country. Many of the institutions he founded would later join together to help found the Lutheran Services in America, the largest church social program in the United States.