

Southern Bulletin

A PUBLICATION FOR FRIENDS OF LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SOUTHERN SEMINARY OF LENOIR-RHYNE UNIVERSITY

FALL 2018

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Southern Bulletin is a publication of Lenoir-Rhyne University and produced for friends of Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary.



Lenoir-Rhyne Welcomes Professor of Methodist Studies

LTSS only approved seminary in South Carolina for training UMC clergy



Melanie Dobson, Th.D., has joined Lenoir-Rhyne's Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary as assistant professor of Methodist studies.

A graduate of Duke University Divinity School, Dobson has the appropriate knowledge in Methodism needed to train United Methodist Church clergy. LTSS is the only approved seminary in South Carolina for training UMC clergy, and one of fewer than 60 approved seminaries in the United States.

"Theologically, as a fellow mainline denominational seminary, LTSS provides an education that is in concert with the formation desired by the United Methodist Church for its future clergy," Dobson said. "To be ordained as a United Methodist Church elder or deacon in full connection requires theological education at an approved seminary."

Methodist students comprise the second-largest number of students at LTSS, behind only students from the Lutheran denomination. In an effort to provide greater opportunities for the Methodist student population, Dobson plans to develop strong relationships with the South Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church.

"This includes everything from having regular visits from district superintendents and the bishop, to connecting with the South Carolina Board of Ordained Ministry, to my own visits to United Methodist college ministries at schools in South Carolina," Dobson said. "I've also been working with the Methodist Student Society, which is the UMC student organization at LTSS, in an effort to build a strong sense of community."

Dobson's efforts to inform and enlighten students at LTSS has a direct effect on seminarians such as William Altman, a Methodist student currently training to become an ordained elder in the UMC. The Master of Divinity degree he is pursuing at LTSS will provide the theological education needed to help him achieve this dream. "The Master of Divinity degree at LTSS will allow me to spread the hope of Jesus in congregations," Altman said. "My goal is to help our neighbors sow seeds of hope through putting our faith into practice in the United Methodist Church."

"My heart comes alive when I'm teaching."

MELANIE DOBSON, TH.D.

With 16 years of experience in ordained leadership, Dobson's background enhances her ability to train students such as Altman for serving congregations. Most recently, she served in Charlotte for four years as minister of faith formation at Myers Park UMC, a congregation with more than 5,300 members and a regular worship attendance of 1,400.

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Dobson stands in front of the Martin Luther statue with Methodist students Paul Perry, William Shelton, and Cameron Levi (left to right).

Decades of Dedication

LTSS welcomes Fitzsimmons as new campus pastor



After nearly four decades of faithful service in various ministerial roles, the Rev. Dr. Mark Fitzsimmons recently stepped down as senior pastor at the Lutheran Church of the Nativity in Arden, North Carolina, and transitioned into the role of campus pastor at Lenoir-Rhyne's Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary. In this capacity, Fitzsimmons provides pastoral conversation and counseling, as well as vocational discernment for graduate students.

Fitzsimmons credits the Lord for preparing him in various ways for this new role. "During my 32 years of parish ministry, I was able to serve in some capacity in synodical ministries," he said. "In looking back on those opportunities, a pattern emerged, which involved equipping leaders – both future and present – for ministry."

In Fitzsimmons' first decade, he gained experience in youth ministry that continued into his service as the chair of the Fall Convocation for Professional Leaders in the second decade, the Candidacy Committee during the third decade, and most recently as adjunct professor at LTSS.

"Senior students in the polity and leadership class have learned that there are four types of parishes, based on size dynamics: family, pastoral, program, and corporate," he said. "I have had the pleasure of serving in all four scenarios, which provides a good vantage point of the variety of ministry sites our graduates will be serving in the years to come. Moreover, in three of those parishes I was blessed to support members who entered into candidacy, seminary, and rostered ministry. In my last parish, I enjoyed supervising five interns from Southern."

Since 1982, Fitzsimmons' appointed positions have included youth ministry to pastor or associate pastor in churches with small to large congregations. He has served both the Carolinas and Virginia and gained experience in teaching, preaching, and stewardship development. Fitzsimmons said his new role at LTSS serves a purpose beyond just the ministry.

"Everyone in every workplace is facing an unprecedented rate of change and an ever-increasing level of anxiety," he said. "This includes parish ministry as well, the very place where people seek God's renewing grace to help them serve faithfully in their callings. As campus pastor, my role is to shepherd a community along healthy pathways, so that future parish leaders might find models for daily ministry during their time of professional

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Since assuming the presidency of Lenoir-Rhyne in February 2017, I have met with countless LTSS alumni, faculty, staff, students, and friends, all of whom share a love for and pride in the seminary. Throughout those conversations, certain themes have arisen about how we can help build on the solid foundation of LTSS and elevate it even further as an exemplary seminary within the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America and among its ecumenical partners.

One of those themes is the importance of having a full-time leader focused on the seminary and residing in Columbia. We believe that this kind of leadership could be transformational for LTSS and have begun a search for a rector and dean of the seminary. Through the use of the title rector, we elevate the seminary's leadership position and give unique recognition to the person who will be appointed as the ecclesiastical and administrative head of the seminary.

It is our expectation to secure a leader who will have the credentials and experience necessary to assume more responsibility for both the academic and spiritual direction of LTSS. A national search is underway and we aim to have this new person in place no later than June 2019.

I would like to sincerely thank Dr. David Ratke who has served as our dean of the College of Theology and, through this position, has been responsible for LTSS for the past two years. David has earned the respect

and trust of the LTSS faculty and staff, and his leadership has provided stability and improved many aspects of operations at LTSS. I am grateful for this leadership and for his willingness to continue in his current role with LTSS until the new person begins. At that time, David will transition back to his role in our religion program at Lenoir-Rhyne on our main campus in Hickory.

In our October meeting of the LTSS Advisory Council, there was enthusiastic support for this development from the council members—a mix of LTSS alumni, friends, and ELCA representatives—and a sense of excitement about how this change will strengthen LTSS. I, too, share that excitement and look forward to moving LTSS to an even higher level of excellence.

Sincerely,

Fred Whitt
Dr. Fred Whitt, President



Dr. Fred Whitt
President of Lenoir-Rhyne University

Professor of Methodist Studies, Cont'd



Dobson and her son Elijah Reid Hughes attend a football game together at Clemson University.

"Dr. Dobson brings not only her expertise in the areas of Methodist history and theology, but also many other gifts that enrich our relationships with Methodist partners such as extensive experience in congregational ministry," said the Rev. Dr. David Ratke, dean of the College of Theology. "The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and LTSS are partners with the United Methodist Church in advancing the gospel of Christ."



Dobson teaches a Christian ethics course.

Dobson also has a plethora of experience in education and has held positions at Duke University Divinity School as an adjunct professor, instructor, and head teaching assistant, among others. She says her inspiration for teaching comes from the one who gives us breath, the Holy Spirit. "My heart comes alive when I'm teaching," she said. "Irenaeus, an early church father, wrote that 'the glory of God is a human being fully alive.' What a gift to have work in which I come alive."

About Dr. Dobson

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Dobson received a Doctor of Theology, Master of Theology, and Master of Divinity from Duke University Divinity School in Durham, North Carolina, where she maintained a 4.0 GPA. Her dissertation, "The Practice of Habits: A Theological Account of Tending to Health," focused on the cultivation of practices of health as a way of virtue that leads to deeper life with God and neighbor. She has also written several articles and a book titled "Health as a Virtue: Thomas Aquinas and the Practice of Habit in Christian Community."

AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS:

The John Wesley Fellowship - the Association for Theological Education

The Fellowship Seminarian Award of the United Methodists in Music and Worship Arts

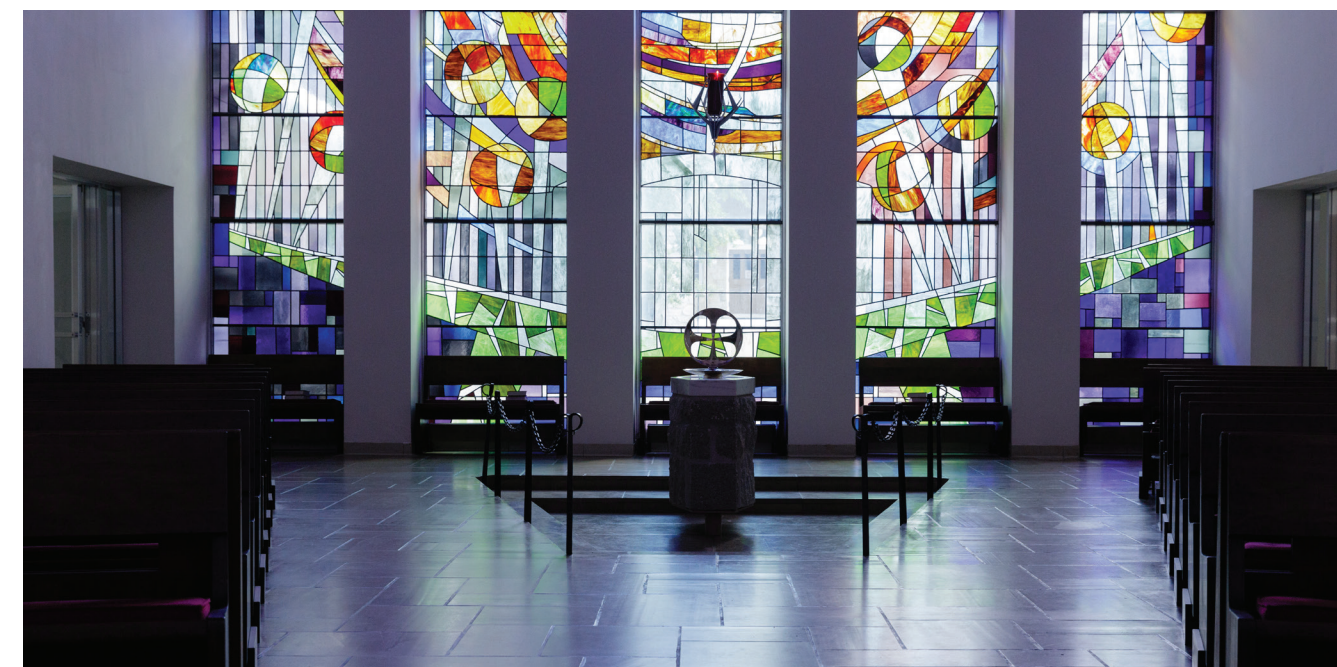
Andrews Scholar - Duke Divinity School, full tuition financial award
Phi Beta Kappa - Furman University, national scholastic honor society

HOBBIES:

"I practice yoga daily and am also a registered yoga teacher. I teach yoga at churches, in retreat settings, and for cancer survivors. I also enjoy hiking, cycling, cooking, and being outdoors."

FAMILY:

"I am a single mom to one son, Elijah, age 9. I'm very close to my parents, brother, and extended family, who live in South Carolina. I'm thrilled to be in the same state with them now."



Decades of Dedication, Cont'd

preparation. However, I serve more than just the seminary community. On the Columbia campus of Lenoir-Rhyne University, we are also raising up agents of healing through our graduate programs of occupational therapy, mental health counseling, and human services. If you think about it, all of our Columbia campus graduate schools are involved in the Trinitarian work of creation, redemption, and sanctification."

"As campus pastor, my role is to shepherd a community along healthy pathways, so that future parish leaders might find models for daily ministry during their time of professional preparation."

THE REV. DR. MARK FITZSIMMONS

Over the years, Fitzsimmons has been a popular speaker at various leadership trainings, including the pre-assembly workshop for the North Carolina Synod and deacon training at the Lutheran

Church of Haiti. He has also served in various synodical leadership roles, including chair of the North Carolina Synod Candidacy Committee and dean of the Smoky Mountain Conference.

A 2008 graduate of Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, Fitzsimmons earned his doctorate in pastoral leadership. He has a master's degree in counseling, marriage, and family from Appalachian State University and a Master of Divinity degree from LTSS. His bachelor's degree is in religion and economics from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In 2012, Fitzsimmons was presented The John Benjamin Bedenbaugh Award for Distinguished Pastoral Leadership by the LTSS Alumni Association. He is also the 2003 recipient of the Clergy Renewal Grant from the Lily Endowment, Inc., and the 1997 recipient of the Bishop's Award for Visionary Ways to Serve Christ from the North Carolina Synod ELCA.

Fitzsimmons and his wife, Dana, have two sons, Kyle and Evan. In his leisure time, Fitzsimmons enjoys reading, hiking, and traveling, as well as entertaining guests and playing bridge.

Remembering The Rev. Dr. Ralph J. Wallace



The Rev. Dr. Ralph J. Wallace, 82, died Saturday, July 7, while preparing to join his family for a reunion trip.

The North Carolina native was born Oct. 12, 1935, and was a graduate of Lenoir-Rhyne College and the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary. He served nine Lutheran congregations in the North Carolina, South Carolina, and Southeastern Synods for more than 40 years.

Married to the late Sarah Frances Huddle for 56 years, he is survived by a daughter, Dr. Leslie Skinner (Ed); a son, Chris Wallace; grandchildren, the Rev. Jessica Skinner Darty (the Rev. Jason), Justin Skinner, Bryce Wallace, and Abigail Wallace; and a great-grandson, Isaac Wallace Darty. Surviving siblings are the Rev. Gerald Wallace (Nancy); brother-in-law, the Rev. David Huddle (Pat); and sister-in-law, Kristen Huddle, as well as nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by his parents, Bryce and Myrtle Wallace, as well as brothers-in-law and a sister-in-law.

In Memoriam

- The Rev. David Frye Conrad '45 of Oneonta, AL • 3/21/2018
- The Rev. Raymond Petrea, LR '52 & LTSS '55 of Greensboro, NC • 10/20/2018
- The Rev. Floyd W. Bost '55 of Salisbury, NC • 9/5/2018
- The Rev. John Yates Yoder '55 of Asheville, NC • 7/27/2018
- The Rev. H. William Johnson '56 of Hopkins, SC • 5/22/2018
- Mr. Roy L. Trexler '56 of Monroe, NC • 6/14/2018
- The Rev. Hugh Wyman Dowd '60 of Prosperity, SC • 1/18/2018
- The Rev. Dr. William M. Johnson '60 of Weeki Wachee, FL • 3/2/2018
- The Rev. Dr. Ralph Justin Wallace '61 of Columbia, SC • 7/7/2018
- The Rev. John L. Heyer '62 of Seneca, SC • 4/21/2018
- The Rev. R. Graham Nahouse '64 of China Grove, NC • 8/31/2018
- The Rev. Clarence George Walck '65 of New London, NC • 4/13/2018
- The Rev. Dr. Guy H. Shealy '71 of Rock Hill, SC • 6/2/2018
- The Rev. Thord K. Einarsen '73 of Williamsburg, VA • 4/22/2018
- The Rev. Karl F. Suhr '84 of Atlanta, GA • 1/12/2018
- The Rev. Cameron Powell Keyser '93 of Stephens City, VA • 8/10/2018
- The Rev. Gerald Richard Leaphart '11 of Burnet, TX • 7/8/2018

Bishop Lowell G. Almen receives Bachman Award



Lenoir-Rhyne President Dr. Fred Whitt presents Bishop Lowell G. Almen with the John Bachman Award.

LTSS presented its newly appointed chair of the LTSS Advisory Council, Bishop Lowell G. Almen, with the John Bachman Award for his exemplary leadership to the church. Almen is the founding secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, an office which he served from 1987 to 2007.

The award is named for the Rev. Dr. John Bachman in honor of his many life accomplishments. Bachman served as pastor at St. John's Lutheran Church in Charleston, South Carolina, for 56 years. He is recognized as a pioneer in southern Lutheranism, and was a key leader in establishing LTSS.

Newly Revived Alumni Board Formed

The newly revived LTSS Alumni Association has appointed an alumni board of 12 dedicated alumni, faculty, and staff members.

Goals for the board include working to find meaningful ways of reaching alumni, growing support of the seminary, and developing plans for the future. Currently the board is working to coordinate events for Alumni Day 2019.

"Lenoir-Rhyne's Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary Alumni Association board was recently reconstituted with the goal of strengthening connections with Seminary alumni, faculty, staff, congregations and affiliates," said the Rev. John D. Stirewalt, president of the LTSS alumni board. "The Board members and I are inspired by the passage that has so stirred our fellow alumni."

THE ALUMNI BOARD CONSISTS OF THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS:

President: The Reverend John Stirewalt

Vice President: The Reverend Josh Tucker

Secretary: The Reverend Emily Edenfield

Student Representative: Ashton Roberts

Other Alumni Representatives: The Reverend Wade Roof, The Reverend Stephen Mims, The Reverend Angela Ford Nelson, Deacon Ashlyn Cox

Faculty: The Rev. Dr. Mary Sue Dreier and Dr. Susan McArver

Staff: Jonathan White and Shelby Mills

Ex-Officio: The Rev. Dr. Robert E. Allen



LTSS alumni can notify the seminary of changes to contact information by contacting Shelby Mills, administrative assistant for advancement, at shelly.mills@lr.edu.





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ir.edu/ltss



Open Doors Campaign Moves Forward

An important step forward in the Opening Doors: Answering the Spirit's Call campaign on behalf of the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary occurred Sept. 1, when the congregation phase of the campaign began. Campaign materials and letters introducing the campaign were sent to all pastors and chairs of Councils in the North Carolina Synod. Congregations have an opportunity to give support to this important venture until Dec. 31, 2019.

The \$2-million campaign was launched by the North Carolina Synod on behalf of seminarians who attend Lenoir-Rhyne's Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary. Its primary purpose is to reduce, and in time eliminate, the debt seminarians accumulate while acquiring a theological education. The ELCA indicates that the average seminarian graduates with a debt of \$40,000. This is in addition to the debt they accumulate during their college years. Every gift will enable a North Carolina seminarian to reduce financial worry.

To lift up the significance of the campaign, four Sundays have been designated as Seminary Sundays in the North Carolina Synod. Seminary Sundays will occur Dec. 9, 2018, March 10, 2019, Sept. 8, 2019, and Dec. 8, 2019.

To date, LTSS has received \$754,000 of the \$2,000,000 fundraising goal.

GIFTS OF SUPPORT CAN BE SENT TO:

Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary/Lenoir-Rhyne University
Box 7467, Hickory, NC 28603



Gifts to Lenoir-Rhyne's New Life Fund impact the lives of seminarians at LTSS each day. Through the New Life Fund, those committed to the mission of LTSS can make a major difference in the training of future servants of the church.

Join the many supporters of LTSS in making sure the needs of the Seminary and our seminarians are met. Please make a gift prior to Dec. 31, 2018, for an approved tax credit.

LTSS is truly thankful for the loyalty and support of the ELCA's seminary in the South. A gift of any size expresses faith in LTSS' continued prosperity and demonstrates the value and commitment LTSS and its supporters have for its students.

Visit ir.edu/givetoLTSS

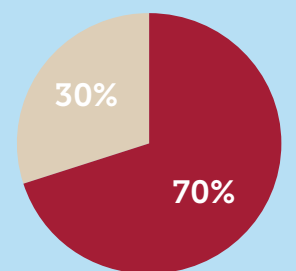


INSIDE THE NUMBERS



STUDENTS ENROLLED ON LR'S COLUMBIA CAMPUS*

**This figure is comprised of 78 students at LTSS and 129 students at the Columbia Center.*



COLUMBIA CENTER
FULL-TIME STUDENTS
PART-TIME STUDENTS



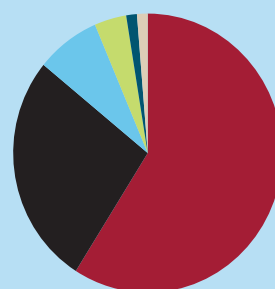
ONE OF SEVEN ELCA SEMINARIES THROUGHOUT THE U.S. AND THE ONLY ELCA SEMINARY IN THE SOUTHEASTERN U.S.



THE ONLY SEMINARY IN SOUTH CAROLINA APPROVED FOR TRAINING UNITED METHODIST CLERGY



NEARLY 190 YEARS OF EDUCATING SEMINARIANS



DENOMINATIONS OF DEGREE-SEEKING STUDENTS

ELCA - 46
UMC - 21
BAPTIST - 6
EPISCOPALIAN - 3
PRESBYTERIAN - 1
CATHOLIC - 1