



SOUTHERN BULLETIN

SPRING 2021

FEATURES

Sins of Our Fathers

Charles Cureton Brings Parish Experience as a Seminarian

LTSS Adapts to Meet Challenges

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Letter from The Rev. Dr. Mary Hinkle Shore

LTSS: A Timeline

In Memoriam

The Rector Reads

GET IN TOUCH

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



The Rev. Angela Ford Nelson graduated from LTSS in 2015 and is the pastor at Good Hope Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church in Camden, South Carolina. (Photo credit: The Rev. Angela Ford Nelson)

Sins of Our Fathers: LTSS Makes Renewed Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion

Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary of Lenoir-Rhyne University is a Christian center and place of higher learning with a calling to train ministers for the world.

But in order to be true to that calling, LTSS must have a clear idea of where it came from and where it wants to go.

As a seminary, LTSS teaches that everyone is a beloved child of God. Yet, the institution's founder, the Rev. John Bachman, and its first professor, Ernest Hazelius, were slave owners. Bachman was a fierce supporter of the Confederacy during the Civil War.

African-American students were first allowed admission to the seminary for the 1954-55 school year — 10 years before former President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act — but it didn't graduate an African-American student

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until Calvin Earl Harris was awarded the Master of Divinity in 1976. The seminary's first African-American female graduate didn't come until Alma O'Bryant in 1987.

The social justice issues and racial tension of today have risen to center stage through most of 2020 and into the early days of this year after police interactions with George Floyd and Breonna

Taylor, as well as protests and riots throughout the country.

"The call to Christian stewardship requires of us that we care for the homes, institutions and country we have been given to maintain — whether we had anything to do with the onset of their problems or not," the Rev. Dr. Mary Hinkle Shore, rector and dean of LTSS, said.

Those types of problems have hit closer to home for LTSS than some may realize.

On June 17, 2015, white supremacist Dylann Roof entered the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, and opened fire in the middle of a Bible study, killing nine African-Americans. Among the victims were LTSS alumni the Rev. Clementa Pinckney '08 and the Rev. Daniel Simmons '88.

CONTINUED PAGE 3



The Rev. Charles Cureton is pastor at Friendship Baptist Church in Hopkins, South Carolina, and a seminary student at LTSS and Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta. (Photo credit: The Rev. Charles Cureton)

Iron Sharpens Iron: Charles Cureton Brings Parish Experience as a Seminarian

Charles Cureton has a different view than most when it comes to seminary.

As a second-year Master of Divinity student, Cureton has put in the hours analyzing scripture, religious heritage and doing a deep dive on the foundations of theology. However, as the third-year pastor of Friendship Baptist Church of Hopkins, South Carolina, he also has an intimate understanding of parish ministry.

"It sharpens me," he said. "As the Bible says, 'Iron sharpens iron.' Today, we need to be more Biblically sound than ever before. We have to have that foundation in place."

Cureton's foundation is based in the church.

A "born and bred Baptist," he served parishes throughout the Carolinas in a variety of youth ministry roles before making the leap to enroll in seminary, and it has left him with multiple landing spots.

While the married father of four is serving as senior pastor at Friendship Baptist and enrolled at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, he's also dual enrolled as a seminary student at Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta.

"ITC is one of the schools I wanted to go to, but, logistically, it wasn't feasible," Cureton said. "LTSS is in town. It has great professors who've studied at Yale and Duke. For me as an African-American, it's the best of both worlds because I'm able to have that and also learn black liberation theology, as well."

"All of the classes I've had have been a great mix. Although we don't look at color, we know color exists. With all the things we see on the news, there's a long way to go. I can say everyone has been very open and welcomed me with open arms at LTSS. I love the continued growth of diversity. I don't know what it was like in the past, but I'm enjoying a very diverse environment."

Due to a dual enrollment agreement between the institutions, Cureton is actually able to attend classes at each institution — both are now virtual due to COVID-19 — that go toward the same Master of Divinity degree.

"It's definitely not easy," he said. "Two different schools have two different ways they do things. It's definitely a challenge, but it's rewarding, as well." ●

LETTER FROM THE REV. DR. MARY HINKLE SHORE



The Rev. Dr. Mary Hinkle Shore
Rector and Dean (Photo credit: Charles Uko)

Lenten greetings as we walk together in repentance and renewal! In this issue of “Southern Bulletin” we reflect on diversity, equity and belonging. LTSS, as an institution, and I, in the position of rector and dean, examine our history and imagine our future.

Accountability

I like these words from the Confession included in Night Prayer (ELW) “I have sinned against you this day. Some of my sin I know. ... but some is known only unto you.” Here we admit that our distance from God’s intention for us is even greater than we are aware. This is part of what it means to hold ourselves accountable for racial injustice that has its roots in American slavery and that continues to harm people today in our towns, churches and seminaries.

Isabel Wilkerson points to another aspect of accountability in her book, “Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents” (New York: Random House, 2020). She uses the metaphor of an old house to describe America. “Not one of us was here when this house was built. Our immediate ancestors may have had nothing to do with it, but here we are, the current occupants of a property with stress cracks and bowed walls and fissures built into the foundation. We are the heirs to whatever is right or wrong with it. We did not erect the uneven pillars or joists, but they are ours to deal with now.” As stewards of God’s gifts, we must care for the homes, institutions and country we have been given to maintain even though their problems did not start with us.

Accountability for the past is one thing. What about responsibility for the present and future?

Leadership

To fulfill its mission, both for the ELCA and for those of other denominations who come to us, LTSS must have people of color teaching and leading in our seminary. We have urgent work to do. Our student body includes African-American and Asian leaders, but as they study, almost no one teaching them can bridge to their daily experiences of race. Moreover, faculty decide issues of curriculum and formation. We need full-time faculty of color to do that work well. New faculty searches will prioritize the need to work with colleagues of color on a daily basis.

At the same time, LTSS faculty members are committed to educating ourselves and joining our students in anti-racist teaching, formation and nurture. Course reading lists mean that we think theologically and practically in the company of African descent authors.

Courses

The M.Div. curriculum has long had a cross-cultural immersion and a church-in-context requirement. Students spend a short-term intensive in a culture not their own, exploring how the body of Christ is always shaped by the bodies of believers.

Classes include the voices of scholars of color and students of color. By their own engagement with theological education, our students and alumni of color press this historically white institution to grow into a seminary that more vividly embodies the diversity, equity, justice and love of God.

Columbia Campus

We are exploring also how to be a neighbor to our neighbors in Eau Claire. An ongoing initiative involves how our campus can partner with food producers and other educators in our neighborhood in activities like community gardening and on-campus food service.

Observers may say that the seminary should be further along, that our engagement with racial justice is so much less than it could or should be. I agree. Is it possible that we have focused more on the seminary’s survival than on what kind of seminary we might survive to be? I know how easy it is to fall into this kind of short-sightedness, for I have done it myself. (“Some of my sin I know...” the penitent admits). Repentance and renewal mean that we start where we are, and we turn toward life. We work and pray to be drawn more fully into the perfect will of God for us and our neighbors. May God grant us such repentance and renewal to all of us who steward this seminary. ●

Grace and peace,

Mary Hinkle Shore, Rector and Dean



Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary is adapting its student learning outcomes in order to better prepare candidates for ministry. (Photo credit: Jennifer Shimota)

Changing Times: LTSS Adapts to Meet Challenges

With changing times, both people and institutions need to change with them or be left behind.

The Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary of Lenoir-Rhyne University is changing one component — student learning outcomes — that will enable them to better prepare candidates for ministry years into the future.

“We want to serve students in such a way that they graduate with the kind of competencies that are most relevant to Christian ministry and leadership in the 21st century,” said Dr. Brent Driggers, associate dean of academic programs and professor of New Testament at LTSS.

Since the spring of 2020, LTSS faculty, with assistance from the advisory council and the Association of Theological Schools accrediting body, have been working on revising the institution’s current student learning outcomes. The changes aim to improve candidates’ leadership skills and provide them with a better understanding of cultural context in today’s world.

“We started the conversation in broad terms,” said the Rev. Dr. Mary Hinkle Shore, rector and dean of LTSS. “We imagined our students receiving their diplomas at graduation. What skills, character and habits did we want those graduates to have?”

The discussion of outcomes began in earnest prior to the COVID-19 pandemic with meetings among faculty and conversations with personnel from the main campus in Hickory. Driggers and the rest of the LTSS faculty were also in regular consultation with ATS.

The areas that the accrediting body looks at when it evaluates programs and institutions are broken down into four categories: religious heritage, cultural context, personal and spiritual formation and religious and public leadership.

“ATS provided us with really helpful resources that we’ve been using throughout this process,” Driggers said. “But ATS doesn’t determine the language of our student learning outcomes, It only asks that we articulate outcomes that

address those four areas.

“The LTSS Advisory Council consulted on the work of creating a learning outcome related to public Christian leadership. Since many council members are pastors, we thought their time would be best spent in that area.”

Driggers said the goal is to have student learning outcomes finalized and approved by the end of the 2020-21 academic year. New outcomes inevitably lead to needed changes in curriculum, which will be worked on next academic year and implemented for the fall term 2022.

“While we haven’t finished crafting student learning outcomes yet, we’re in agreement that we want them to deal with issues of racism and anti-racism,” Driggers said. “That’s an issue that a number of our classes tend to at the course level, but we’ve never had overarching student learning outcomes that name that.” ●

LTSS: A Timeline



1830

Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary is founded by the South Carolina Synod under the leadership of slave owners the Rev. John Bachman and professor Ernest Hazelius.

1851

South Carolina abolitionist Simeon Corley is elected to the LTSS board of trustees. He served in the position for nine years.

1861

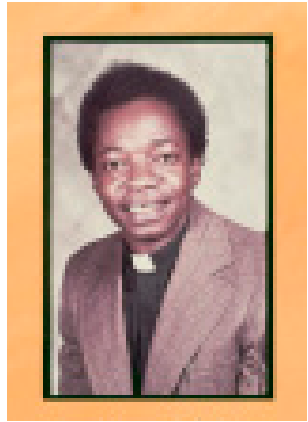
J.H. McCullough, R.J. Hungerpeler and Jefferson Sligh, the only three seminarians enrolled, leave school to fight for the Confederacy in the Civil War. Sligh was the only to survive.

1953

The LTSS board of trustees votes to approve the admission of African-American students.

1975

The first African student, Jackson Malewo of Tanzania, graduates from LTSS.



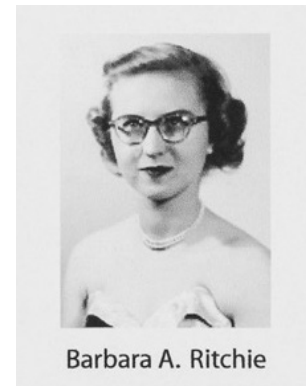
1970

The Lutheran Church in America allows women to be ordained.

1964

Civil Rights Act is signed by former President Lyndon Johnson.

LTSS becomes the first higher education institution to integrate in South Carolina, beginning with part-time students.



Barbara A. Ritchie

1958

Barbara Ritchie and Jane Sigmon become the first female graduates of LTSS.

1976

The first African-American student, Calvin Earl Harris, graduates and is ordained as a United Methodist pastor.



Alma O'Bryant

1987

The first female African-American student, Alma O'Bryant, graduates from LTSS.

1990

Dennis Yarbrough becomes the first African-American ELCA candidate to graduate from LTSS and be ordained.

1996

Beverly Wallace becomes the first female African-American ELCA candidate to graduate from LTSS and be ordained.

1997

Dr. Richard Wallace becomes the first full-time African-American faculty member at LTSS after becoming director of the Lutheran Theological Center in Atlanta.

Sins of Our Fathers, continued

"When you see situations arise like with George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and many others, you have to be able to address them theologically," said the Rev. Angela Ford Nelson MDiv '15, pastor at Good Hope Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church in Camden, South Carolina. "In seminary, we were taught how to think theologically. I went through the class with the Rev. Dr. Ginger Barfield, and she was very sensitive to white privilege.

"I'd never heard of 'white privilege' until she brought it up in class. I took offense to the term. I said, 'No one has privilege over me.' She had to explain it to me and to the class. Throughout my seminary career to this day, LTSS has been very intentional in how it handles issues of race relations and injustice."

Nelson returned to LTSS in the fall of 2020 after being offered a field education mentor position and recently assumed additional responsibilities in January of this year as a mentor in the spiritual direction certification program. She did this all while maintaining her parish ministry half an hour away.

As a field education mentor, Nelson oversees a class of seminary students who meet to discuss topics such as conflict management, spiritual formation and pastoral care. As a graduate of the spiritual direction program, certified spiritual director and Ordained Elder in the United Methodist Church, Nelson leans on her training and experience to offer real-life insight.

"When the Rev. Dr. Melanie Dobson asked me to be a part of the spiritual direction mentoring team, it was intentional. She said, 'We see in you the gift for spiritual direction and know that you would be an amazing mentor in the program. As a practice of anti-racism, we commit to recruiting people of color for positions of leadership and teaching.' If I hadn't been with LTSS and seen how they've worked toward sensitivity and inclusion, I probably would have thought it was a knee-jerk reaction to current events. But because of how I've seen the

"The seminary will undoubtedly continue to create opportunities for students and faculty that look like me to find a place to learn and contribute at LTSS and beyond."

THE REV. ANGELA FORD NELSON MDiv '15

leadership team work toward greater diversity throughout the years, and especially in recent months, I emphatically said yes."

Nelson has also been encouraged by the LTSS Advisory Council, on which she serves as a member, with regard to including diverse voices and backgrounds.

"In this way, the seminary will undoubtedly continue to create opportunities for students and faculty that look like me to find a place to learn and contribute at LTSS and beyond," she said. ●



The Rev. Angela Ford Nelson also graduated from the spiritual direction certification program where she now serves as a mentor for seminarians. (Photo credit: The Rev. Angela Ford Nelson)

IN MEMORIAM

The Rev. Dr. Benjamin Huddle '40 10/28/2020

The Rev. Dr. Frank Perry '55 9/5/2020

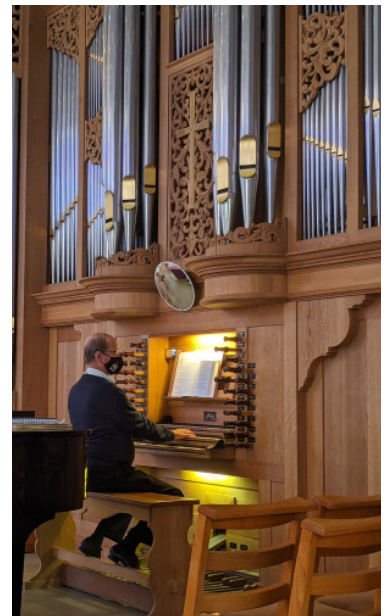
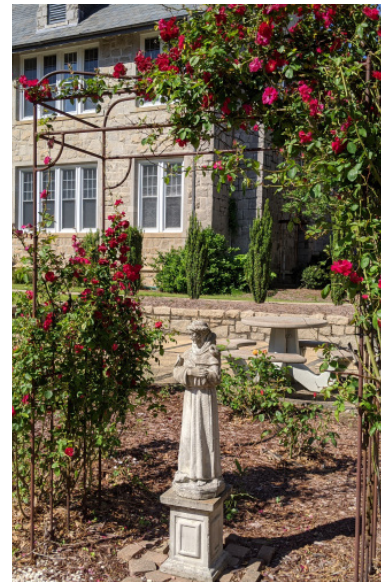
The Rev. Dr. Charles Setzer '65 12/30/2020

The Rev. Maurice Staley '66 11/19/2020

The Rev. Perry Sloop '70 10/19/2020

SCENES FROM SOUTHERN

Beautiful scenes from Southern can be captured daily at LTSS or catch a glimpse of these images and more by following LTSS on Facebook at facebook.com/LutheranTheologicalSouthernSeminary.



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THANKFUL FOR YOU

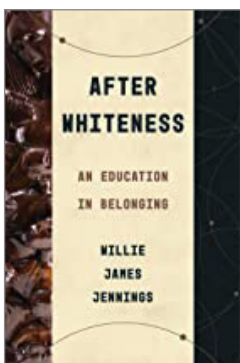
Gifts to the New Life Fund, the Seminary's annual fund, impact the lives of seminarians at LTSS each day. Through the New Life Fund, those committed to the mission of LTSS can make a major difference in the training of future servants of the church.

Join the many supporters of LTSS in making sure the needs of the seminary and our seminarians are met. Please make a tax-deductible gift prior to May 31, 2021, our fiscal year end.

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 the seminary's continued prosperity and demonstrates the value and commitment LTSS and its supporters have for its students.

Visit [lr.edu/IGive2LTSS](https://www.ltr.edu/IGive2LTSS).

THE RECTOR READS



(Willie James Jennings' "After Whiteness: An Education in Belonging." Eerdmans, 2020. \$19.99. 176 pages.)

Students often joke at graduation about becoming a "master" of divinity or Christian ministry. As if! This spring, LTSS students and faculty are reading Willie James Jennings', "After Whiteness: An Education in Belonging." The book is both a memoir from Jennings' years as a divinity school dean and a theological essay. In it, Jennings calls on us to imagine theological education apart from mastery. Our work is not to create a master, but to form people who form communion. The book will help educators and other leaders in the church see where we are perpetuating the idol of self-sufficiency and how we may aim toward communion with God and others instead. ●

A series on book recommendations by
The Rev. Dr. Mary Hinkle Shore, Rector and Dean

INSIDE THE NUMBERS: GIVING

\$904,324

SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS AWARDED FOR THE 2020-21 ACADEMIC YEAR

\$202,633

GIFTS RECEIVED AS OF FEB. 1 FOR THE NEW LIFE FUND

\$350,000

LTSS NEW LIFE FUND GOAL

74

LTSS SPRING ENROLLMENT 2020-21

18

AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS CURRENTLY ENROLLED AT LTSS