



SOUTHERN BULLETIN

SPRING 2023

FEATURES

Diverse perspectives in faith and leadership: Q&A with the Rev. Dr. Chad Rimmer

On faith and farming

Finding a place at LTSS

Connecting with global experience

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

In Memoriam

GET IN TOUCH

The Rev. Dr. Chad Rimmer
Rector and Dean
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The Rev. Dr. Chad Rimmer enjoys a sunny spring afternoon on the LTSS campus.

Diverse perspectives in faith and leadership: Q&A with the Rev. Dr. Chad Rimmer



The Rev. Dr. Chad Rimmer

Photo by Albin Hillert, courtesy of Lutheran World Federation

The Rev. Dr. Chad Rimmer began as rector and dean at LTSS on April 1, 2023. With a perspective informed by a multidisciplinary educational background, a deeply rooted faith and years of global experience, he is ready to prepare the next generation of ministers to face the challenges of an evolving future.

“As a seminary preparing people for public ministry, we want to equip people from all sectors to live out their vocation from a faithful perspective that unites diverse communities in this work that reconciles people and the planet.”

THE REV. DR. CHAD RIMMER

Q: After your years of work with the Lutheran World Federation, what drew you to come to Southern?

A: Theological education and formation have always driven the Lutheran tradition as a church that’s engaged in the public space. In my work with the global Lutheran community, I was working with Lutheran churches and theological institutions around the globe in the area of theological education and formation. So as part of my ordination to word and sacrament ministry, my vocation has always been as a teaching theologian.

When I was asked to consider this position, it felt like a bit of a homecoming. I grew up in North Carolina, and my family is in the Southeast. My grandmother grew up in Columbia. My grandfather and two uncles went to LTSS. My parents and multiple members of my extended family went to LR. After 17 years of serving on six

CONTINUED PAGE 3



Louis Liss celebrates with neighborhood children as part of his mission in Beirut.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Building unity in dangerous times

On August 4, 2020, poor oversight and neglect caused a stockpile of ammonium nitrate to detonate in a warehouse near the port of Beirut, the city Louis Liss '23 and his family had called home for almost nine years.

“It was the third largest explosion in human history, after the atomic bombs during World War II,” Liss explained. “The shock hit our house. Thousands of homes were lost that day.”

Liss and his wife — whom he’d met via Lutheran campus ministry as an undergraduate at Northern Arizona University — had been called abroad to Lebanon after he finished his studies at Phoenix Seminary in Arizona. It wasn’t his first international ministry experience. His time in outreach with Indigenous peoples in Mexico had led him to the seminary.

“The dialects, the relationships — it was amazing. I thought, ‘How could you not want to do this for the rest of your life?’” said Liss.

The mission to Lebanon in 2012 represented a

unique challenge. The Islamic State group was pushing into eastern Lebanon after expanding into Syria, displacing more than a million Syrian refugees.

Liss and his wife operated an outreach facility in a risky neighborhood. “The army came to our door and said 50,000 Syrian refugees in the neighborhood were now our responsibility.”

By supporting the needs of the local population, the ministry expanded to represent 50 cultural groups speaking seven different languages. “We were living there too. Once you live with people, it stops being ‘they’ and becomes ‘us,’” Liss said.

After the 2020 explosion, Liss and his family helped rebuild hundreds of homes until the ELCA called them back to the U.S. and asked Liss to get ordained. “I chose Southern because I wanted to go to a pastor-oriented institution. The faculty cares about us holistically, and it’s been a place where my family and I could heal, thrive and prepare for the next step.” ●



Sarah Bowers with her husband, Brandon, their two children and goats on the farm.

On faith and farming

While completing her degree in mathematical sciences at Clemson University and her master's in Christian ministry at LTSS, Sarah Bowers '17 did not imagine herself becoming a farmer, but true love and God's plan revealed a different path.

"If you've read our farm's blog, I call it 'The Reluctant Farmer's Wife,'" said Bowers, who operates Bowers Farm in Pomaria, South Carolina, with her husband, Brandon. "He convinced me with his passion for the land, how his faith was connected to his farming practices and respect for creation."

After college, Bowers moved to Columbia, South Carolina, took a job as a youth and family minister with an area church and

enrolled in a few seminary classes. She also reconnected with Brandon, a friend from Clemson.

"Service and outreach, the work of the gospel being done outside the church walls, was always my focus," said Bowers.

Now a deacon in the ELCA, Bowers serves as the creative director for the South Carolina Synod, where she helps secure leadership opportunities for newly rostered leaders, organize supply preachers around the state and prepare for the synod's annual assembly. However, her full-time service outside the church walls takes place on land that has been in the Bowers family for generations.

"As a deacon, I'm a Minister of Word and Service," she explained. "I'm sure there must be another deacon out there who is a farmer, but I don't know."

Bowers Farm produces meat and eggs, using centuries-old methods. "When you live in agriculture, certain references in scriptures take on a different meaning, so we care for the animals in line with the way they were created."

The family also welcomes guests seeking education or just a breath of air. "This farm is not ours. We're just stewards of it during this season and time, and we want to share those opportunities to connect with God's creation," said Bowers. ●

IN MEMORIAM

The Rev. Charles B. Dawkins '54 (4/15/2022)

The Rev. Everett Lewis Lineberger '54 and '62 (2/11/2023)

The Rev. Dr. Charles Ward Easley '56 (5/27/2022)

The Rev. William Elmer Smith '56 (4/19/2022)

The Rev. James R. Connelly '57 (4/29/2022)

The Rev. John F. Taylor '58 (4/5/2021)

The Rev. Dr. Jacob Harry Crout '63 (1/9/2023)

The Rev. James W. Kinney '63 (1/15/2022)

The Rev. Dr. Larry S. Long '65 (11/24/2022)

The Rev. J. Pierce Evans '66 (4/17/2022)

Mrs. Dorothea McCarter Lyerly '66 (6/22/2022)

The Rev. Dr. Jacob Larry Yoder '69 (12/7/2022)

The Rev. Robert M. Van Horne '70 (11/4/2022)

The Rev. Dr. David Hanford Webb '70 (10/30/2022)

The Rev. Robert George Coon '72 (11/18/2022)

The Rev. Eddie Cloma Miller '77 (8/8/2022)

Pastor Peter C. Picos '82 (5/25/2022)

The Rev. Steven Douglas Jackson '83 (10/8/2022)

The Rev. Elizabeth Joy Toler '85 (11/29/2021)

The Rev. Stephen Ray Rhodes '87 (11/11/2022)

The Rev. Virginia Kellogg Barnes '91 and '95 (10/16/2022)

The Rev. Dr. Saint Julian Turae Snider '94 (10/10/2022)

The Rev. William Charles Zima '98 (9/6/2022)

Mr. Robert N. Hubbs '03 (2/10/2022)

Dr. Charles Neal Still '07 and '12 (3/24/2022)

Mr. William B. Horne Honorary Degree (8/14/2021)



Saying goodbye to Lorie Gladyness

After a courageous battle with cancer, seminary student Lorie Curtis Gladyness passed away September 19, 2022. She was born in Hastings, Michigan, on April 8, 1962, to Jim and Marilyn Curtis. A 1980 graduate of Hastings High School, she played bassoon and clarinet in the band and participated on the flag team; she received her bachelor's degree from Calvin University in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Steadfast in her faith and living her life in service of the Lord, she was six months away from completing her seminary degree at LTSS. She is predeceased by

her father, Jim Curtis, Sr. Survivors include her mother, Marilyn Curtis, a brother, James Curtis, Jr. (Brenda) and many nieces, nephews and extended family members. The family would like to extend heartfelt gratitude to the students and staff of LTSS for their support and friendship throughout Lorie's illness.

In honor of her time and work at LTSS, Gladyness was awarded a posthumous degree at the seminary's spring commencement ceremony on May 11, 2023. ●

Q&A with the Rev. Dr. Chad Rimmer continued

continents among different languages and cultures, bringing that experience home was part of this sense of call. And LTSS is an inspiring community and context to teach, form and nurture leaders for public ministry today.

Q: How has the transition to Columbia and Southern been since you got here?

A: I'm really grateful for the hospitality and the welcome from both the faculty and students and staff, as well as the Advisory Council. The positivity from the larger LTSS community has just been overwhelming in the best way, and it is an inspiration to see the reach of the LTSS community across Lenoir-Rhyne, across the alumni and throughout the church. This outpouring is a real sign of the gifts Southern has brought to the community and the region, as well as the love and appreciation for what the school has done for their lives and in the greater ministry of the church. I feel humbled to be a part of that tradition.

Q: What was your journey to being called into ministry like?

A: I grew up in the church with several family members who were pastors, so faith was always a deep part of my identity. My father was an environmental chemist, and I started out in the natural sciences, graduating from UNC-Chapel Hill with a degree in biology and chemistry, focusing on ecology. Toward the end of my studies, I started feeling a certain restlessness and started to discern what I felt called to do. I went to Gettysburg for seminary, and in all my studies and field education, there was a connection to wholeness, wellness and easing the suffering in people's lives. From my first parish, I was called into global mission, and projects with the Danish National Council of Churches on green church

“The positivity from the larger LTSS community has just been overwhelming in the best way, and it is an inspiration to see the reach of the LTSS community across Lenoir-Rhyne, across the alumni and throughout the church.”

THE REV. DR. CHAD RIMMER

issues led me to pursue a Ph.D. in theological ethics at the intersection of ecology, faith and theology.

Q: Can you discuss a little more about how ecology, faith and theology intersect?

A: There has always been a relationship between theology, the natural sciences and public life. Specifically in eco-theology, we're talking about who we are in relationship to God and other creatures, and our call to safeguard the conditions that sustain life. So, in that dialogue natural sciences ask proximate questions about how the world works and theology asks ultimate questions about why the world is here and our vocation to care for creation. When we don't care for people and the Earth in the way faith and good science teach us, ecosystems break down in ways that impact the most vulnerable first. The injustices of climate change that affect all species — neighbors who we are called to love — impact human rights, loss and damage, conflict, migration, and the ecological impact of the loss of biodiversity.

Q: If caring for creation, including the needs of our vulnerable neighbors is a central challenge for the modern church, how do we meet that challenge?

A: Through my work in eco-theology and climate justice advocacy, I know the benefits of creative partnerships between theology, the natural sciences, the humanities, and the social sciences. Both biological and social diversity are necessary for life. On the other hand, there are a lot of social forces that seem to be striving for uniformity, and it's a tremendous challenge for church leaders to go into communities and proclaim a message of reconciled diversity and healing. The way Genesis narrates the story of sin is disunity and focusing on yourself more than your relationships with others, so it's critical for us to return the focus to those relationships and connections.

The more the church can engage people in constructive conversations around these questions and these relationships, the more we equip people to faithfully engage in every sector of life. As a seminary preparing people for public ministry, we want to equip people from all sectors to live out their vocation from a faithful perspective, that unites diverse communities in this work that reconciles people and the planet. I think with the gifts Southern has to offer — the community, the people and this beautiful place where the seminary sits on the Columbia campus — we have all the pieces to bear fruit for those challenging conversations as we continue to serve in the way that the seminary has done for decades. ●



M'Lilian Scott

Finding a place at LTSS

For many prospective and new LTSS students, M'Lilian Scott MDiv '22, senior graduate admission counselor, provides their first impression of the seminary.

“It's challenging to bring in new leaders in a world where it can seem like the church is disappearing. I don't believe that. I just think people are approaching church in different ways. I tell people, there's a place for the church, and there's a place for you in the church and in university seminary education,” Scott shared.

A lifelong member of the Baptist church, Scott describes her move toward ministry as a winding path. At Clemson, she completed an undergraduate degree in architecture and worked in graphic design, marketing and real estate before beginning her path to LTSS. In the Baptist tradition, entering the ministry begins with delivering a sermon for the congregation's approval, which Scott did in January 2019.

“We have a lot of ministers in my family, so I know it's truly a calling. I've felt a magnetic pull toward ministry since I

was a child, so when the opportunity was presented for me to attend seminary, I saw that as divine intervention,” said Scott.

Scott began working as an admissions counselor at LTSS while she was still a student, through a grant from Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. “They set aside some funds for a position to increase enrollment for underrepresented groups, which means taking creative routes to recruit students,” she explained.

Upon graduation, Scott joined the staff full-time in her current position, and she enjoys providing a bridge between LTSS and the Columbia community.

“I genuinely enjoyed seminary, and I want other people to have that experience too. I feel like every believer could benefit from the study that seminary offers because it makes everything we do — and why we do it — more meaningful.” ●

Connecting with global experience

When the World Council of Churches Assembly met in Karlsruhe, Germany in early fall 2022, the Rev. Melanie Dobson, Th.D., stepped in to lead the LTSS contingent with the confidence borne from her own international ventures.

Dobson learned the transformative power of international experience when she moved to Honduras to teach English after college.

“I knew I wanted to live internationally, to serve others and have some time to discern,” she said. “I learned so many things there, but most importantly I came from that experience with a sense of calling into ministry.”

While working on her Master of Divinity, Dobson spent a year studying at the University of Bonn. “It's always a lot of work when you're in a different language and culture, but I came to deeply appreciate the German language, the culture and the people. I developed lifelong friendships there as well.”

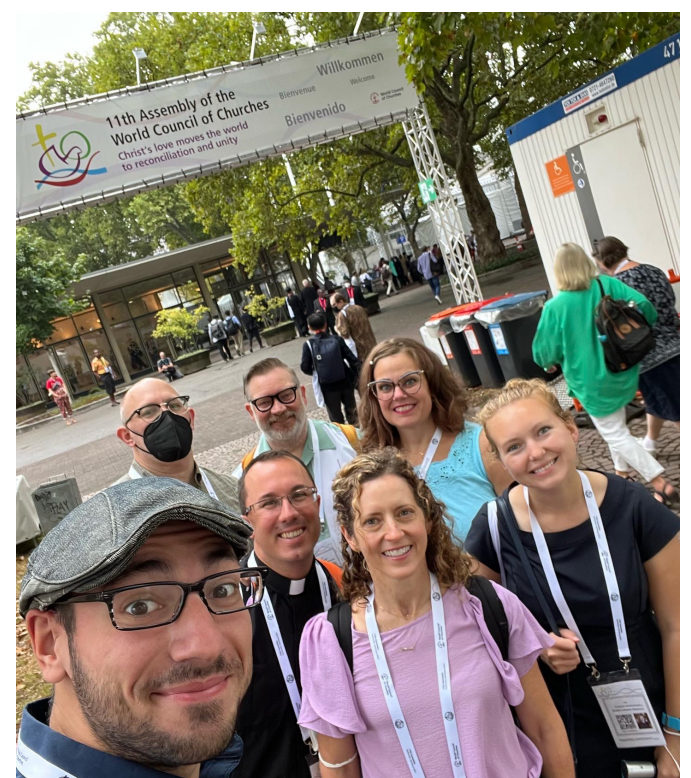
When the Rev. Dr. Mary Hinkle Shore extended a call for faculty members interested in leading the WCC

Assembly trip, Dobson was eager to share her enthusiasm for Germany and bring them to a peak experience of ecumenical work.

“It's really a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for our students because the assembly doesn't happen every year,” she said.

The WCC Assembly gathers in a new location every eight years to engage in important conversations and strategize solutions to global problems. In 2022, the most critical topics included racism, Indigenous people's rights and climate change. The trip exceeded all the participants' expectations as a theological and international learning experience.

“It was a heartfelt effort to get this trip together,” Dobson shared. “It took a lot of calls and emails, but when we got to the assembly, I was really heartened to see how many ecumenical officers and church leaders were eager to meet our students, to share and connect with them.” ●



The Rev. Melanie Dobson with the LTSS delegation at the World Conference of Churches

UPCOMING EVENTS

AUGUST
21-24 LTSS First Week Gathering

SEPTEMBER
20 Scholarship Day

NOVEMBER
8-9 LTSS Advisory Council

NOVEMBER
9 The Rev. Dr. Chad Rimmer, Rector and Dean Installation



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Columbia, SC 29203

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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.

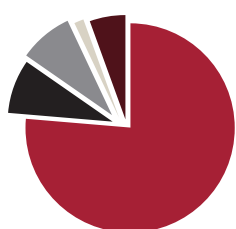
Join the many supporters of LTSS in making sure the needs of the seminary and our seminarians are met. Please make a tax-deductible gift prior to May 31, 2023, our fiscal year-end.

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.

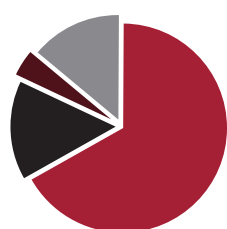
INSIDE THE NUMBERS: STUDENTS

BY DENOMINATION



- ELCA 55
- Baptist 6
- Methodist 6
- Presbyterian 1
- Non-Denom 4

BY DEGREE PROGRAM



- MDiv 48
 - MA/MACM 11
 - MTS 3
 - Non-Degree/Affiliate 10
- Total 72

INSIDE THE NUMBERS: GIVING

\$1,007,529

DOLLARS RAISED FOR LTSS AS OF MARCH 31, 2023

13.26%

ALUMNI PARTICIPATION AS OF MARCH 31, 2023

\$353,000

NEW LIFE FUND GOAL FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023

\$210,853

GIFTS TO THE NEW LIFE FUND, AS OF MARCH 31, 2023