



SOUTHERN BULLETIN

FALL 2024

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The Rev. Dr. Chad Rimmer,
Rector and Dean
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Painting of Col. John Eichelberger Home by E.F. Bullock, presented in 1940 to LTSS by the Rev. Dr. E.B. Keisler '32 and the Rev. J.A. Keisler '35.

A history of pilgrimage and preservation

The story of Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary (LTSS) is one of perseverance, of an institution so dedicated to its mission to prepare students for a life of service through ministry, that it has continually defied the odds to survive and continue that mission.

In 1829 the synod of South Carolina – only in its fifth year – set down a set of resolutions, the first of which read, “...this synod regards the establishment of a theological seminary under the auspices of this body and within its bounds as highly calculated to advance the interests of our church and as an object worthy of our attention.” The resolutions that followed promised material support for the endeavor, including funding and an oversight committee.

The following year the synod agreed to establish the seminary to train pastors and address an ongoing shortage of ministers in the state. The Rev. John G. Schwartz, pastor of Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Pomaria, South Carolina, welcomed a class of five students

in February 1831 at the home of Col. John Eichelberger, also in Pomaria, which became the first of many homes for LTSS.

In the 80 years between 1831 and 1911, the seminary moved nine times for familiar reasons – from Pomaria to Lexington, South Carolina, in 1834, to Newberry, South Carolina, in 1856, to Walhalla, South Carolina, in 1868, to Columbia, South Carolina, in 1871, to Salem, Virginia, in 1872, back to Newberry in 1885, to Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina, in 1903 and back to Columbia in 1911.

“Across these years, the seminary moved partly due to financial challenges, closures that were forced by the loss of students and the death of faculty, wars and epidemics that threatened our capacity to continue this Lutheran tradition of theological education and formation,” explained the **Rev. Dr. Chad Rimmer**, rector and dean of the seminary, in a presentation marking the 200th anniversary of the South Carolina Synod.

RECTOR'S LETTER

Greetings, friends of LTSS.

As our seminary makes its next steps on its pilgrimage, I made time to be present with groups across the ELCA, from church wide units to Synod Councils, congregations, groups of alumni and friends of LTSS, sharing a word of hope from the prophet Isaiah, when God says, "I am about to do a new thing...do you not perceive it?"

Adaptive change is never easy. Especially when it comes with lamentation for the loss of the familiar, and the need to respond to forces that feel beyond our control. The old pipelines to seminary education have fewer students nationwide, and sustaining campuses in the current financial context of higher education is forcing mergers, closures and consolidations for seminaries and universities around the country. For LTSS, sustaining the mission of the seminary for the next 200 years means we need to consolidate to the Hickory campus of Lenoir-Rhyne University. In December, we will take our leave from a familiar place on Seminary Ridge that the seminary has called home for 113 years.

While we have things to lament, we have no reason to despair. Why? Because adaptive change is always about something new being born. Creation shows us that in the course of natural evolution, as ecosystems are altered, new niches open up into which life adapts. These adaptations have a way of highlighting new traits and aspects of species that are better fit for new contexts, and surprising things can happen when life finds a way to thrive in new environments.

If we take the long view of salvation history, we are comforted with the knowledge that the same is true for the Creator. The Trinity is a communion of creativity. Someone asked the mystic



The Rev. Dr. Chad Rimmer, Rector and Dean

Meister Eckhart, what does God do all day? He answered, "God lays on the maternity bed and gives birth." In my faith and ecology class, I teach the realities of *creatio continua*, continual creation. In the letters of Paul and the book of Revelation, the omega point of God's creation is not a return to an old state of being in the garden, but a new heaven and a new Earth, into which we are being called.

Our baptismal call is one of becoming a new being, not being restored to an old one. Like the prophet Jeremiah urged us, rather than yearning for days of old that simply could not be in today's contexts, God is always calling us forward into hope and a future. To those exiles who were wondering how they would sing their song in a new land, Isaiah comforted God's people with the words, "I am about to do a new thing...do you not perceive it?"

Friends, we are doing a new thing in the 500 year old tradition of Lutheran higher education. As a seminary of one

of the great institutions of the Network of ELCA Colleges and Universities (NECU), Lenoir-Rhyne University is making bold steps to sustain our Lutheran commitment to liberal arts education and vibrant theological education and formation. As we take our leave from Columbia, and begin next semester in Hickory, come help us sing our song in praise of the next 200 years of LTSS' mission!

Peace friends,

The Rev. Dr. Chad Rimmer,
Rector and Dean

Stepping into a new chapter

Jace Martinez, M.Div. '26, lived a life on the move for many years – from his hometown of Owatonna, Minnesota, to the U.S. Army, to Texas State University, to LTSS. So many relocations have given him a special interest in and appreciation for the idea of pilgrimage.

“Pilgrimage often involves letting go of control, trusting in God’s guidance during times of transition and upheaval,” he said. “In my studies at Southern, it is presented as more than a physical journey. It’s a holistic process of transformation, a deep intertwining of spiritual and emotional growth.”

Inspired by a long family history of military service, Martinez left Minnesota to spend six years as a linguist as part of the U.S. Army National Guard in Texas. He was stationed at multiple locations within the United States – Oklahoma, Arizona, California and Texas – in

addition to assignments in Germany and Iraq.

“All these moves weren’t framed as spiritual at the time, but in hindsight they felt like a pilgrimage in their own way,” he shared. “I had to adapt, let go of familiar surroundings, separate from my loved ones, and find new ways to connect to my own purpose and the community around me.”

Influenced by his linguistic work for the Army, Martinez also majored in French at Texas State. These experiences brought forth a calling to the ministry that had been seeded in his childhood at Trinity Lutheran Church back in Owatonna, which led to the move he calls the biggest pilgrimage of his life – from Austin, Texas, to Columbia, South Carolina.

“My wife and I had recently gotten married when I said, ‘Hey, seminary is



Jace Martinez, M.Div. '26, with wife Julia.

calling,” he shared. “We didn’t really know what the journey would bring, but we trusted in the process. It felt like we were stepping into a new chapter together, and we’re thankful that God was watching over us the whole time.” ●

A history of pilgrimage and preservation continued

Despite the mobility of these early decades, the seminary began to amass an impressive collection of texts and artifacts – including letters and documents from the earliest years of the Lutheran church in South Carolina – that needed to be transported and preserved through each relocation. During the Civil War, when the seminary was located at the newly established Newberry College, both the seminary and college suspended operations when most of the faculty and students left to join the army. The library was famously transported via wheelbarrows away from the building that housed both institutions before the Confederate Army arrived.

“Those that came before us always found a way to persist and discern what it means to be a steward of this gift and call to teach, form and nurture leaders for public ministry that has been entrusted to us as the church,” Rimmer observed when relating the story.

Once settled on the campus in Columbia, the collection of scholarly materials and artifacts in the Lineberger Memorial Library at LTSS continued to grow into the third largest theological library in the Southeast – only Emory and Duke universities have larger collections in the region. As the seminary prepares to relocate to the Lenoir-Rhyne University campus in Hickory, North Carolina, these materials will arrive at their new home via professional moving services, not wheelbarrows.

“It has taken loads of planning and making space. We’ve removed low-circulation materials from our own collection,



The first LTSS professor, the Rev. John G. Schwartz, served as pastor at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Pomaria, South Carolina.

and we are hiring a librarian with a theological specialty,” shared **Dawn Behrend, MLS, MBA, M.A.**, dean of the libraries at Lenoir-Rhyne. “The Lineberger collection is part of a consortium, and as such, we will be retaining the vast majority of items for relocation to the Hickory campus.”

The collection includes 94,254 books in the circulating collection, 12,143 bound journals, as well as 1,578 rare books in special collections and 2,067 reference works.

“We’re thrilled to bring the collection here, to care for it,” Behrend added. “We’re ready to celebrate these materials and their history.” ●

Tenacity, perseverance, strength and hope

LTSS Alumni Board President reflects on the seminary's upcoming move

In March 2024, LTSS announced it would be leaving its Columbia, South Carolina campus and moving to Lenoir-Rhyne University's campus in Hickory, North Carolina – sparking thoughtful discussion and a myriad of emotions from faculty, staff, students, community members and alumni.

“Like many alumni, my initial reaction was that of heartache and sadness. We all know that this decision was necessary in terms of stewardship and financial health. But as an alum, you have so many memories tied to the physical space of the seminary campus,” said the **Rev. Joshua A. Tucker, M.Div. '13**, current LTSS alumni board president and pastor of Friendship Lutheran Church in Taylorsville, North Carolina. “God promises to always make things new. That's who we are intrinsically as Christians. So, once I thought more on the move, I saw this as God creating a new, incredible opportunity. I think it gives us a lot of hope for the future and anticipation of what the seminary can be within the campus of Lenoir-Rhyne.”

Thinking of the future of the seminary in its new location, Tucker is excited for the range of options available – from seminarians being able to take additional courses to aid in the administrative side of church ministry and studying foreign languages to reach more people, to becoming active members of a larger campus through student life – the possibilities are vast.

“Beyond the academics, there is an opportunity for seminary students to be a part of a bigger community of student life that the seminary doesn't have right now. The sheer number of the community will be magnified, and the seminarians will have the opportunity to share in community life in a whole host of ways – from attending sporting events to being a part of extracurricular activities/clubs and student life – all at a Lutheran university,” he shared. “I also think this can help us to better live into our call to identify God's gifts in people that might be called to serve in the church in some capacity – for students at Lenoir-Rhyne that are working on their undergraduate degrees, the seminary could be an active part in that to help identify, perhaps God is speaking to you in some way and ask them: ‘Have you considered seminary education? Have you considered discerning a call to ministry leadership?’”

As the countdown to the January 2025 move continues, Tucker encourages fellow alumni to stay connected with the seminary.

“I see this pilgrimage as a time of strength. I hope that the alumni base can see all of the hope and opportunities that come with this move. I hope that not only will they stay connected, but I hope that they'll share the story that this



The Rev. Joshua A. Tucker, M.Div. '13, with his wife, Kristi, daughter, Gracyn, and son, Elliot.

“This story is one of perseverance, because this is not the first time the seminary has been on a pilgrimage, has relocated. With every season, with every move, there's been strength.”

THE REV. JOSHUA A. TUCKER, M.DIV. '13

seminary tells. It's one of resilience, it's one of being faithful to God's call, and it's one of remaining true to our identity as a seminary where we are called to teach, form and nurture those that God has called to serve in church leadership, in ministry. That's not going to change, no matter where the seminary is located. That's our identity as Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary. This story is one of perseverance, because this is not the first time the seminary has been on a pilgrimage, has relocated. With every season, with every move, there's been strength.” ●

Traveling for transformation

The **Rev. Dr. Evelyn Fulmore, M.Div. '25**, is no stranger to the tradition of pilgrimage, having studied and participated in these journeys as a student at LTSS.

A memorable moment occurred during Maymester 2023 during the **Rev. Dr. Melanie Dobson's** course, "Pilgrimage of Justice and Hope," which explored America's racial history. Fulmore embodied the spirit of the course and pilgrimage by spontaneously leading the group in singing the hymn "I Don't Feel in No Ways Tired" during their visit to the International African American Museum (IAAM) in Charleston, South Carolina.

"There's nothing like the tangible feeling of walking the ground where monumental events have happened, of feeling and embracing the truth of a story," said Fulmore. "In everyday life, we have our patterns, our ways of coming and going. When we want to take a deeper dive into understanding, into spirit, that's what leads us to take time from our everyday lives and embark on a pilgrimage. That's what happened in Charleston."

Fulmore talks about pilgrimage as a catalyst – sometimes the prospect of a transition spurs the pilgrimage, sometimes the pilgrimage spurs a transition. For example, in January 2020, before she began the process of changing careers from pharmacy to ministry, Fulmore was presented with the opportunity to travel to Jerusalem for two weeks.

"The trip came at a time when I didn't know I needed it. I just knew God was making a move," she said. "I didn't get all the answers on that journey, but it sowed the seed that led me to hear the call to ministry."



The Rev. Dr. Evelyn Fulmore, M.Div. '25

Looking back, Fulmore encourages anyone who finds themselves at a crossroads in life to consider a pilgrimage.

"It doesn't have to be a long period of time. It just requires the intent to move away from the everyday and have an encounter with God, with something greater. Anybody can do this." ●

A deep dive into the practice of pilgrimage

Pilgrimage figures prominently into the curriculum and instruction the **Rev. Dr. Melanie Dobson** shares with her students as they prepare for lives of spiritual leadership. In 2023 she led a Maymester course that engaged students in a series of local pilgrimages associated with racial history and social justice. In her semester-long spiritual practices course, students take a deep dive into the history, theology and practice of pilgrimage in the modern world.

"This is a practice that speaks to the spiritual and social longings all humans feel, for God, community, connection and healing," said Dobson. "Pilgrimage satisfies the need to find meaning through experience, through encounter with places infused with a sense of holiness."

The act of pilgrimage became a popular practice during the Middle Ages, when travel of any kind was costly and hazardous, which underscored the material sacrifice of undertaking the journey to a holy site, usually associated with saints, miracles and/or healing. Participants had to prepare for such excursions by settling affairs with their families,

attending confession and opening their spirits for a journey into the unknown.

"Pilgrimage involves a choice to leave behind what is familiar and safe, to move into the unknown because it is a journey that provides a chance to engage with something greater than ourselves," Dobson explained.

In the modern era, the logistics of pilgrimage have become easier to navigate, and the possible destinations have broadened beyond shrines, relics and cathedrals to also include journeys into nature, to museums or historic locations, to participate in public service.

"You're selecting a site that holds holiness for you – that place could be on another continent or around the corner," shared Dobson. "It becomes a pilgrimage through intention and through discipline – listening, saying only what is necessary, engaging in prayer before and during the journey, and reflecting on what you've learned from the experience after you return." ●

ALUMNI DAY 2024



INSIDE THE NUMBERS: **GIVING**



\$298,324

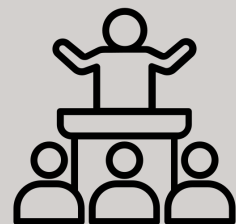
DOLLARS RAISED FOR LTSS AS OF
SEPTEMBER 30, 2024



\$127,160

GIFTS TO THE NEW LIFE FUND AS OF
SEPTEMBER 30, 2024

A 14% INCREASE IN GIVING YEAR OVER YEAR!



7%

OF LTSS DONORS THIS YEAR ARE
MONTHLY SUSTAINERS



DECOMMISSIONING SERVICE

Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary will host a special decommissioning service on Wednesday, Nov. 20, at 3 p.m. to commemorate the move of the seminary from Columbia, South Carolina, to Lenoir-Rhyne University's Hickory campus.

"This decommissioning service is a moment for remembering, grieving, and dreaming. We will give thanks for the rich history of LTSS and look forward to a strong future as part of the LR community on the Hickory campus," said the **Rev. Dr. Chad Rimmer**, rector and dean of the seminary. "We are grateful for the support of our alumni, friends, and the broader

community as we embark on this next step in our pilgrimage together."

The service will feature **Bishop Sue Briner, M.Div. '03**, of the Southwestern Texas Synod as presiding bishop and Rimmer as the preacher. The event will include holy communion and a liturgy of decommissioning the LTSS space.

A reception will follow the service. Overflow seating will be available in Reinartz Hall, where the service will also be live streamed and viewable online at:

lr.edu/ltss-decommissioning-livestream.

IN MEMORIAM

The Rev. Henry N. Brandt '54, 9/1/2023

*The Rev. Robert Brown Lineberger '55,
7/17/2024*

The Rev. Ted Wales Goins '56, 6/27/2023

*The Rev. Iverson McCoy Brendle '59,
8/9/2024*

*The Rev. Dr. Charles R. Huggins '61,
9/14/2023*

*The Rev. James Franklin Shealy '65,
2/28/2024*

*The Rev. William Joseph Bullock '69,
6/22/2024*

The Rev. Jack D. Deal '71, 5/26/2024

The Rev. Jack C Wray '71, 8/18/2023

*The Rev. Donald Edwin Hanberry, '72
9/29/2023*

Dr. William Collins Wood '74, 6/3/2023

The Rev. Roger E. Lindler '75, 6/26/2024

The Rev. Robert E. McCollum '75, 6/3/2024

The Rev. Byron Wilbur White '75, 7/20/2023

The Rev. Richard M. Connor '77, 7/5/2023

The Rev. Deana K Voges '83, 9/24/2023

The Rev. Ellen Cross '96, 9/1/2023

The Rev. Dr. Phillip Baker 7/16/2024

*The Rev. William Peter Benedict '00,
7/5/2024*

The Rev. Kathy E. Harris '03, 11/13/2023

The Rev. Lois Jean Helms '06, 5/18/2024



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