



Southern Bulletin

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

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A Family Affair

Brothers Share their Journey of Faith at LTSS



For Jesse Canniff-Kuhn, there is only one thing that could have made his final year of study at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary (LTSS) even more special – the opportunity to share it with his brother.

With apartments side by side, they go back and forth daily – baby monitors in tow – sharing time for study, conversation, and prayer. They sit on the front porch with their wives and watch their children play together, recognizing that their lives have come full circle.

Oldest brother Matthew Canniff-Kesecker was born at LTSS while his parents Pastors Tim and Mary Canniff-Kuhn were students. “I played here on the same ground that my daughter and nephew are playing on now,” Matt said. “Talk about following in your parents’ footsteps.”

A Shared Passion for Serving Christ

Both brothers are pursuing their Master of Divinity degrees to become pastors for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Matt is in his second year of study. Jesse returned to LTSS for his last year after completing an internship his junior year at Trinity Lutheran Church in

Cincinnati, Ohio. He gained invaluable experience performing pastoral duties including preaching sermons, leading worship, teaching Bible school, and visiting members of the congregation.

“It is a special experience to have actual family here, but at LTSS it is hard to tell where your biological family ends and your family in Christ begins.”

MATTHEW CANNIFF-KESECKER

“I have been pushed and pulled in all the right ways,” said Jesse of his experience at LTSS. “When I first came here, I thought I knew a lot about religion and ministry, but the world is so much bigger and Christianity and theology so much deeper than I realized. I have been challenged to think in different ways and have been blessed with a new and enlightened understanding of God’s mission in

our world.” Jesse credits his professors – whom he describes as highly formational – for helping him develop a strong foundation that he can build upon as he enters the ministry.

According to Matt, beyond the core theological education, the professors encourage students to “put what they have learned into practice.” “There are countless opportunities at LTSS that allow you to explore and pursue your passions,” he said. He referenced a student-led initiative that provides housing to refugee families through a partnership with Lutheran Services of the Carolinas. “You learn to recognize giving back as a way of life and the fulfillment that comes from serving others.”

Jesse describes the community of LTSS as “a unique and wonderful place to grow.” “We live, work, and relax together,” he said. “There exists a village mentality through which we work collaboratively, supporting one another in our callings to serve God.” Matt added that their fellow students even babysit their children. “It is a special experience to have actual family here, but at LTSS it is hard to tell where your biological family ends and your family in Christ begins.”

Paths of Their Own

Jesse and Matt look alike, sound alike, and have shared many of the same experiences. Those experiences have been formational, leading the brothers to the path they are on today. But it wasn’t always the path they thought they would follow.

“Especially when your parents are pastors, there is an aversion – like I guess there is for all kids – to becoming just like your parents,” Matt explained. “I spent my life hearing, ‘You should be a pastor.’ I didn’t want to feel like my future was already planned out for me so I built up a resistance to the idea.” Over the years Matt began to feel his own calling to serve God and, though he remained uncertain, he knew it was something he needed to

CONTINUED PAGE 2

Christ Chapel Celebrates 50th Anniversary

In the heart of Lenoir-Rhyne University’s Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary (LTSS) lies Christ Chapel, a structure which has brought students together for worship for the past 50 years. The church, dedicated on May 14, 1967, was designed by Harold E. Wagoner of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Christ Chapel’s design is intended to combine traditional and contemporary architecture, symbolizing worship’s relationship to both past and present. The great center rise, with its pointed arches and upward thrust, are reflective of Gothic architecture, which flourished in Europe during the high and late medieval period. However, the wide nave, which brings worshippers to a close relationship with the altar-table, reflects the contemporary emphasis of gathered fellowship of God’s family about his table.

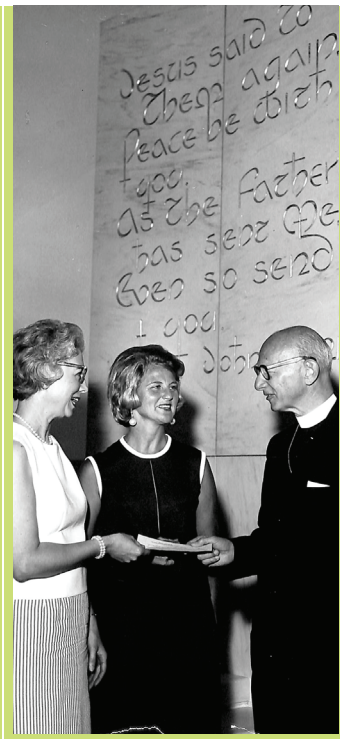
LTSS is one of seven seminaries supported by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). It is located in and supported by six regional synods, incorporating ELCA congregations in South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, the Bahamas, and the Caribbean. These supporting synods are reflected through materials used in the construction. The floor is Tennessee crab-orchard stone, the marble is from Alabama, and the granite from Georgia. The altar’s metal work and baptismal rails, as well as the altar-table sticks, are made of hand-hammered Swedish steel, reflecting a kinship with world Lutheranism.

The chapel’s great facade window consists of five panels, presenting the theme of the descent of the Holy Spirit. The window consists of large, clear,



plate glass panels to which stained glass is laminated by means of crystal clear epoxy resin. When the window was installed, it was the only window in America utilizing this newest and most exciting development of stained glass fabrication. While the window was designed by the Willet Stained Glass Studios in Philadelphia, PA, much of the actual work on it was done in Belgium, where this unique process was perfected.

A special prayer of thanksgiving will be held during a Memorial Service on Alumni Day, May 19 at 10 a.m.



MESSAGE FROM
THE DEAN



The Reverend Dr. David Ratke
Dean of the College of Theology

At this season of spring, many of us find ourselves thinking about Christ’s resurrection and the promise of our own resurrection.

Recently, I read Luther’s treatise, “What To Look For and Expect in the Gospels,” and was reminded of Luther’s brief definition of the gospel: *“The gospel is a story about Christ, God’s and David’s Son, who died and was raised and is established as Lord.”* In the creeds, we remind ourselves that Christ died, was buried, and rose again.

Resurrection is at the heart of the Christian message, the Christian story. Resurrection suggests transformation and change. Transformation and change are, of course, themes associated with Lent.

Among the changes at LTSS this year are that we’ve moved to provide some constancy and stability to a few of our courses that are central for Lutherans. Professor James Thomas has agreed to teach Foundations in Christian Worship and Professor Brian Peterson will teach Foundations in Preaching.

I am very pleased Dr. Thomas has agreed to teach worship. He brings a wealth of experience in leading worship. He has been a pastor for over 30 years and has led worship in a wide variety of contexts, as a parish pastor, as a military chaplain, and in ecumenical and ethnically diverse communities as well as in traditional Lutheran communities. In addition, in his own seminary education, Dr. Thomas learned worship from some of the most influential faculty in the formation and development of Lutheran worship practices in North America.

Like Dr. Thomas, Dr. Peterson comes to this role with significant parish ministry experience. He knows what it means to preach law and gospel throughout the entire lectionary cycle in a congregational setting. Dr. Peterson is not just a New Testament scholar, but a minister of the gospel.

Both Dr. Thomas and Dr. Peterson are deeply committed to the Seminary’s mission: “To teach, form, and nurture women and men for public ministry in a context that is Christ-centered, faithfully Lutheran, and ecumenically committed.” Their willingness to teach courses so central to the identity of LTSS is an inspiration to me as I teach Lutheran Confessions.

Finally, I will be teaching Lutheran Confessions. My own area of expertise is systematic theology. My scholarly work has regularly engaged the themes of the Lutheran Confessions such as justification by faith, the church understood as the assembly of saints and sinners gathered to hear the gospel rightly preached and the sacraments rightly administered, and of the conviction that Christians live in the two realms of God’s activity.

LTSS has long been at the forefront of seminaries that teach, form, and nurture students for ministry. Everything I have seen and everyone I have encountered at the Seminary – faculty, students, and staff – convince me that LTSS is truly dedicated to this mission. I am excited to see what’s next for this community of faith and learning. I am excited to be on this journey with the outstanding people that comprise this community. I hope you will join us and support us as we seek to respond to God’s call to faithfully live out a life in service and witness to the Resurrected One! Alleluia!

May Christ be praised and His gospel proclaimed,

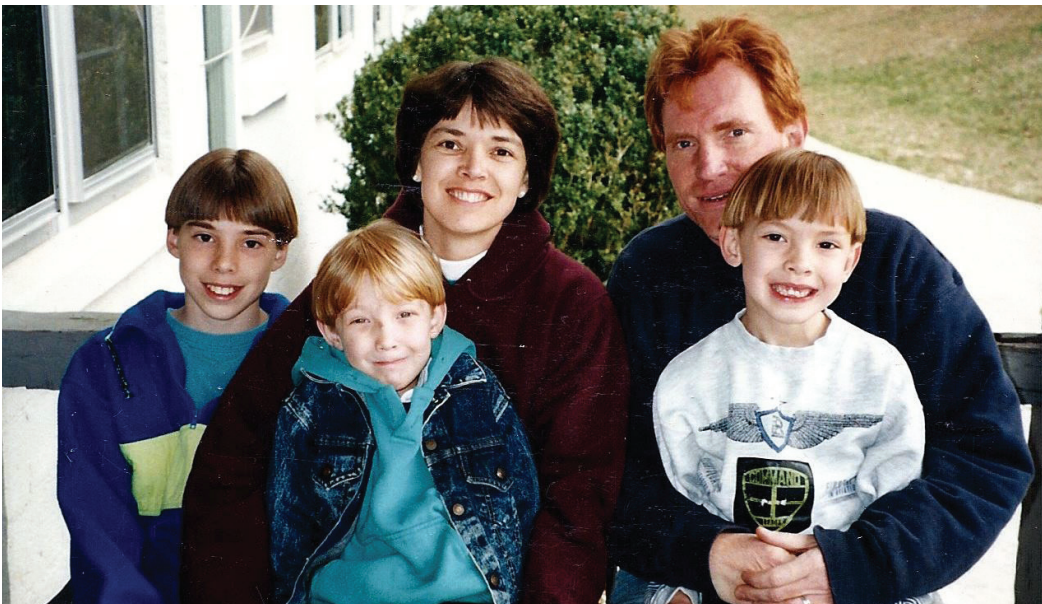
David Ratke

explore. “When I came to LTSS I was still unsure about what I wanted for my future, but during my very first semester on campus, I knew that this was exactly where I should be and what I was meant to do.”

Matt has an affinity for urban and neighborhood-based ministry, and LTSS has provided him with the opportunity to study and pursue his passions. “Even though I am following in my parents’ footsteps, my path and my calling are my own,” Matt said. “God has

Growing up Lutheridge

Matt was 10, Jesse was 6, and their younger brother Nathan was 3 when their parents began serving as co-directors of Lutheridge camp in Arden, North Carolina. “Lutheridge is an incredible place,” Matt said. “The creation of an intentional Christian community is hard to replicate.” He explained that as residents of Lutheridge, he and his brother became fully integrated into camp life. “It is truly a gift to have been a part of such a strong Christian



Their parents have served at Lutheridge for over 20 years and have touched the lives of countless children and teens who visit the camp each year.

Higher Education to a Higher Calling

Jesse received an associate degree from Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College (AB-Tech) and then transferred to the University of North Carolina - Charlotte to achieve his bachelor’s degree in Arts and Sociology. Matt worked as a youth and family minister at Faith Lutheran Church in Sarasota, Florida while attending college. He graduated from the University of South Florida with a bachelor’s degree in Interdisciplinary Social Sciences. Nathan attended the University of South Carolina and currently works at ESPN in Connecticut.

Jesse and his wife, Lindsay, have a one and a half year-old son named Witten. Matt and his wife,

Aubrey, have a two and a half year-old daughter named Nora.

“This past year at LTSS is one we will always remember,” said Matt. “It has truly been a blessing to have this time to take advantage of all LTSS has to offer and, at the same time, share our lives.” Both brothers express their hope that this experience is the beginning of a strong foundation of faith for their own children.

Witten and Nora are more like siblings than cousins and seem very content with their life as “seminary kids.” Possibly they will find their own path to LTSS one day – following in their parents’ footsteps.

LEARN MORE: lr.edu/ltss

“We live, work, and relax together. There exists a village mentality through which we work collaboratively, supporting one another in our callings to serve God.” **JESSE CANNIFF-KUHN**

unique plans for each of us and I believe LTSS has helped me to find my niche.”

Jesse shared Matt’s resistance to a life of ministry. He admits it was difficult overcoming the realization that he was going to become a pastor and essentially, follow in his parents’ footsteps. “Becoming a pastor was never my childhood dream,” Jesse recalls. “I believe the transformation began for me at Lutheridge. I began to recognize that I had been given the gifts and skills that fit with professional ministry, and it grew into a passion, and then a calling.”

Both Matt and Jesse express their admiration for their parents and their life decision to serve others through Christ. They feel extremely blessed to have experienced a childhood and life that has led them to the place they are today.

community. You become naturally woven into a community and culture that is intentionally servant-based and Christ-centered.”

Both brothers served as summer counselors at Lutheridge during their formative college years. “The experience helped me to develop skills in leadership and ministry that I have built upon,” Jesse said. “It changes the way you look at responsibility.”

Jesse and Matt recognize Lutheridge as a gift to the church, one that has inspired a generation of pastors who now serve the ELCA. “Half of my LTSS class served as counselors at Lutheridge or other Christian-based camps. It is a great place to discover Christ, learn about worship and service, and develop as a person and a Christian. It provides a great platform to propel you toward the path you are meant to follow,” Jesse said.



REFER THE NEXT GENERATION OF
CHURCH LEADERS TO LTSS

Have you ever met someone who you knew would be an exceptional servant to the church? Or has someone directly asked you about serving in the church? These are important opportunities that we cannot let slip by. Each of us has the responsibility to recognize individuals who need guidance in developing their vocational plans. You can make a significant difference in the life of another and the church by simply making a referral to the Seminary. The church relies upon pastors, congregation members, families, and friends to express a committed interest in others that will inspire men and women to consider a variety of church vocations.

TO MAKE A REFERRAL:
Contact the Office of Enrollment at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary at admissions_columbia@lr.edu or 803.461.3238. You can also mail a referral to LTSS, 4201 North Main Street, Columbia, SC 29203. Be sure to include the following information: name and email address of the person making the referral; person referred, along with their email address, cell phone, denomination, and program of interest.

There is a great need in the church for strong, dedicated, and visionary leaders to serve, and no greater satisfaction than serving Christ and His people. Take the time to recognize and refer candidates for church leadership and ministry.

COLUMBIA CAMPUS OVERVIEW

Welcoming and accommodating a diverse student population



Two new staff members have recently joined the Lenoir-Rhyne University Columbia Campus. **Justin Rimbo** is serving as Assistant Director of Enrollment Management and **Jonathan White** has accepted the position of Director of Enrollment Management, replacing Jennifer Casey who served Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary before accepting a new calling in Pennsylvania.

Rimbo is a 2015 graduate of LTSS. He is a commissioned deacon in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and most recently helped to launch a new worship community in downtown Columbia called Sobremesa. Rimbo also holds two bachelor’s degrees in both English and Religion from Augsburg College in Minneapolis.

A published author, Rimbo has written resources for Augsburg Fortress and Sparkhouse Publishing as well as articles for *Living Lutheran* and *CrossAccent: The Journal of the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians*. He is also a frequent keynote speaker at church assemblies and conventions. Before relocating to South Carolina, he served as the music and arts director for Humble Walk Lutheran Church in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Rimbo currently lives in Irmo with his wife Angie, their two children, Owen and Zoe, and their dog, Luna. He enjoys music, tabletop games, and cooking.

White comes to LTSS from Dowling College in Oakdale, New York, where he served as Assistant Vice President of Enrollment Services and Marketing. He has over 17 years of experience in higher education and enrollment services, having worked at institutions in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Virginia, and Georgia. White also has teaching experience. He served as an adjunct professor while working at Marymount University and Maritime College.

White is a graduate of Marymount University where he received his Master of Business Administration with a concentration in marketing. He completed his undergraduate studies at Bates College in Lewiston, Maine. He is a member of a number of professional organizations including the National and Southern Associations of College Admission Counseling.

Originally from St. Paul, Minnesota, he and wife Samantha are the proud parents of Noah Davidson White, born in April 2017.

Students Hit the City Streets for Urban Ministry Course

The Rev. Dr. James Thomas, Associate Professor of Church and Ministry at the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, is helping students address public issues and engage with their surrounding community through his course, Urban Ministry.



The course’s objective is to address Christian mission and ministry in an urban context and identify public issues which call religious leaders to the task of public theology. Urban Ministry is considered a J-term course, meaning it is completed during the month of January. The highly intensive curriculum requires students to engage in cross-cultural experiences in Columbia, South Carolina, with the option to complete coursework in various urban settings across the globe. “Public theology calls us to look beyond our own communities and traditions to the world around us,” Thomas

said. “The hallmark of public theology is the insistence that the point of theological interpretation is not simply to contemplate or comprehend the city as it is, but to engage religious institutions so that they become co-creators of the city that God intends it to be.”

“What I heard most from the students was that the experience was transformational.”
DR. JAMES THOMAS

When the Urban Ministry course was first offered in January of 2015, students were required to spend 10 days evaluating public issues in Detroit, Michigan, as they related to the practice of ministry. “Detroit is a very difficult place to be the church, and I thought it would be good for our students to look at a city that has been abandoned by millions of people, but nonetheless a city that is resilient in many respects,” Thomas said. While in Detroit, students visited social service agencies, pastors from local churches, police officers, prisons, and Detroit criminal court. Through their conversations with these various groups of people, they learned how the practice of public ministry can occur within Detroit’s social and economic environment.

This past January, 12 students completed their coursework in Columbia while several traveled to Israel and Honduras. According to Thomas, there are significant and similar issues in a small southern city such as Columbia, and it made sense to evaluate the Seminary’s surroundings, especially since many graduates of LTSS will be placed in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America’s Region 9, which includes Columbia.

Students completing their cross-cultural experiences in Columbia visited places such as Sistercare, which provides comprehensive services for victims of domestic violence and their children, predominantly LGBTQ establishments where they had

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

UPCOMING EVENTS

MAY

19

Alumni Day: Memorial Service, Alumni Luncheon, Yost Lecture

MAY

19

Baccalaureate Service

MAY

20

Commencement Ceremony

JUNE

6-17

Dr. David Ratke and Dr. Lamontte Luker lead LTSS Alums and Friends Study Tour in the Holy Land

JUNE

14-17

Spiritual Direction Program Intensive

JULY

25-29

Bishop’s School at Camp Kinard

AUGUST

21

Fall Semester Classes Begin

SEPTEMBER

8

Inauguration of Dr. Fred Whitt, 12th President of LRU

SEPTEMBER

12

AFL Presents: Shared Table Dinner and Conversation with Muslim Neighbors

SEPTEMBER

21

AFL Presents: R. Balmer Lecture

OCTOBER

10

AFL Presents: Shared Table Dinner and Conversation with Muslim Neighbors

OCTOBER

26

AFL Presents: Martha Stortz Lecture

OCTOBER

26-27

LTSS Advisory Council Fall Meeting

NOVEMBER

14

AFL Presents: Shared Table Dinner and Conversation with Muslim Neighbors

NOVEMBER

16

AFL Presents: Sexual Trauma of the Midlands

AFL: Academy for Faith and Leadership

conversations with customers and learned about their individual experiences in the church, and Transitions, which helps provide homeless people with sustainable living options. Through these experiences, Thomas explained students gain an increased awareness of the ongoing realities of racism, classism, sexism, and heterosexism in American society. “The course introduces some of the socio-cultural dynamics that shape life, inform theology, and challenge ministry,” he said. “What I heard most from the students was that the experience was transformational.”



4201 North Main Street
Columbia, SC 29203

lr.edu/ltss



Announcing

THE

INAUGURATION

of the 12th president of Lenoir-Rhyne University

Dr. Frederick K. Whitt

Friday, September 8, 2017

P.E. Monroe Auditorium
Lenoir-Rhyne University
Hickory, North Carolina



Paul Jersild Authors New Book

Paul Jersild, Professor Emeritus of Theology and Ethics and former Dean at LTSS, recently published a book titled *Christian Faith In Our Time – Rethinking the Church's Theology*. In his book, Jersild responds to the fundamental issue in the theology of the church: what is the nature of our language in addressing the mysteries of our faith? He makes his case for a “faith-based imagination” centering on life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as God’s man who brings a divine, redemptive love to the human story. Prior to his tenure at LTSS, Jersild served as a Visiting Research Professor at the University of South Carolina Bioethics Center. Among his published works are *Spirit Ethics: Scripture and the Moral Life* (2000) and *The Nature of Our Humanity: Ethical Issues in Genetics and Biotechnology* (2010).



Thankful
FOR YOU

To continue the faithful work of the faculty and staff of Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, our most critical need is for financial support from people like you. It is your committed giving that ensures that consecrated individuals will be prepared to be in congregations across the world.

Regardless of the size of the gift, every dollar increases the potential of making a huge impact.

Visit lr.edu/givetoLTSS

INSIDE THE NUMBERS: LTSS GIVING REPORT

\$218,632

GIFTS MADE BY FRIENDS OF LTSS IN 2016

INCREASE IN GIVING TO THE NEW LIFE FUND
FROM 2015 TO 2016

56%

\$2,745,678

TOTAL DOLLAR INCREASE TO THE ENDOWMENT
FROM 2015 TO 2016

AVERAGE EXPENDITURE OVER THE LAST FIVE
YEARS PER FULL-TIME STUDENT

\$83,569

FULL-TIME STUDENT TO
FULL-TIME TEACHER RATIO

8:1

\$72,831

2016 GIFTS RECEIVED BY ALUMNI IN
SUPPORT OF NEW LIFE FUND

→ 9.3%
DECREASE FROM 2015

-\$9,183

DIFFERENCE IN TOTAL UNRESTRICTED
GIFTS RECEIVED FROM THE ELCA
AND SYNODS FROM FY15 TO
FY16

→ 1.4%
DECREASE FROM 2015

-\$26,681

DIFFERENCE IN TOTAL RESTRICTED
INDIVIDUAL GIFTS SPECIFICALLY
DESIGNATED FOR LTSS NEEDS FROM
FY15 TO FY16

→ 8%
DECREASE FROM 2015