

LUTHERAN SERVICES CAROLINAS 2026 South Carolina ELCA Synod Assembly

Dear Friends,

In 2025, Lutheran Services Carolinas—your health and human services social ministry of the South Carolina and North Carolina Synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)—faced new challenges and changes in funding while also experiencing growth and stability in other areas.

Last year, more than 2,500 LSC teammates, along with 2,553 donors and 4,494 advocates, improved the lives of thousands of Carolinians. In South Carolina:

- Dedicated foster parents and case workers served 353 children.
- The Foster Care for Unaccompanied Children program helped 32 children as they awaited reunification with their families or guardians.
- LSC's Day Services for Youth program served 505 of South Carolina's highest-risk foster youth.
- LSC's disaster services served 286 individuals with the help of partners.
- Trinity Recovery provided resources to 6,185 individuals. This LSC program helps congregations and non-profits become more recovery-informed and connects individuals with substance-use disorder to needed services and resources.

LSC also opened its Welcome Center in partnership with the South Carolina Department of Social Services. The Welcome Center provides a safe, supportive place for South Carolina children and youth—from birth to age 21—who are entering foster care or transitioning between placements. For many young people, these moments are marked by uncertainty and crisis. The Welcome Center offers a stable, welcoming environment during this critical time. The Welcome Center served 15 youths in 2025.

The challenges came when federal changes to refugee programs created funding uncertainty and limited available resources, requiring LSC to respond with flexibility and faith while continuing to walk alongside refugees seeking safety and stability. But through it all, our LSC New Americans Program assisted 4,411 people on their path to new lives in the United States

The overall financial results for LSC remained strong in fiscal year 2025. Thankfully, LSC is a diverse organization that serves people from many walks of life. So, the struggles caused by federal changes outlined above, resulting in financial losses, were covered by other service lines within LSC.

Thank you for your partnership and prayers as the South Carolina Synod and Lutheran Services Carolinas serve across the state of South Carolina.

Yours in Christ,



Ted W. Goins, Jr.
LSC President



2026 Report to the Synod Assemblies of Region 9

Greetings from Hickory, in the name of the Holy Trinity!

The 2025/26 academic year has been a time of great flourishing for LTSS. I want to thank our remarkable faculty who continues to embody our strategic plan for *vibrant formation* on the Hickory campus, *innovative teaching and learning* in the classroom and community, and to establish *dynamic partnerships* across the university, the Catawba Valley and our entire region. I would also like to thank the Advisory Council, Alumni Board, alumni and friends across Region 9 for helping to *tell our story* in a new era of theological education for LTSS.

One of the joys this past year was the installation of the Reisz Art Gallery, and the replica of the Christ Chapel Dove window, which was gifted to LTSS by former President and Presiding Bishop H. George Anderson. The light of this beautiful stained glass now welcomes everyone into the Russell House. It stands as a portal between our past and our future, as we do the work of holy remembering for the sake of stewarding the gift entrusted to us. In this light of God's Spirit, the future of theological education for LTSS and the Lutheran tradition of higher education at Lenoir-Rhyne university is full of promise.

Academic Program Updates

We continue to work across colleges of all disciplines to create curricular innovations that will better prepare leaders for public ministry in today's context. We are thrilled to announce a new Accelerated Master's Program, allowing students to complete a BA in Religious Studies and an MDiv in six years. This collaboration with the LRU College of Humanities and Social Sciences opens new pipelines for undergraduates and mature students discerning a vocation to ministry. We are also planning several programs with the College of Business and Economics and the College of Education and Human Services to propose future micro-credentials in administration and a dual-degree in mental health counseling.

We are expanding our non-degree programs by offering three new micro-credentials in:

- **Lutheran Studies**
- **Methodist Studies**
- **Youth and Family Ministry**

These micro-credentials provide accessible, specialized pathways for alumni and people seeking continuing education to cultivate their knowledge and skills for ministry in these areas.

We continue to cultivate our historical commitment to provide a rich ecumenical education and formation. Partnerships with local congregations and the Western North Carolina Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church remain strong. Our Methodist Studies Program continues to be affirmed by the University Senate of the UMC as we train Methodist clergy alongside students from diverse traditions.

Our Explore Courses are a gift to the wider church, as we offer classes in Lutheran Polity, Stewardship and others. These one-hour courses allow students and alumni to engage in sustained learning with experts on faithful management and denominational life, as well as other timely topics.

Building on our commitment to global ecumenism, LTSS partnered with the LRU Lutheran Student Movement (LSM) for our second international study trip over Spring Break. We hosted a Lutheran Heritage Tour in Germany. The trip offered students a chance to encounter the roots of our tradition while engaging with the contemporary witness of our global communion and its transformational promise for our age.

In cooperation with Region 9 Synods, we continue to engage in Advanced Lay Ministry Training programs. We have begun the vital work of planning discernment weekends with the Synod staff of Region 9, to ensure we are actively walking with your candidacy committees as we accompany and inspire those who are discerning their sense of vocation to public ministry.

Special Events

In April, LTSS hosted our annual Alumni Day and Yost Lecture. It was a time for Alumni and the entire church to gather for the Yost Lecture, which welcomed Mr. Vance Blackfox for a lecture on the topic of repudiation as a model for decolonizing our institutions and theological education. The day included a faculty session of Theological Jazz, a barbecue lunch on the quad, annual alumni awards, and a festival eucharist presided over by Bishop Kevin Strickland of the Southeastern Synod.

LTSS 2030: Gratitude for the past, looking to the future

With the year 2030 just around the corner, we now turn our faces with great anticipation toward “**LTSS 2030**”. 2030 will mark 200 years since the founding of LTSS, and 500 years since the Augsburg Confession. This convergence shines light on the special quality of the Lutheran tradition, which grows out of the nexus between the Church, the academy and the public space. The bicentennial of our seminary will be more than a look at the past. LTSS 2030 will be a time for us to engage the wider church and society in deep discussions about the enduring value of Lutheran Higher Education for the future. As we celebrate two centuries of theological education and formation at LTSS, we will use the opportunity to host a national conversation about the charisms and call of the Lutheran tradition of higher education entrusted to us. LTSS 2030 will inspire our commitment to the task of preparing leaders for public ministry for generations to come.

We are grateful to our Bishops, our faithful congregations, and individuals in Region 9 and beyond. We invite you to visit your seminary on the beautiful campus of Lenoir-Rhyne University as we prepare for a future full of hope.

Peace be yours,



How are the Wolves? The Wolves are well! Another year has passed since our last assembly and Newberry College is making strides on the national and even international level. Our Lutheran faith reminds us to strive for justice as we hosted regional conferences for food insecurity (September '25) and the third annual human trafficking awareness (April '26). The Wolves Pantry offers food, toiletries, feminine hygiene products, laundry supplies, over-the-counter meds, fruits, cheeses, frozen meals, and school supplies to over 40 students a week on our small campus as we recognize and make a difference in the lives of our 1,500 students. To date, generous donors contributed \$36,819 to the Wolves Pantry fund. We are connecting with students' spiritual journeys with our Praise Team and Gospel Choirs and rotating Chapel services between the religious groups on campus. We sincerely thank our church partners for their continued support, including \$14,219 in synodical and congregational giving last year. We thank Bishops Aebischler, Strickland, and Suarez for continued support of Newberry College. — **The Rev. David Coffman '97, Campus Pastor**

Newberry earns top honors in U.S. News & World Report 2026 Best College's rankings

In September, Newberry was named among the best colleges in the South by U.S. News & World Report in its 2026 Best Colleges rankings, once again highlighting the College's tradition of academic excellence, affordability, student success, and a great return on a family's educational investment. Among public and private colleges in South Carolina, Newberry College was recognized across multiple competitive categories, including:

- Best Regional Private College in the South
- Best Value Regional Private College in the South
- Top Performer on Social Mobility (Regional Private Colleges – South)
- Best College for Veterans (Regional Private Colleges – South)

U.S. News & World Report evaluates nearly 1,500 colleges and universities nationwide each year using metrics such as graduation and retention rates, social mobility, faculty resources, and peer assessments. These recognitions affirm Newberry College's mission to make a transformative education accessible to all students, especially those who are first-generation or from historically underrepresented backgrounds.

Board of Trustees extends Dr. Harpool's appointment through 2028

The Newberry College Board of Trustees voted unanimously Jan. 30 to extend Dr. David Harpool's appointment as president through Dec. 31, 2028, and to formally change his title from transitional president to president. Since assuming leadership, Dr. Harpool has worked closely with the executive team and Board of Trustees to strengthen the College's financial standing while achieving record enrollment growth. During this period, Newberry College has continued to compete on a national level in athletics, speech and debate, marching band, and multiple academic areas.

Field Hockey and Football go deep into the postseason

The women's field hockey team played for the NCAA Division II National Championship against Shippensburg University in November, ultimately falling 3-2 in overtime. Meanwhile, Wolves football reached the NCAA II semifinal game against the eventual national champions Ferris State University. Thanks to the outstanding leadership of head coaches Hannah Dave, Todd Knight, and their coaching staffs, both teams made a name for themselves and proved that they are capable of competing on the national stage.

Newberry continues to address social justice issues

Newberry College is leading the way to address several social justice issues. In September, the College hosted the Carolina Colleges Food Insecurity Summit. One hundred and ten participants from different schools, food banks, nonprofits, and other agencies across the Carolinas united to tackle the issues faced by countless students while reducing the stigma surrounding food insecurity. The summit's focus was on teambuilding, educating, coming up with solutions, and promoting awareness of food insecurity. On April 17, Newberry will host the third annual Shedding Light on Human Trafficking and Exploitation Conference. This year's conference will highlight labor trafficking in South Carolina, trends and issues involving juvenile victims, and focus on improving ways to assist victims from investigations to restoration,

Newberry College Speech & Debate team earns national and international honors in March competitions

The Newberry College Speech and Debate Team earned international recognition and national honors during two major competitions in March, marking a milestone moment in the program's continued growth and success. Eleven students competed at the International Forensics Association (IFA) Tournament in Athens, Greece and the Pi Kappa Delta (PKD) Biennial National Tournament and Convention in Springfield, MO. This was the team's first time representing Newberry internationally and was just their second PKD national tournament. The team earned a total of 10 awards across both tournaments, including three international titles and one national championship. In addition to competitive success, the team was recognized at the PKD tournament with the R. David Ray New Chapter Award, honoring the program's achievements in its first three years. As a team, Newberry Speech and Debate placed among the top 20 programs internationally and finished 17th overall at the national level.

College raising funds to repair Wiles Chapel organ



Newberry College continues to raise funds to repair Wiles Chapel's majestic pipe organ. The College is raising \$350,000 to not only restore playability, but also to outfit the instrument for many more decades of beautiful music. So far, generous donors have contributed \$76,443 to

the organ fund. To give, please visit newberry.edu/give or scan the QR code, and enter "Wiles Chapel Organ" in the designation box. You can also send a check made payable to Newberry College to 2100 College St. Newberry, SC 29108, with "Wiles Chapel Organ" in the memo line.



2026 Report to Synod Assemblies

The Mission of NovusWay Ministries is to be a place apart for meaningful experiences, authentic friendships, high adventure, leadership development, and fun in God's creation. Our Vision for this mission is, "Rooted in Christ's promises, lives are transformed to love and serve." In fulfillment of this vision, the following Values are central: safety, care, joy, unity, and inclusivity.

- In 2025, we welcomed 1,800 youth campers and 450 adult and family campers for summer camp programs at Lutheridge, Lutherock, and Luther Springs. Through summer camp ministry, people of all ages experience God and Christian community in new ways, deepening their understanding of who they are as children of God and strengthening them to share the peace and love of Jesus.
- Through our Day Camp programs, we brought the joy of camp to 41 congregations throughout the southeast. These partnerships between camp and congregations are an exciting and innovative way for communities of faith to connect with children from church and reach out to neighbors.
- In partnership with Lutheran Disaster Response and local relief organizations we hosted over 800 Disaster Response Program campers during the summer of 2025 and numerous other service groups throughout the year. These groups traveled to our camps from places all over the country to serve those affected by recent disasters and experience the blessings of camp community.
- We welcomed over 1,600 youth and adult participants to year-round programs in 2025. Retreats for young adults, women, men, and families provide time away for learning, fellowship, worship, and renewal. We celebrate the Spirit's movement among those who experienced camp all year long.
- Hosted ministry at Lutheridge, Lutherock, and Luther Springs continues to be a significant part of our ministry. In 2025, many groups spent time at one of our NovusWay sites for a wide variety of events including quilting programs, business meetings, council retreats, festivals, and family reunions.
- The Lutheridge 75th Birthday Capital Campaign is inspiring a season of renewal at Lutheridge. Through the gifts of individuals and congregations, we've been updating beloved spaces and building new facilities to serve the next generation of campers at Lutheridge. Visit Lutheridge.org/Campaign.
- We are thrilled to welcome Lauri SoJourneyer as the new CEO of NovusWay Ministries. Lauri has a long professional and personal history in camp and conference ministry and brings to NovusWay an expertise in leadership development, organizational strategy, and team dynamics. Summer camp played a major role in Lauri's faith formation and personal development, and she believes every child should have the opportunity to go to camp.
- We are indebted to the NovusWay Board for their ongoing leadership and for their work developing a new Strategic Plan (available on our website) that will guide our ministry in the coming years.
- The ministries of NovusWay continue to provide transformational faith experiences for children, youth, and adults. We are grateful for the gifts of individuals, congregations, and synods which empower this ministry we share. Thank you for your generous prayers and support for Lutheridge, Lutherock, Luther Springs, and for all we serve!

[WWW.NOVUSWAY.ORG](https://www.novusway.org)

South Carolina Lutheran Retreat Centers 2026 South Carolina ELCA Synod Assembly

The South Carolina Lutheran Retreat Centers have had a remarkable year of providing holy spaces for God to change lives. Camp Kinard and Coastal Retreat continue to serve congregations, camps, and community groups from across the South Carolina Synod and beyond. Both retreat centers experienced strong usage this past year as individuals and groups sought time for retreat, renewal, learning, and community. The retreat centers remain deeply connected to the ELCA while also welcoming many ecumenical partners who share in the use of these sacred spaces.

Summer camp programs once again welcomed young people for weeks of faith formation, friendship, and outdoor adventure. Signature programs such as LCY's Camp HUGG (Helping Under God's Grace), which pairs Lutheran youth with peers with developmental disabilities, continue to reflect the deep commitment of this ministry to inclusion, belonging, and joyful community.

During the past year, SCLRC completed the ELCA affiliation process through Lutheran Outdoor Ministries. This process affirms the retreat centers' shared mission with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and strengthens connections with the wider network of Lutheran outdoor ministries across the church.

Momentum continues to build around the Holy Spaces campaign to construct a new chapel at Camp Kinard. During the past year alone, the campaign has received \$1,102,307 in gifts and pledges, bringing the project significantly closer to completion.

Support from the wider community has also strengthened the ministry. Through Midlands Gives, donors helped fund the purchase of a new tractor for Camp Kinard, an important tool for maintaining the property. At Coastal Retreat, a grant from the City of Isle of Palms made it possible to resurface the parking lot, improving access and safety for the many groups who gather there each year. Camp Kinard also hosted its first Business After Hours event with the local Chamber of Commerce, providing an opportunity to introduce community leaders to the ministry and recognize lead benefactors WP Rawl and Sons for their support of the chapel campaign.

This year also marks a leadership transition for the South Carolina Lutheran Retreat Centers. Executive Director Deacon Dallas Shealy will retire at the end of March after twenty-one years of service. The Board of Directors has called Lori Bode to serve as the next Executive Director beginning April 1, 2026 and we look forward to the continued growth of this ministry under her leadership.

David Coffman
Board Chair

Deacon Dallas Shealy
Executive Director

Report of the IELCO (Iglesia Evangelico Luterana de Colombia)—South Carolina Synod Companion Relationship Task Force 2026 South Carolina ELCA Synod Assembly

The relationship between IELCO, the Lutheran church in Colombia, and the South Carolina Synod is based on accompaniment rather than patronage, on mutual support and encouragement rather than paternalism. We can and do learn from one another what it means to be the church in the world today.

Task force members are Rev. Lisa Isenhower (coordinator), Rev. Ginger Litman-Koon, Rev. Jorge Leone, Rev. Mark Buchan, Rev. Steven Gallego, Rev. Luke Swanson, and Nancy Caughman. The task force has been meeting regularly since last fall, exploring ways to connect the people of both synods/churches in meaningful ways. We are also seeking ways to help people of the South Carolina Synod understand the experiences of Latino Lutherans here in South Carolina. Some highlights of our relationship with IELCO over the past year include the following:

- “Las Pastoras.” This group of women pastors from North American Lutheran churches and IELCO’s churches meet for fellowship and mutual support via Zoom. The group was developed several years ago when then-bishop of IELCO, Atahualpa Hernandez, was seeking ways to support his women pastors by connecting them with other women pastors. Since many of the pastors of IELCO serve in isolated places where women in ministry meet significant resistance, he felt that providing them with a network might be helpful. In fact, the fellowship has been beneficial to all the pastors who are involved as the women pray for one another and share the joys and challenges of pastoral ministry.
- IELCO’s Asamblea. The new bishop of IELCO, the Rev. John Rojas, was elected at the church’s 2025 assembly, or Asamblea. Representatives of companion churches from around the world came to be with the people of IELCO as they elected a new bishop to lead their church. Rev. Lisa Isenhower was sent to represent the South Carolina Synod at that assembly, which took place last March in Paz de Ariporo, Colombia.
- “Los Jovenes.” After the success of Las Pastoras, the task force wanted to find a way to connect lay people from IELCO with lay people from the South Carolina Synod. During her time in Colombia at the Asamblea, Pastor Isenhower learned that many of the young people in Colombia are eager to practice their English. With this in mind, the task force worked with Bishop Vice President Consuelo Preciado of IELCO to convene a group of young people from each church body via Zoom for conversation and friendship. Rev. Ginger Litman-Koon and Rev. Luke Swanson have been instrumental in developing this new connection between our two church bodies.
- Connections. The task force is still working to find ways to facilitate deeper connections between our siblings in Colombia and members of the South Carolina Synod. We encourage all members of the South Carolina Synod to consider taking a Sunday to worship at one of our congregations where English is not the primary language, such as Sagrada Familia in Columbia, Cristo Rey in West Columbia, and Nuestro Salvador in Greenville.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Lisa W. Isenhower
Colombia Companion Synod Relationship Coordinator



Report to the ELCA Synod Assemblies - April 2026

Founded in 1874, the mission of St. Olaf College is to challenge students to excel in the liberal arts, examine faith and values, and explore meaningful vocation in an inclusive, globally engaged community nourished by Lutheran tradition. St. Olaf's current student population of approximately 3050 degree-seeking undergraduates represents 49 states and 100 countries. 21% are first-generation college students, 22% identify as domestic students of color, 11% are international students, and 22% are income-eligible for Pell grants. St. Olaf continues to be one of only a handful of higher education institutions nation-wide that meets the full demonstrated need of all admitted students through a variety of financial assistance programs, [including a new study abroad affordability commitment to be launched in 2027, thanks to the generosity of Louis and Mary Kay Smith](#). Approximately half of our students indicate that they are affiliated with a Christian denomination, with 15% self-identifying as Lutheran and another 5% as members of a denomination in full communion with the ELCA.

St. Olaf's core curriculum engages students with the full array of liberal arts disciplines, including one required course examining Religion, Faith, and Values, one on Christian Theology in Dialogue, and one on Ethical Reasoning in Context. Among our class of 2025 graduates, 97% had participated in a "high-impact educational practice," such as a mentored research experience, a learning community, study abroad/away, or an academic civic engagement course. Over the past three years, an average of 94% of our recent graduates were working, pursuing further education, or engaged in full-time military or other service programs within seven months of graduation.

Under the leadership of president Dr. Susan Rundell Singer, the college is now implementing a six-year strategic plan, focused on elevating vocation, expanding innovation, and sustaining community. Leading the implementation of the strategic plan are three implementation teams and the President's Leadership Team, including our new vice president for academic affairs and provost Dr. Tarshia Stanley and chief of staff Kathryn Lohre '99. Dr. Stanley comes to St. Olaf from Wagner College on Staten Island where she served as Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. Ms. Lohre comes to St. Olaf after serving for fifteen years in the Presiding Bishop's Office as the Executive for Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations and Theological Discernment.

St. Olaf continues to offer [daily Chapel services and Sunday worship](#) throughout the academic year, led by College Pastor, the Rev. Dr. Matthew Marohl, and featuring members and friends of the St. Olaf community as speakers and musicians. Consistent with St. Olaf's identity as a "rooted and open" ELCA institution, the College Ministry team also includes an Associate Chaplain for Jewish Life and an Associate Chaplain for Muslim Life. This year, St. Olaf was ranked #4 on Niche's [Best Christian Colleges in America](#) list, recognizing St. Olaf as an academically strong, faith-based institution.

In the fall of 2025, the College named [Dr. Kiara Jorgenson, Associate Professor of Religion and Environmental Studies, as the Martin E. Marty Chair in Religion and the Academy](#). The [Marty](#)

[Chair](#) fosters ongoing dialogue that explores the intersection between significant religious and cultural issues and St. Olaf's role as a liberal arts college of the church.

The [Lutheran Center for Faith, Values, and Community](#) continues to advance a compelling vision for Lutheranism in the 21st century, foster interreligious engagement, nurture vocational discernment, and provide thought leadership on campus and in the community. A key part of the Lutheran Center's work is to help all the college's constituencies understand the role of Lutheran tradition in supporting the things they value most about St. Olaf. The Center has recently completed or is nearing completion on two projects made possible by grants from the [Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education](#). The Life on Purpose project infused vocational exploration in St. Olaf students' experiences by supporting shifts in advising, classroom projects, and faculty and staff capacity building around vocation. The Honest Storytelling project engaged twenty staff and faculty and one student to research and tell untold and undertold stories from the college's first 150 years, and will result in the publication of a volume in honor of the college's sesquicentennial due out through Fortress Press this fall.

In 2025, grants from [Lilly Endowment Inc.](#) continued to support two complementary initiatives—the [Nourishing Vocation Project](#) and the [Nourishing Vocation with Children Project](#)—advancing congregational leadership, vocational discernment, and intergenerational, arts-enriched worship. The Nourishing Vocation Project, part of the Thriving Congregations Initiative, strengthened congregations and ecclesiastical partners by fostering peer leadership, deepening vocational discernment, and expanding practical ministry tools. Pastoral coaching pilots and adaptable resources enhanced leaders' capacity for contextually grounded discernment, while integration with broader institutional and interfaith efforts extended the initiative's reach and sustainability.

The Nourishing Vocation with Children Project advanced child-attentive, arts-enriched worship through the Nurturing Children through Worship and Prayer Initiative. Resources were refined and expanded, engaging congregations across multiple states and denominational contexts. New liturgies and participatory art experiences nurtured children's faith while strengthening congregational life.

We look forward to an exciting summer 2026 at St. Olaf as we welcome back [Lutheran Summer Music](#) to campus for the first time since 1994 and the national conference of the [Association of Lutheran Church Musicians](#).

We invite lay, professional, and rostered church leaders to the [2026 Conference on Worship, Theology, and the Arts](#), July 20–22, 2026, at St. Olaf College, under the theme “Nourishing Vocation: Every Time + Every Age + Every Place.” We encourage you to take advantage of the many opportunities and resources St. Olaf provides for education, artistic engagement, and spiritual enrichment. We look forward to welcoming you to campus, and to welcoming the prospective students you introduce to St. Olaf.