

A Report to the Southeastern Synod on the

May 10, 2020

THE LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL CENTER IN ATLANTA,

A new context in changing circumstances.

The Lutheran Theological Center in Atlanta (LTCA) was born of a desire to prepare leaders for a diverse church and to expose these leaders to a new context within existing circumstances. This new context is multicultural, and ecumenical. In 2020 the Center will celebrate thirty-two years of ministry and theological education. LTCA as a community works to bring to fulfillment the Lutheran desire and expectation to make a difference in the world, through the practice of our theology.,

The following are comments from program participants.

Thanks to the LTCA I received the opportunity to participate in a life-changing immersion experience. It was there that I began to better understand seeing differently and loving more fully. You connected us with learning experiences across the ELCA-from PLTS to Luther, Emory and of course the ITC in Atlanta. I knew that I was not alone on what was at times a challenging journey. DJ

The Lay courses offered through LTCA provided formal biblical, theological and practical learning and fellowship. I would like to highlight lay courses and worship experiences that significantly impacted my faith formation, discipleship and evangelism: Contemporary Christology...Sending of the Seventy, where we learned canvassing and the opportunity to lead small group workshops at the synod assembly. LTCA is a blessing in the Southeastern Synod. It's a resource for faith filled life-long learning for the laity of our congregations. CD

This class exceeded my expectations....additionally the coalescing of theological doctrines with proven scientific laws...strengthened my belief in a sovereign God. The class exceeded my personal learning goals and beyond. –Blind evaluation

The Lutheran Theological Center in Atlanta, LTCA, was established in 1988. It is a non-constituent member of the ITC family and is a ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, ELCA. The Center moved to the ITC campus in 1997 as part of efforts to increase the numbers of African Descent leaders, lay and ordained, in Lutheran Congregations. LTCA it prepares, engages and nourishes leaders to be robust in their witness for the well-being of God's people through the Gospel, their faith, and through the pursuit of justice, for the sake of the world. The Center and its programs are key component of the ELCA African Descent outreach strategy. Participants and students of the Center are multicultural which reflect the demographics of Lutherans in the southeastern tier of the US.

Specifically the LTCA lives into its mission as required by its governing document, A Covenant of Agreement with the ELCA partners: The Center

- Provides opportunities for learning and leadership development among rostered and lay leaders with an intentional focus on multicultural leadership development and congregational support; and
- Offers continuing education and opportunities for spiritual development and growth for lay and ordained leaders; and
- Establishes stronger ties between the Interdenominational Theological Center, the African Descent Community in the US and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

While the Center does not offer degrees, it provides courses for ministry candidates who are preparing for ordination for word and sacrament ministry in the ELCA. It also provides continuing education for congregation leaders, both lay and ordained, and enrichment learnings delivered through workshops, graduate level courses, public conversations and forums to accompany people on their spiritual journeys. This accompaniment is greatly enhanced in the ecumenical setting at the ITC and through cross registration with Atlanta area seminaries, partnerships with, Lutheran congregations, civic, governmental and educational institutions and groups. Our approaches for learning facilitate conversations in an increasingly global community and teaching and learning appropriate for adults such as the TED approach. The Students and participants benefit from the Center's ability to gather the community and stimulate conversation around difficult issues. Here are highlights of the Center's work:

- During the 2018-2019 time frame participants and students in LTCA learning activities: workshops, classes, field experiences were conducted in 7 congregations
- Distinguished Professor Don E. Saliers, Emory University was guest lecturer on the "Beauty of Worship at the Lutheran Worship and Lectionary Class in May 2019. The course master for the class was Pastor Nancy Christensen. Dr. Saliers gave demonstrations using music and poetry during his one day visit with the class.
- A new conversation ***God's Work in the World: Science and Faith***, has been developed and delivered to congregations by the Administrative Dean and an ITC professor and in three congregations in Metro Atlanta.
- An introduction to a Science and Faith workshop was well attended at the 2019 Synod Assembly.
- In January 2019, The Bishop's Commemoration Service for the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., was hosted by Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Marietta, GA. This service is planned and carried out by 5 lay teams with initial guidance by LTCA and the pastor of the host congregation. More than 237 people attended, representing more than 20 congregations from Metro Atlanta/North Georgia. Bishop Strickland was the preacher of the day.
- Bishop Yehiel Curry of the Metro Chicago Synod of the ELCA was welcome onto the campus by Interim ITC President Williams, where Bishop Curry delivered a robust 2019 Reformation Day Sermon and joined students and faculty in the luncheon discussion.
- In October 2019 Thirty-five people from congregations, primarily from Conference 2 participated in a multicultural ministry conference sponsored by Christ Our Hope Lutheran Church in Riverdale and LTCA with support from the churchwide Multicultural Ministry group. The Keynote speaker was The Reverend Doctor Ken Walden, president of Gammon Theological Seminary in Atlanta. In addition to Lutherans in attendance, Baptists, United Methodists and Presbyterians were in attendance.
- During 2019, approximately 660 participants were touched by LTCA initiatives and learning opportunities.

- The Urban Plunge! Is a week-long immersion experience designed to provide direct experience and theological reflection on issues on life in cities, and exploring ministry and outreach opportunities. In addition to presentations and instruction by the District Attorney for the Stone Mountain District-Dekalb County on Criminal Justice, participants were able to observe an actual courtroom proceeding, followed by an interview with the judge, a tour of the jail facility and presentations by juvenile authorities, including judges. Exploration of the Legacy Museum in Montgomery, AL, observation of Friday prayers at the temple in Atlanta and a dialog with a pastor, council chair and a congregation member urban ministry.
- Sending of the Seventy, a certificated class aimed at training missionaries or evangelists to work in congregations and their communities; during this reporting time, we formed a partnership with New Covenant Lutheran Church in Northeast Ohio Synod following a question by the Presiding Bishop about the transferability of the program. Eight persons have earned the certificate for program completion and three of these have earned the M.Div. degree, one is currently working towards this degree, and one has completed the TEEM program. One congregation council president completed the program; and one is expected to complete TEEM in 2020.
- Other workshops offered were Forgiveness and Reconciliation, Grief and Loss-Moving Forward, Inviting Your Friends and Neighbors to Worship;

We add to the quality of life and faith journeys of Christian leaders as we address issues of justice, environmental stewardship, and the relationship of the Gospel and the human condition to life in the 21st century.

LTCA Work and Alignment with ELCA Strategic Directions and Goals

LTCA work supports the Five Strategic Goals of the ELCA in the following ways.

- **Identity:** LTCA provides a Lutheran witness and presence in areas of US where there are few Lutherans; it is located in the midst of the Atlanta University Center, which has over 11, 000 students, faculties and staffs in 6 independent colleges, a graduate school and a medical school. The Center has offices on the Interdenominational Theological Center, an Ecumenical consortium of Historical Black Denomination seminaries.
- **Strengthens evangelism:** Through its programs such as the Sending of the Seventy, and special gathering such as the Lutheran Day of Service, LTCA shares the gospel through community projects and prayer services making the ELCA known in various communities.
- **Provides Leaders** who are formed and developed to do theology in special contexts who will help develop **congregational vitality**. In 2017 LTCA assumed administrative and ministry/program responsibility for the **Atlanta University Lutheran Campus Ministry**, also located on the ITC campus.
- **Baptismal Vocation:** LTCA's provides opportunities for lay and rostered leaders for education, faith formation; provides space for faith formation and enrichment studies.
- **Works in** ecumenical ecologies, and through the ITC in African Descent Communities with the Historical Black Church, routinely 6 denominations representing some 24 million Black Christians.
- **Church Profile:** LTCA is one of the few programs and agencies which reaches vast numbers of African Descent communities through the LTCA-ITC affiliation.

- **Communication:** LTCA communicates the gospel through its unique pedagogy based on the three expressions of the ELCA and civic and community agencies and their resources and partnerships to do outreach and work on behalf of the church for the sake of the gospel and for the sake of the world.

Faculty, Lecturers, Facilitators for Lay Classes, Workshops & Intensives

Following the example of Jesus Christ and through instructional leadership, participants will have opportunities to discover and articulate a new word about Jesus Christ and God's work in the world

2015-2020

Pastor O.D. Mims: **St. Paul Lutheran Church, Teaching Pastor**
 Pastor Deryck Durston, **ELCA Southeastern Synod**
 The Reverend Ruth Hamilton, PhD: **ELCA, Leadership & Candidacy**
 The Rev. Kelvin Dudley, D.Min: Church at North Point & **Trinity Lutheran Seminary**
 Pastor Brenda Smith: **Domestic Mission-ELCA**
 Dr. Itihari Toure, Director, Institutional Effectiveness: **Interdenominational Theological Center**
 Dr. Don E. Saliers, **Distinguished Professor of Theology and Worship:**
Candler School of Theology
 Reverend Craig Storlie, Spiritual Advisor & **Teaching Pastor, ELCA**
 The Reverend Carolyn McCrary, MDiv., Certif. d'Etudes, ThD:
 Associate Professor, **Interdenominational Theological Center**
 Annette L. Flanigan, MA; **Christ Our Hope Lutheran Church**
 L.Wesley DuSouza, ThM, PhD Associate Professor: **Candler School of Theology**
 Rev. Mark Lomax, D.Min: **The Interdenominational Theological Center**
 Andrea Green, MA, M.Div., PhD: **Georgia Gwinnett College**, Resident Theologian
 The Reverend Ken Walden, M.A., D. Min., PhD: Chaplin Major, **US Air Force (Resv) &**
President-Dean, Gammon Theological Seminary
 Pastor Beverly Shaw: **Lutheran Church of the Atonement, Teaching Pastor**
 Pastor Matthew Henning, STM, **Community of Grace, Teaching Pastor**
 Pastor Nancy Christensen: **St. John Lutheran Church; Teaching Pastor**
 The Rev. Delmer Chilton, D.Min: **ELCA Southeastern Synod**
 Deacon Susan McArver, PhD: **Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary**
 Pastor K. Love, **M.Div., D. Min.**
 Gene Lewis: **St. John's Lutheran Church, Faith Community Organizer**
 Pastor Gwendolyn H. Snell: **New Covenant Lutheran Church, Teaching Pastor**
 Pastor Chad Hyatt: **Mercy Church, Atlanta**
 Sherry Boston, JD: **District Attorney, DeKalb County, GA**
 Dr. Temba Mafico: **Distinguished Professor of Old Testament & Hebrew Emeritus**
Interdenominational Theological Center
 Deacon Melanie Johnson, MA: **Immigration Services-Lutheran Services of GA**
 Rev. The. Smith, PhD: **Emory University & Candler School of Theology**
 Deacon Jeanette Burgess: **Southeastern Synod & St. John's Lutheran Church**
 Pastor Everett Flanigan, PhD: **ELCA Domestic Mission, Ass. to the Bishop; Adm. Dean,**
LTCA
 Rev. Mark Ellingsen, PhD: Professor, **Church History & Luther Scholar:**
Interdenominational Theological Center

The Reverend Moses Penumaka, ThD: ***Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary***

We appreciate the 32 year partnership with the people of this synod.

Thanks be to God for the fruits of this partnership for your support and for this good work.

-Pr. Flanigan