

ELCA seminary and Lenoir-Rhyne will merge

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Although they will stay on their campuses 140 miles apart, Lenoir-Rhyne University in Hickory, North Carolina, and Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary in Columbia, South Carolina, will merge July 1.

At a March 26 signing ceremony, Lenoir-Rhyne President Wayne B. Powell called the merger a “win-win” for the two schools, both of them affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Lenoir-Rhyne is establishing a school of theology which will include the seminary as part of a larger university system, officials said.

The LTSS this year has 145 students, of which 117 are in the M.Div. program, according to the ELCA News Service. Ginger Barfield, the seminary’s academic dean, said the agreement allows the school to maintain its campus in Columbia, its location since 1911. Lenoir-Rhyne University “provides a natural flow of potential to the seminary,” she said.

ELCA presiding bishop Mark S. Hanson said: “Both institutions will be enriched with a greater diversity and an increased capacity to serve both church and society.”