

LCC Secures Funds to Complete First On-Campus Residence



"We give thanks to God for His providence for us and for our students, every brick laid is a blessing from our Lord to our Lutheran posterity. May He continue to guide our steps as we prepare to welcome our first students this fall."

– LCC president Rev. Dr. Harold Ristau

Accepting applications for Fall 2025

Thinking about enrolling? 38 applicants have been accepted.

LCC's Admissions Department aims for 60-70 students for August 2025.

To learn more about enrollment visit:

lutherclassical.org/admissions/apply/



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AD FONTES
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BRINGING LUTHERANISM TO THE WEST

BY REV. ANDREW HILL

Rev. Hill is pastor of Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Green River, WY and Trinity Lutheran Church in Rock Springs, WY.

THE AMERICAN WEST HAS ALWAYS NEEDED WRANGLERS in the office of the holy ministry. In his book *Cowboy Preacher*, Rev. John D. Schroeder recounts his mission to spread Lutheranism in America. Born on January 1, 1872, in Westerburg, Germany, Schroeder's only knowledge of America came from reading books and Indian stories. He and his friends spent their days playing cowboys and Indians and their nights gathered in their hideout, smoking (stolen) peace pipes, and sharing stories. At age 15, John came to America and began his studies at Concordia Seminary in Springfield, Illinois—something he had thought impossible due to his family's poverty. Things were not easy in the beginning. He was always poor and often saved at the last minute by a providential gift or scholarship. Rev. Schroeder notes how beneficial the seminary's strict schedule was for him as a young man. He thrived in this disciplined environment. Some achievements, such as learning Latin, only came through hard work – there is no way to learn Latin except by putting in the hours. An older student once offered to help by selling him some "Latinsalve" promising that after one application he would know the great classical language. The next morning, however, he went to class with nothing but a black grease mark on his forehead. During his college years, there was a terrible typhus outbreak.

The school shut down for the rest of the year and sent all the students home, but young John Schroeder had no home in America. He spent several months homeless, wandering from place to place trying to find shelter and work. During this time, he found comfort through prayer and by singing the hymns of Paul Gerhardt. Despite the challenges, Schroeder finished college and was placed at a congregation in Ohio, where he preached, directed the choir, and taught at a school with 50-60 children. He was only 18. A year later the congregation called a full-time pastor, and Schroeder was able to return to Springfield to finish his seminary education. At age 20, he was called into the holy ministry as a missionary to the "Northwest."

Between seminary and beginning his missionary work, Rev. Schroeder returned to Germany to see his parents. Everything had changed. Much like today, it was no longer "in style" to go to church, and no one believed that the Bible was God's Word anymore. He had grown accustomed to the American view that a man was expected to govern himself. While trying to cross from one side of the railroad tracks to another, he simply hopped over them. When a railroad employee saw this maneuver, "he scolded me like a fishwife, and I had to go back over the tracks and swallow a strong reprimand. O Holy St. Bureaucracy!" If there were a place opposite from the bureaucracy of Germany at the end of the 19th century, it was the American West. Nevertheless, Rev. Schroeder set to work in western Nebraska, preaching in Crawford, Alliance, Chadron, Hemingford, all the way to Wyoming in Sheridan, Buffalo, Newcastle, and possibly Casper. When he first got off the train, a Lutheran woman fetched him from the station and greeted him with these words: "We are so glad that you have come to bring God's Word to us. You will find abundant and hard work here, but put your trust in God, who sent you, and He will be with you and bless your work." As we know well today, there is still abundant work to be done in Casper!

Much of Rev. Schroeder's work involved inviting total strangers to church. He would ride to town to ask whether people were Lutheran and if they wanted to attend church the next day. The area was full of Lutheran migrants, many of whom tried to assimilate into the new world by abandoning their German dialects. Rev. Schroeder worked in both German and English, so language was not a barrier. Theological literacy, however, was. As

a result, the ever-present Methodists and Mormons held virtual monopolies in many towns.

The pace and intensity of Rev. Schroeder's work was unsustainable. After three years, his body could no longer take the physical strain, and he accepted a call to Grand Island, Nebraska, and later to Wisconsin, where he would serve out his days. He emphasized that his life and work were entirely under God's loving care. "Before I leave this subject, I must say that every time I had a great need, whether as a new immigrant, or as a student, or out in the mission field, over and over again at just the right time God sent help to me. He never forsook me."

Rev. Schroeder faced many of the same problems we are facing today. He lived in terrible conditions, but he rarely speaks of them. He closes his journal with these words:

In this story of my experiences in the west, I have left out the worst events. I have not revealed the abuse, the blasphemy, the slander, the many rejections for a night's lodging and the disappointments. All these are better forgotten ... My loving Father has directed me on a totally different path than the one I had dreamed of. But His way is good and right.

As a new pastor, I found these lessons to be encouraging and comforting. In many ways, things have not changed. There are still not enough pastors, and many people still do not care about church. Hard work and discipline are still the best tools for the Christian training of the young. Our Lutheran hymns continue to be treasures that bring comfort in trials. And God's Word still changes and blesses lives.

The "Cowboy Preacher" helped sow God's seed and spread Lutheranism out West. May the founders of Luther Classical College sow with the same devotion to pure Gospel teaching.