

# SET APART TO SERVE

LCMS CHURCH WORK RECRUITMENT

## REPORT TO THE SYNOD PRESIDENT

— and over 600 significant collaborators and stakeholders —

MARCH 2025

### KEY POINTS FOR THIS MONTH

- ① 2025 Pilot Projects
- ② 2025 Research Projects
- ③ SAS KFUO Coffee Hour

## 2025 Pilot Projects

*Set Apart to Serve (SAS)* builds and refines many of its strategies and resources by listening to and interacting with subject matter experts in pilot and research projects. These groups serve SAS in several ways:

- **LISTENING** to ideas and best practices in the field;
- **DEVELOPING** new resources;
- **TESTING** SAS-developed resources; and
- **RESPONDING** to formation and recruitment challenges.

### ① Pilot Project with District SAS Focus Teams

SAS identified 13 districts to collaborate with to develop or enhance their church work formation and recruitment focus. Depending on district preference, this could include a committee, working group or task force, etc. SAS will walk beside these teams to:

- Support the formation of a district focus team;
- Discuss how the district leadership team currently builds a church work formation culture in its congregations, schools and entities;
- Evaluate the effectiveness of SAS resources created to assist district teams in building a culture of church work recruitment; and
- Develop and refine group templates and resources for use in all districts as part of their church work formation efforts.

### ② Pilot Project with Circuit Visitors

Circuit visitors play a significant role in the district. The work of circuit visitors includes being conversant of Synod and district resolutions; seeking to strengthen the spirit of cooperation among pastors, commissioned ministers and congregations; and regularly convening his circuit's pastors for conferences (Winkels). SAS is inviting 22 circuit visitors to participate in a pilot project to identify ways all circuit visitors can better integrate SAS into the culture of their circuit's congregations, schools and entities among pastors, commissioned workers, LCMS parents, lay leadership and youth. SAS will use the pilots to:

- › Develop resources for circuit visitors to use to encourage all pastors to work with their congregations in developing their culture of church work formation and recruitment;
- › Identify and test resources that effectively reach and activate laity, who play a key role in creating this culture;
- › Learn about questions and challenges that circuit congregations and schools encounter in developing a culture of church work formation and recruitment; and
- › Equip and encourage other circuit visitors to assist their congregations, schools and entities to develop an SAS church work formation and recruitment culture throughout the Synod.

### **③ LCMS School Principals Pilot Project**

SAS identified and is connecting with eight LCMS principals to learn more about how Concordia Publishing House's (CPH) SAS curriculum is being used in our schools. Prior to gathering these principals, SAS and CPH will be sending a curriculum survey to our LCMS principals and schools. Based on survey results and SAS' goals for this curriculum, this pilot will:

- › Identify ways to address the challenges and opportunities identified in the survey;
- › Learn how SAS can improve the curriculum;
- › Gather best practices from across the Synod in implementing and enhancing the curriculum; and
- › Develop a promotion plan for the curriculum to encourage annual use across all our LCMS schools and congregations.

### **④ Second-Career Facebook Teacher Ads**

SAS just concluded a second-career Facebook teacher ad campaign with district education executives Sean Martens (education executive for the LCMS Minnesota South District) and Chris Cody (education executive for the LCMS South Wisconsin District). The campaign targeted current public school teachers to generate interest in working at an LCMS school. The campaign was a success — we received contact information from 398 people who wanted more information about teaching at LCMS schools.

We will use the insights from this ad pilot to inform an expanded pilot later this year before determining if a Synodwide campaign is feasible.

## **2025 Research Projects**

### **① Research with Lay Leaders**

SAS is identifying approximately 40 LCMS lay leaders to participate in one-on-one interviews and focus groups. This research will deepen our understanding of the laity mindset and behaviors around church work formation and recruitment. This project will include:

- › Developing new and refining existing resources that resonate with a lay audience; and
- › Incorporating learning from the research into SAS articles, presentations and other communication and teaching opportunities.

### **② Research with Parents and Youth**

SAS is identifying approximately 30 LCMS parents and youth to participate in one-on-one interviews and focus groups. We will learn about the perceptions, expectations, challenges and joys of the journey toward full-time church work from the perspective of our current generation of LCMS youth. This research will include:

- › Developing new and refining existing resources that resonate with youth; and
- › Using these findings to help LCMS parents have meaningful conversations with youth about considering full-time church work.

### ③ Research with Concordia Universities' and Seminaries' Theology Faculty

LCMS Concordia university and seminary faculty play a vital role in our Synod's life together. As they lead the formation of future church workers, theology professors have a captive audience of the next generation of influential persons who will form, recruit and encourage the generation of youth and adults who follow them in pursuing full-time church work. We want to equip and support our LCMS professors in helping these students understand the role they will soon play in developing and sustaining a culture of church work formation and recruitment in the place where they are called. SAS will interview faculty members to learn how we can support integrating the messages of church work formation and recruitment into their courses and into the campus life of their institutions.

### SAS on KFUO Coffee Hour Program

The KFUO Coffee Hour program is in its third year of featuring SAS every Friday. Go to [kfuo.org/tag/set-apart-to-serve](http://kfuo.org/tag/set-apart-to-serve) to hear these great SAS programs. You can listen to past programs at any time. Share them with a friend.

- **Jan. 17** – Ross and Jenni George, a new seminary family at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., talk about Ross's first career and how he made the decision to pursue pastoral ministry (*re-broadcast*).
- **Jan. 24** – Matt Kenitzer, a member of the Board of Regents for Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, talks about his upbringing in the church, what drew him to the LCMS, why faithful leadership in the church is important to him, and all the critical work the Board of Regents do for the good of the seminary.
- **Jan. 31** – The Rev. Seth Flick, pastor of Divine Redeemer Lutheran Church in Hartland, Wis., talks about his formation as a pastor and who encouraged him in this pursuit; his congregation's emphasis on their duty to raise up future church workers; how they use relationships, opportunities and invitations to encourage children in the faith; and the roles of other church workers and parents in their approach (*re-broadcast*).
- **Feb. 7** – The Rev. Paul Hemenway, pastor of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Edmond, Okla., talks about his life prior to his journey to seminary, skills from the music industry that have translated into pastoral ministry, how he finally made his way to seminary, who supported him on this journey, and words of wisdom and encouragement for others who are considering church work vocations.
- **Feb. 14** – James Wiencke, a first-year Residential Alternate Route student at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, shares his journey — his life before considering seminary, the various careers that led him there, how his family supported his decision, the joys and challenges he encountered, and what he is looking forward to in seminary.
- **Feb. 21** – Dr. Thaddeus Warren, Chair of the Department of Human and Social Sciences and DCE Program Director at Concordia University, Nebraska (CUNE), Seward, Neb., discusses his passion for worker well-being, the church work programs available at CUNE, and how students are formed for ministry.
- **Feb. 28** – David Vandercar (executive director of Lakeview Ministries in Seymour, Ind.) and Danny Frastaci (operations director of Lakeview Ministries in Seymour, Ind.) talk about Lakeview Ministries, how life at camp shapes attitudes concerning a life of Christian service, how many church workers could potentially attribute experience at Lakeview to their consideration of full-time church work, and what Lakeview does to intentionally form church workers.
- **March 7** – The Rev. Joe Cox, head of academics at Lutheran High School South in St. Louis, talks about his journey to the seminary and into the teaching vocation, what gives him joy as a Lutheran high school teacher, the relationships he builds with students as a part of their formation as young adults, how he and other school leadership work with parents in the formation journey, and his favorite lessons to teach students (*re-broadcast*).

➤ **March 14** – The Rev. Harrison Goodman (executive director of mission and theology for Higher Things) and Crysten Sanchez (executive director of operations for Higher Things) discuss the upcoming HT Beyond: Eyes to See – A Young Adult Event from Higher Things, including what HT Beyond is, the significance of this space for young adults, what young adults will learn about art and architecture through the event, the topics liturgical artist Ed Riojas will present on, and how events like these inspire young adults to consider church work vocations.

**Set Apart to Serve** is funded entirely by donor-designated gifts. To learn more or find out how you can help strengthen a culture of church work recruitment, contact LCMS Mission Advancement at 888-930-4438 or [mission.advancement@lcms.org](mailto:mission.advancement@lcms.org).



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