



2025

LCMS CHURCH WORK RECRUITMENT
ANNUAL REPORT

SET APART TO SERVE 



Set Apart To Serve

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Set Apart to Serve is personal for all of us.

I was raised by two faithful Lutheran parents. They brought me to the font of Holy Baptism shortly after I was born, taught me to pray before meals and before bedtime, took me to church and Sunday school every week, took me to Confirmation instruction and helped me learn the Catechism.

What my parents taught me concerning Christ and the Holy Scriptures they learned from the preaching, teaching and pastoral care of their pastor(s). My parents reared me in the Christian faith because they wanted me to have the forgiveness of sins and eternal life in heaven through the blood, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In His infinite wisdom, God created the Office of the Holy Ministry. He designed this sacred, honorable and joyful office of the Word. He calls pastors to preach and teach His powerful, life-giving Word, feed God's people His holy Sacraments and provide pastoral care to His people — from conception to death. It is through His Word and Sacraments that the Holy Spirit creates, nourishes and sustains saving faith in all who hear the Word and believe.

In love, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has established seven full-time church work vocations to support the Office of the Holy Ministry to assist the faithful in their God-given vocations. These sacred and joyful offices are Lutheran school teachers, deaconesses, directors of Christian education, directors of Christian outreach, directors of family life ministry, directors of parish music and directors of church ministries.

While parents, relatives, and laypersons teach and share God's Word in their godly vocations, pastors and commissioned workers devote their entire lives to these full-time church work vocations. Pastors, particularly, are accountable to God for their faithful ministry (HEB. 13:17).

This is where full-time church work becomes deeply personal for us. We want our children, their spouses, our grandchildren, extended family and friends and all God's people to know Jesus Christ and have saving faith in Him. We pray that faithful pastors, teachers, deaconesses, DCEs, DPMs and other church workers put Jesus into the ears and hearts and souls of our loved ones for their eternal salvation.

Set Apart to Serve is a culture of forming, raising up, encouraging, and making it possible for our youth and adults to pursue a full-time, sacred and joyful church work vocation. Just as *all of us* want our children and grandchildren to have eternal life through Christ Jesus, so *all of us* have a passion and role to play in securing pastors and commissioned church workers for generations to come. To all of us — *Set Apart to Serve* is personal.

Rev. Dr. James A. Baneck

Executive Director of LCMS Pastoral Education and *Set Apart to Serve*





CALL TO ACTION

As you read this report, I am asking you to please:

- 1. Share** this report with your pastor, commissioned church workers and laypersons in your congregation, school, family and/or entity.
- 2. Add** a personal endorsement of *Set Apart to Serve* when forwarding this report.
- 3. Pray** that you, your congregation and your family intentionally embrace and implement a culture of church-work formation and recruitment.



WE ARE BUILDING A CULTURE of forming, raising up, encouraging and supporting our youth and adults to consider a vocation in full-time church work throughout The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

This CULTURE is called *Set Apart to Serve*.

Building a lasting culture of this magnitude — with every major entity in the LCMS, two world-renowned seminaries, our excellent Concordia universities, numerous impactful partners, all 35 LCMS districts, 1.3 million confirmed members, 5,000 parish pastors and 6,000 commissioned workers — takes guiding principles, purpose, leadership, expertise, integrity, relationships, research, communication, resources, evaluation and vision.

Guiding Principles

SAS holds that the Office of the Holy Ministry (pastoral office) was instituted by Christ Himself as a gift to His Church. Through the Christian congregation, as the holder of all churchly authority, God calls qualified men to this divinely established office and sends them as His ministers to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to administer the Sacraments publicly in the stead of Christ and by His command, with accountability both to God and the Church (*LBS Agenda*: 155). The LCMS designates these servants of the Church as Ministers of Religion—Ordained.

SAS holds that God moves people to serve Him in many ways. From the earliest days of the Christian Church, some people have been selected to work in support of the Office of the Holy Ministry (*ACTS 6:1-7*). When the Church calls or appoints a person who has received training for such an office, and that person has been certified as being well-equipped and competent to carry out such work, that person is to be properly installed into that position in the congregation or institution in which such service is to be performed (*LSB Agenda*: 203). The LCMS designates these servants of the Church as Ministers of Religion—Commissioned.

Purpose

The purpose of *Set Apart to Serve* is to form and recruit boys and men to preach and teach the Word of Christ as pastors and to form and recruit youth and adults to teach and share the Word of Christ as LCMS commissioned church work vocations through which the Holy Spirit creates, nourishes and sustains saving faith for life and salvation.

Formation for full-time church work ideally begins at a child's conception and continues through a life shared through the Word of Christ — centered in Holy Baptism and the Sacrament of the Altar.

“Teaching our children about Jesus is our single most important task as parents. Everything flows from there. When we mess up and ask for forgiveness, we’re talking about Jesus’ forgiveness. When somebody we love is sick, we’re talking about Jesus’ healing. When our kids talk about what they want to be when they grow up, we discuss how they can use their gifts to proclaim God’s glory to a hurting world. It’s my greatest hope that, no matter what they do or where they go in this world, they will always cling to their faith in Jesus.”

– Michael and Alison Zeller, parents at Our Savior Lutheran Church, Fenton, MO.

As the Church forms her children to love God and serve neighbor for all godly vocations throughout one's lifetime, *Set Apart to Serve* works to form and recruit Christians for full-time church work through lifelong formation in the Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, the baptismal life in Christ, the Christian family, intellect, physical and emotional health and life together in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Leadership and Expertise

The *Set Apart to Serve* core leadership team is comprised of LCMS Office of Pastoral Education, LCMS Communications and Standing Partnership, a marketing and communications firm in St. Louis, Mo. (standingpartnership.com).

The Office of Pastoral Education brings organization, attention to details, relationship-building, conveying the big picture and passion. Combined experience includes parent, grandparent, teacher, school administrator, director of Christian education, circuit visitor, first and second-career pastor, musician and district president.

LCMS Communications includes writers, management, copy editors, designers, web, video production, social media and more.



Research

While *Set Apart to Serve* is led and facilitated by a core team, church work formation and recruitment culture is best developed through the voices, representation, expertise and input from all sectors of the Synod.

This year, SAS gathered information through pilots, focus groups, surveys and more to develop a recruitment culture in every LCMS congregation, home, school, district and entity. Our goal is a culture so ingrained in the Synod that it will last until the Lord returns.

Pilot programs

District Focus Team Pilot

In May, July and October 2025, *Set Apart to Serve* convened representatives from eight LCMS districts to discuss forming and strengthening district focus teams. Whether they are new focus teams, committees, task forces or integrated into existing district groups, they all serve the same purpose: engage every individual in the Synod in recruiting the next generation of church workers.

Action and Impact:

Participants shared best practices including group structure, leadership support and district alignment (files.lcms.org/file/preview/forming-district-SAS-focus-team).

- The pilot established a collaborative model between SAS and districts that supports accountability and shared ownership.
- The pilot lays the groundwork for a scalable approach to shape future resources, training, church work formation and recruitment strategies across the Synod.

LCMS Districts

Mid South
Minnesota South
Nebraska
Northern Illinois
Northwest
Oklahoma
Rocky Mountain
Southeastern

“The establishment of a special district SAS committee has really gotten into the grassroots areas of our district. Our district is spread out very much like several others and geographically bringing people together let’s them know that there’s an important purpose for this whole thing. And it’s been very, very effective... By the grace of God, we have 11 men that are in the seminary and five others that have applied. We also have five deaconesses in our district as a result of this effort as well.”



– Dr. Roger Paavola, LCMS Mid-South district president

Circuit Visitors Pilot

In May, July and December 2025, *Set Apart to Serve* convened a pilot group of circuit visitors (CVs) who explored how they can encourage church work formation and recruitment across their circuits.

LCMS Districts

Atlantic
Florida-Georgia
Kansas
Mid South
Minnesota North
Minnesota South
Montana
Nebraska
New England
North Wisconsin
SELC
South Dakota
Southeastern

Action and Impact:

- CVs shared current practices, challenges and opportunities for strengthening church work recruitment.
- The group provided insight as SAS developed a quarterly CV newsletter with turnkey tools to promote recruitment and formation in circuits and congregations. The first edition was sent in the fall. Sign up for the “*Set Apart to Serve* Newsletter for Circuit Visitors” at mailchi.mp/lcms/email-signup.
- This pilot strengthened feedback channels that inform future training and resource development.

Teacher Advertisement Pilot

Set Apart to Serve partnered with District Education Executives Chris Cody (South Wisconsin) and Sean Martens (Minnesota South) to run a pilot Facebook ad campaign targeted to public school educators in those districts, encouraging them to consider teaching at an LCMS school.

Action and Impact:

- Over three months (Dec. 2024 – Feb. 2025), 398 public school teachers submitted information to learn more and were contacted by the respective district education executive.
- The pilot established a foundation for future campaigns. SAS is expanding this successful teacher-recruitment effort to four additional pilot districts later this year.

LCMS Districts

Florida-Georgia
Michigan
Minnesota South
Missouri
Nebraska
South Wisconsin

Surveys

Annual Youth Survey (Summer 2025)

This fourth annual survey tracks year-to-year changes in awareness and preferences related to church work careers among LCMS youth. Responses came from across Synod. Findings include:

- Awareness of *Set Apart to Serve* among LCMS youth has increased over the years, though a majority of youth are still unaware.
- Financial reasons remain among the top obstacles for those considering church work.
- Conversations with church workers remain the most important trigger for youth who self-reported they are considering church work.
- Fewer than one-quarter of youth report that a church worker spoke with them about church work vocations (22% down from 28% in previous years). These conversations are even less common among girls or students not attending an LCMS school.

Respondent Demographic Overview:

19% attend an LCMS school

67% attend worship weekly

71% attend youth group

58% are female

16% heard about SAS

38% related to an LCMS church worker

Action and Impact:

Through awareness efforts, focus groups, pilot projects and Synodwide collaboration

- SAS is strengthening its communication that pastors, commissioned church workers, parents and lay leaders must have intentional conversations with youth about considering full-time church work so the Synod increases its church workers today and for generations to come.
- SAS is strengthening its communication that, through the generosity of many, tuition and room and board costs have been reduced in recent years. To learn more, visit lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve. In addition, through the Concordia University (CUS) System Scholarship Endowment Fund, 120 church work students received \$5,000 each this fall. To learn more, visit cus.edu

Annual Influencer Survey (Fall 2025)

This fourth iteration surveyed LCMS ordained and commissioned church workers and congregational lay leaders to measure SAS awareness and behavior changes. Findings include:

- SAS awareness has reached 91% saturation among ordained and commissioned workers and continues to rise among lay leaders from 42% in 2023 to 58% in 2025.
- Respondents reported that they are more prepared to talk about church work than the prior year (10% increase).
- 74% of ordained and commissioned workers had one or more conversations with youth about full-time church work in the past year; 54% of lay youth leaders reported the same.

Action and Impact:

- While SAS is glad to see increases in awareness, preparedness and conversations with youth about church work vocations, we aim to push these numbers higher. We want more respondents reporting these behaviors.
- The 2025-26 SAS scope of work to increase these numbers includes
 - District Focus Team Pilot — learn how district teams are formed, what's working and what can be improved.
 - Circuit Visitors Pilot — equip Circuit Visitors with SAS information and tools for congregations, schools, Winkels (pastor conferences) and more.
 - School (CPH Curriculum) Pilot — understand school needs and better promote the SAS/CPH church work recruitment curriculum.
 - Lay Leader Pilot — work with lay leaders to learn from them and guide them on how to create a culture of church work formation and recruitment in the congregation, home and school.
 - Parent and Youth Pilot — engage influential adults, parents and youth to learn how SAS can best reach them.

Annual Congregation Survey (Spring 2025)

This survey gauges SAS awareness and the frequency of church work conversations in LCMS congregations, especially among the laity. Survey findings include:

- 98% of LCMS ordained and 90% commissioned church workers are aware of SAS.
- Laypersons talking to one or more youth about church work increased from 19% in 2023 to 30% in 2025.
- Commissioned workers talking to one or more youth about church work increased from 58.7% in 2023 to 74.1% in 2025.
- Pastors talking to one or more youth about church work increased from 74% in 2023 to 83.3% in 2025.
- Most conversations across all stakeholder groups are directed to middle- and high-school youth.
- 15% of lay people are uncomfortable initiating church-work conversations but would be more comfortable with good resources in hand.

Action and Impact:

- Please encourage pastors, commissioned workers, pastors and lay leaders to initiate intentional church work conversations.
- Continue to communicate that our Concordia Universities and the Concordia University System have been collaborating to drastically reduce the cost of church work programs and reduce the education debt of church work graduates.
- Support SAS pilots (district focus teams, circuit visitors, school curriculum, lay leaders, parents/youth) that identify ways to improve and increase awareness, preparedness and church work conversations.

Interviews and Focus Groups

Seminary and Concordia University Theology Faculty

From April to June 2025, the SAS team interviewed 11 theology professors across all Concordia universities and both seminaries to assess current recruitment efforts, areas needing improvement and ways SAS can provide support.

Significant insights shared by Faculty

- The Concordia universities and seminaries depend on prior faith formation and recruitment in congregations, homes and schools.
- Building a SAS culture hinges on a shared foundation set by pastors, parents, commissioned workers and laity.
- Recruitment efforts will stall without universal cultural change in the congregation, home and Lutheran school level.
- Recruitment is not just about numbers; we must prepare the whole person, not just the worker.

Action and Impact:

- SAS will build tools to help universities introduce vocational conversations with students.
- By supplying tools and resources for faculty, SAS will help seminaries encourage students to identify and mentor future church workers.
- SAS will explore ways for faculty to engage more purposefully in recruitment conversations.

*“My pastor told me I should do this.’
That’s what 90 percent of students tell us
when we ask why they came to seminary.
That shows the powerful role pastors play
in raising up the next generation.”*

– Geoff Boyle, CTSFW



Set Apart to Serve identifies these areas of development that are necessary in forming the *whole Lutheran person* for all godly vocations, including full-time church work:

- Biblical
- Confessional
- Baptismal (faith and life)
- Family
- Intellectual
- Physical
- Emotional
- Synodical

Second-Career Seminarians (Journey mapping, Fall 2024)

SAS facilitated journey mapping workshops at both LCMS seminaries — first with second-career seminarians, then with their wives — across these stages:

Awareness → Consideration → Decision → Enrollment → Relocation → Seminary Years

For each of the stages, we asked these five questions of both groups:

- What steps did you take?
- What key questions and decisions were involved?
- Who and what did you interact with in this stage?
- What were the pain points and barriers?
- When did you take these steps?

Action and Impact:

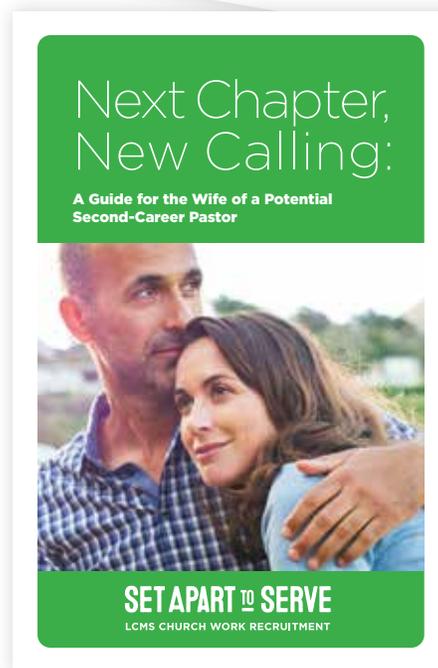
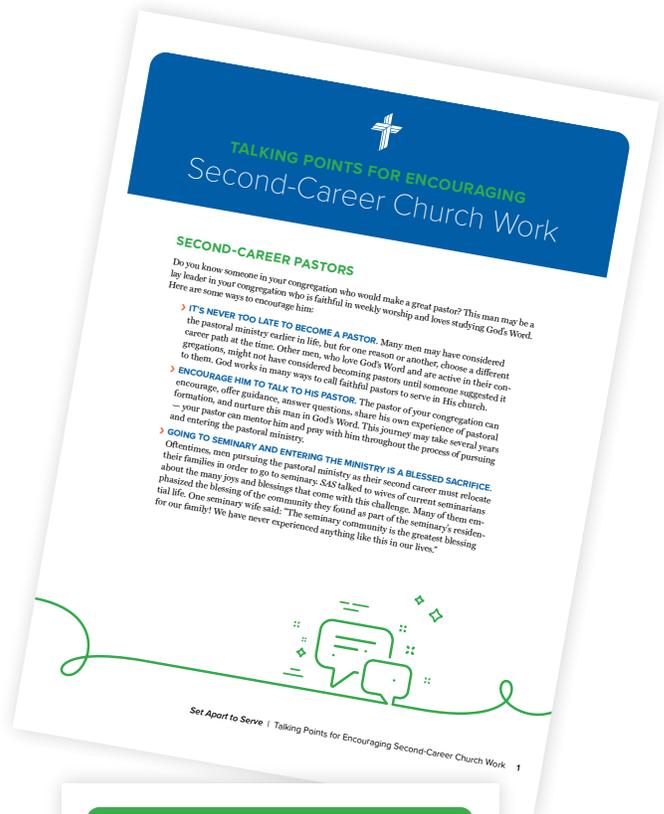
These journey maps helped develop the following resources:

- Next Chapter, New Calling — A Guide for the Wife of a Potential Second-Career Pastor files.lcms.org/file/preview/LCMS-Set-Apart-to-Serve-Next-Chapter-New-Calling
- Talking Points for Encouraging Second-Career Church Work files.lcms.org/file/preview/SAS-Talking-Points-for-Encouraging-Second-Career-Church-Work
- Routes to the Office of the Holy Ministry files.lcms.org/file/preview/sas-routes-to-the-office-of-the-holy-ministry
- A Pastor's Guide to Mentoring Future Second-Career Pastors files.lcms.org/file/preview/A-Pastors-Guide-to-Mentoring-Future-Second-Career-Pastors

More resources in production include second-career FAQs for laity and all audiences and a testimonial booklet for second-career pastors and teachers.

2025-26 Research and Pilots include

- Second-Career Pastor Pilot
- Principal and Current Teacher Recruitment Toolkit
- School Pilot with those using the CPH SAS Curriculum
- Lay Leader Pilot
- Parent/Youth Pilot (Reboot)
- Expansion of Journey Map Confirmation
- Parent/Student Research
- Consult with Pastors' Wives



Evaluating and Testing

SAS continually evaluates and tests our strategies and resources, gathering feedback through pilot groups, surveys and collaborating with Synod stakeholders. We also meet three times a year with the SAS **Advisory Council** for focused feedback, critique and counsel. Council members are subject matter experts in fields central to building an enduring SAS culture.

Serving on the Advisory Council:

- Dr. Alan Freeman — director, LCMS School Ministry
- Dr. Bernard Bull — president, Concordia University Nebraska (CUNE)
- Rev. Dan Weber — pastor, St. Luke's Lutheran Church, Federal Way, Wash.
- David Kuschel – assistant vice president for strategic relationships, Concordia Plans
- Rev. Jesse Kueker – director of enrollment, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo.
- Rev. Matthew Wietfeldt — assistant vice president of admission, Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne, Ind.
- Kaye Wolff — retired information and technology professional, LWML leader, LCMS Black Ministry, Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT) advisor
- Keith Boheim — executive director, The Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation
- Rev. Dr. Kevin Wilson — district president, LCMS Ohio District
- Marli Ockander — science teacher, Sioux Falls Lutheran School, S.D.
- Patrick Sturdivant — executive director of development and marketing, Higher Things
- Robert Finch — pre-seminary student, Concordia University, St. Paul, Minn.

“Four years ago, Concordia Nebraska had 50-60 church work students. The last two years, we’ve been between 90-100, with over 300 church work students currently at CUNE. CUNE has a dedicated recruiter for church work, a dedicated professor for faith formation and a director of church engagement.”

– Dr. Bernard Bull, CUNE President



Relationships and Integrity

Annual research continually reveals and reinforces the importance of **relationships** in church work formation and recruitment. The relationships a youth or second-career individual has with pastors, Lutheran teachers, DCEs, deaconesses, parents, laypersons in the congregation and others rank one of the five most essential elements in building a culture of church work formation and recruitment.¹

Likewise, building and nurturing authentic collaborative relationships and partnerships throughout the Synod is an essential element in building a culture in every LCMS con-

¹ Five most essential elements in building a culture of church work formation and recruitment are immersion in the Word and Sacraments, nurturing and encouraging relationships from influential adults, providing opportunities to serve, participating in like-minded communities (youth gathering, Higher Things, Vocatio, Christ Academy, Lutheran camp) and engaging in vocational conversations.

gregation, family, school, district and entity. SAS strives to develop and nurture these relationships with **integrity**. We build relationships not only for the sake of accomplishing tasks, but because this is how the baptized in Christ strive to live (GAL 2:20).

SAS has great respect for our collaborative partners and cherishes their expertise. Together, we're stronger in accomplishing our common goal and vision of sending more workers into the harvest field (MATT.9:35-38). SAS partners include:

- All 35 Districts — presidents, education executives, conventions and their teams
- Concordia Education Network (CUEnet) — Executive Director Rev. Dr. Paul Philp and his team
- Concordia Publishing House — President and CEO Jonathan D. Schultz and his team
- Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne, Ind. and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo. — Presidents Bruss and Egger, provosts, recruitment officers, leaders in Christ Academy and Vocatio, professors, staff and students and their families.
- Concordia Universities (Chicago, Irvine, Nebraska, St. Paul, Wisconsin/Ann Arbor) — Presidents Dawn, Thomas, Bull, Friedrich and Ankerberg, and their recruitment officers, church work directors, professors, staff and church work students.
- Concordia University System — Rev. Dr. Jamison Hardy and his team
- LCMS Colloquy — LCMS First Vice-President Rev. Peter Lange and his staff
- LCMS Communications — Interim Executive Director Rev. Roy Askins and his team (particularly Jennifer Duffy, director of production services) and writers, editors, social media, website and design
- LCMS Family Ministry — Rev. Andy Becker, manager of family discipleship
- LCMS Mission Advancement — Interim Executive Director Shane Smithson and his team
- LCMS School Ministry — Director Dr. Alan Freeman and his team
- LCMS Worker Wellness — Deaconess Dr. Tiffany Manor and her team
- LCMS Youth Ministry — Director Rev. Mark Kiessling and his team
- Ministry to the Armed Forces (MAF) — Director Rev. Craig Muehler and his team

- Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support (PALS) — Director Rev. Jonathan Manor
- The Lutheran Women's Missionary League — President Eden Keefe and her team
- LCMS Church Planting — Director Rev. Dr. Quintin Cundiff

Communication

Set Apart to Serve has an intentional communications and marketing plan that connects the SAS brand, message, vision, resources, actions and best practices with stakeholders across the Synod. SAS communication is comprehensive, frequent, transparent and honest with the goal that recipients read, share and use the content.

Monthly SAS Report

SAS sends a monthly report to more than 600 stakeholders and subscribers. It highlights current news, activity and vision. Recipients are encouraged to freely share it. Subscribe at mailchi.mp/lcms/email-signup.

Quarterly Council of Presidents

District presidents are vital to SAS's impact and success. All 35 district presidents support SAS and partner through district conventions, focus teams, circuit visitors, education executives and pilot projects with congregations and schools. This report includes:

- SAS activity in the districts
- The impact district partnership has on forming and recruiting church workers
- Takeaways and action items for the next quarter

Email Awareness Campaign

These emails build awareness among lay leaders and LCMS educators by promoting resources and practical ways to support SAS. Newsletters sent this past year include:

- November 2024 — Encouraging youth to study church work at a Concordia university; providing best practices to help youth consider church work.
- March 2025 — Encouraging someone to consider church work as a second career; talking points for those conversations.
- May 2025 — Supporting parents to raise their children in the knowledge, faith and life of their baptism; encouraging laity and educators to explore SAS resources at lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve.

- November 2025 — Promoting the free CPH SAS curriculum (cph.org/c-2765-education/c-2778-religion-curriculum/set-apart-to-serve) and the October teacher colloquy webinar.

District Education Executives newsletter

District education executives (ed execs) are valued partners with direct connections to our LCMS schools, principals, teachers, other church workers and congregations. To support them in building a Synodwide culture of church work formation and recruitment, SAS produces a shareable quarterly newsletter with updates and best practices. Anyone may subscribe at mailchi.mp/lcms/email-signup.

Each quarterly newsletter includes:

- A Scripture verse and prayer
- SAS church worker spotlight on KFUO Coffee Hour kfu.org/tag/set-apart-to-serve
- CPH SAS curriculum best practices (suggested by faculty at LCMS schools)
- SAS resource spotlight
- A significant SAS statistic or research report

Circuit Visitor Newsletter

SAS is working with about 15 circuit visitors (CVs) from 14 LCMS districts. The pilot program is designed to get input from CVs as we develop ways to equip every CV with turnkey ways to promote SAS at circuit pastors' conferences (Winkels), with commissioned church workers, and in congregations and schools in their circuit. Each newsletter will include:

- Scripture and prayer (Pray the Lord of the harvest)
- Spotlight on a CV actively engaging their circuit with SAS resources
- Short SAS bulletin blurbs to share with their congregations
- A pertinent SAS resource for circuit congregations
- Winkel talking points and discussion prompts

KFUO Coffee Hour

The Coffee Hour is a daily KFUO Radio program hosted by Andy Bates and Sarah Gulseth, featuring stories of the intersection of Lutheran life and a secular world.

Every Friday, the show features a conversation around *Set Apart to Serve*. Guests speak on topics related to building a culture of church work formation and recruiting in The

Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Listen at kfu.org/tag/set-apart-to-serve and share these with the people in your congregation, school, family and circle of friends. Topics include:

- Formation and recruitment at Lutheran elementary and high schools
- Formation and recruitment at our Concordia universities
- The journey of church work students at our Concordia universities and seminaries, including student teaching, internship and vicarage
- Pastors and commissioned workers on how they and their congregations are forming and recruiting church workers
- Leaders and participants at the LCMS youth gathering, Higher Things, Vocatio, Christ Academy, and Lutheran camps and how these influence forming and recruiting church workers
- The life and work of full-time church workers — deaconesses, pastors, Lutheran teachers, directors of Christian education, directors of Christian outreach, directors of church ministries, directors of family life ministry and directors of parish music
- Updates from the *Set Apart to Serve* leadership team
- District presidents, district education executives, circuit visitors, board members and others sharing their partnership in SAS in their district
- Telling the story of collaborating with SAS from LCMS school ministry, LCMS youth ministry, LCMS worker wellness, and more
- Church workers telling the joy they have in serving as full-time church workers
- Commitment to church work recruitment, formation and education from CUS and seminary presidents
- How LCMS outdoor camps foster church work formation and recruitment
- Hurdles and barriers to pursuing church work and how they are being addressed throughout the Synod

Reporter

Set Apart to Serve is featured monthly in the Reporter, the official newspaper of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. The print edition and reporter.lcms.org provide ministry news for rostered church workers and laypersons. As vital as it is to have more pastors, teachers and church workers in the LCMS, recipients of the Reporter are asked to take five minutes to find and read the latest about and related to SAS. Sometimes it's on the front page!

This year, SAS featured and related articles including:

- **November 2024** — *Set Apart to Serve* insert
- **January 2025** — Commissioned colloquy manual gets major update
- **February** — SAS is here to stay
- **March** — CUC church work tuition guarantee
- **April** — The eternal impact of SAS, call day at the seminaries
- **May** — Giving thanks for our teachers
- **June** — A report on the first six years of SAS, call day at the seminaries, giving thanks for our DCEs, honoring our church work spouses
- **July** — SAS teaching the Lutheran Confessions at Christ Academy at CTSFW, Worker Wellness pilot project
- **August** — SAS offers new resources for districts and congregations
- **September** — The teacher webinar advertised for Oct. 15, Concordia students sharing their church work journey at Higher Things, CTCR article on Lutheran education
- **October** — Teacher colloquy webinar, LCMS District building a culture of church work formation and recruitment, church work scholarships, church work appreciation

Lutheran Witness

The Lutheran Witness witness.lcms.org keeps readers updated with news from the Synod and helps interpret the world from a Lutheran perspective. Recent SAS articles include:

- **February** — The Purpose of the Educational Well-Being of Church Workers (online)
- **March** — Our Youth Are Ready to Serve (print and online)
- **November** — Joy to the World: the need for church workers around the world

Colloquy Webinar

SAS partnered with Rev. Peter Lange (1st VP, chairman of the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry and Commissioned Ministry), Rev. Dr. Paul Philp (executive director of Concordia University Education Network, or CUEnet) and Wendi Murphy (CUEnet office operations manager and registrar) to develop a teacher colloquy webinar and “Colloquy 101” resource.

The teacher colloquy webinar was held on Oct. 15. Topics

included what teacher colloquy is and what it requires; the personal, spiritual and classroom benefits of colloquy; the colloquy process, including requirements, coursework, formats, timing and financial aid; and next steps and resources for those who are ready to begin the process.

Over 225 people across 31 LCMS districts registered for the webinar including district staff, pastors and principals, but primarily non-rostered Lutheran school teachers. The webinar was also recorded and is available for on-demand viewing at resources.lcms.org/multimedia/teacher-colloquy-webinar/.

Impact will be measured by total attendees, on-demand views, teachers registering for and completing colloquy, and the addition of rostered teachers via colloquy.

Resources

Set Apart to Serve resources are organized by the most influential audiences — pastors, parents, commissioned church workers, laity and districts. Browse at resources.lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve.

The value and worth of SAS resources are realized only when they are put to productive, impactful use throughout the Synod.

In 2020, SAS conducted a baseline survey asking current church workers what would be most helpful to be more proactive in starting conversations with youth and adults about full-time church work. Respondents identified specific needs, and the chart shows both what was requested and how SAS has responded from 2020 to 2025.

Responding to the ongoing needs and requests to form, encourage, assist and recruit youth and adults for full-time church work vocations, SAS developed these resources:

- Forming a Congregation SAS Focus Team — files.lcms.org/file/preview/forming-congregation-SAS-focus-team
- Forming a District SAS Focus Team — files.lcms.org/file/preview/forming-district-SAS-focus-team
- Helping Parents Prepare Youth for Church Work Vocations — files.lcms.org/file/preview/SAS-Helping-Parents-Prepare-Youth-for-Church-Work-Vocations
- Next Chapter: New Calling — A Guide for the Wife of a Potential Second-Career Pastor — files.lcms.org/file/preview/LCMS-Set-Apart-to-Serve-Next-Chapter-New-Calling
- Second Career FAQs

% Requested	Resource Requested	Resources Developed by SAS
39%	Videos, stories, profiles of church workers talking about how they found their path and what they love	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SAS has over 75 videos of church workers at vimeo.com/show-case/9308985 on a wide- range of topics. KFUO Coffee hour has more than 150 recorded stories with guests representing several facets of church work formation and recruitment at kfuo.org/tag/set-apart-to-serve
39%	Prayers that will help me to be more conscious of, and effective in, promoting the Lord’s work	SAS is currently compiling church work recruitment prayers published by LCMS Worship in their “Let Us Pray” series and will post them on the SAS website.
22%	More information about being a church worker	SAS has several resources on this topic resources.lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve . One of the most requested resources is “The 8 LCMS Church Work Vocations” thelc.ms/8-lcms-church-work-vocations .
20%	More information and support from the Concordia university admissions counselors who visit	SAS developed an online resource that compares the tuition, room/board, and fees of the LCMS church work programs at our Concordia universities and seminaries. See lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve .
17%	A conversation guide	Several conversation guides, engaging various audiences resources, and talking points are located at resources.lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve .

- Talking Points for Encouraging Second-Career Church Work files.lcms.org/file/preview/SAS-Talking-Points-for-Encouraging-Second-Career-Church-Work
- Routes to the Office of the Ministry Booklet files.lcms.org/file/preview/sas-routes-to-the-office-of-the-holy-ministry
- Pastor’s Guide to Mentoring Future Second-Career Pastors files.lcms.org/file/preview/A-Pastors-Guide-to-Mentoring-Future-Second-Career-Pastors
- Encouraging Men to Consider a Second Career as a Pastor files.lcms.org/file/preview/encouraging-men-to-consider-a-second-career-as-a-pastor
- Teacher Colloquy 101 (accompanying resource for the Teacher Colloquy Webinar) files.lcms.org/file/preview/sas-teacher-colloquy-101
- Testimonial booklet for second-career pastors
- Testimonial booklet for second-career teachers

Updated Resources from previous years

- Youth Journey Map — Birth to Age 12 files.lcms.org/file/preview/LCMS-Set-Apart-to-Serve-Youth-Journey-Map-Birth-Age-12

- Youth Journey Map — Age 12-14 files.lcms.org/file/preview/LCMS-Set-Apart-to-Serve-Youth-Journey-Map-Ages-12-14
- Youth Journey Map — Age 14-18+ files.lcms.org/file/preview/LCMS-Set-Apart-to-Serve-Youth-Journey-Map-Ages-14-18

Impact

Activity produces Impact

Set Apart to Serve measures impact in several ways:

- Increases in overall SAS awareness throughout the Synod
- The number of influential adults having conversations with youth and adults to consider full-time church work
- The number of major groups and entities partnering and collaborating with SAS
- Increases in church worker formation and recruitment in our congregations, homes and schools
- Increases in church work enrollments at our Concordia universities and seminaries
- Removal of roadblocks that keep youth and adults from pursuing full-time church work in the future
- Decreasing the shortage of pastors, teachers and other church workers

Research consistently shows the influential voices encouraging youth to consider full-time church work are

“All growth depends upon activity. There is no development physically or intellectually without effort, and effort means work.”

– Calvin Coolidge

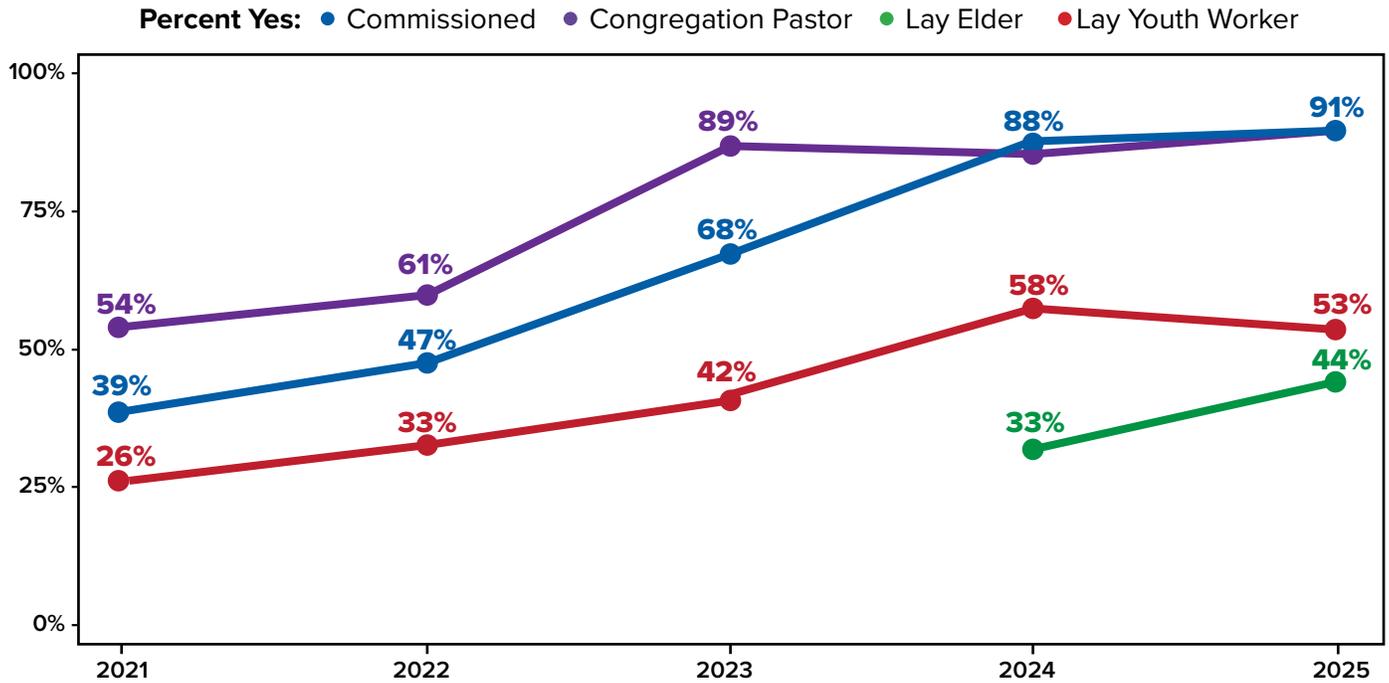
pastors, LCMS commissioned church workers,² parents and laypersons. Teenagers also encourage one another to consider full-time church work.³ Spouses often serve as a significant influence on second-career church workers considering one of the vocations.

For there to be a *Set Apart to Serve* impact in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, everyone must buy into the culture of intentionally forming, raising up and encouraging youth and adults to full-time church work in every LCMS congregation, home, school, district and entity.

Awareness of SAS Increases

Awareness of *Set Apart to Serve* – Peaked Among Church Workers?

Have you previously heard of *Set Apart to Serve*: the LCMS culture of church work formation and recruitment?



The 2021 Name Test survey asked “Have you previously heard of The LCMS Church Worker Recruitment Initiative?” Commissioned teachers and congregation workers are consistently no different in their awareness, so their responses have been combined. Lay elders were added to the survey in 2024.

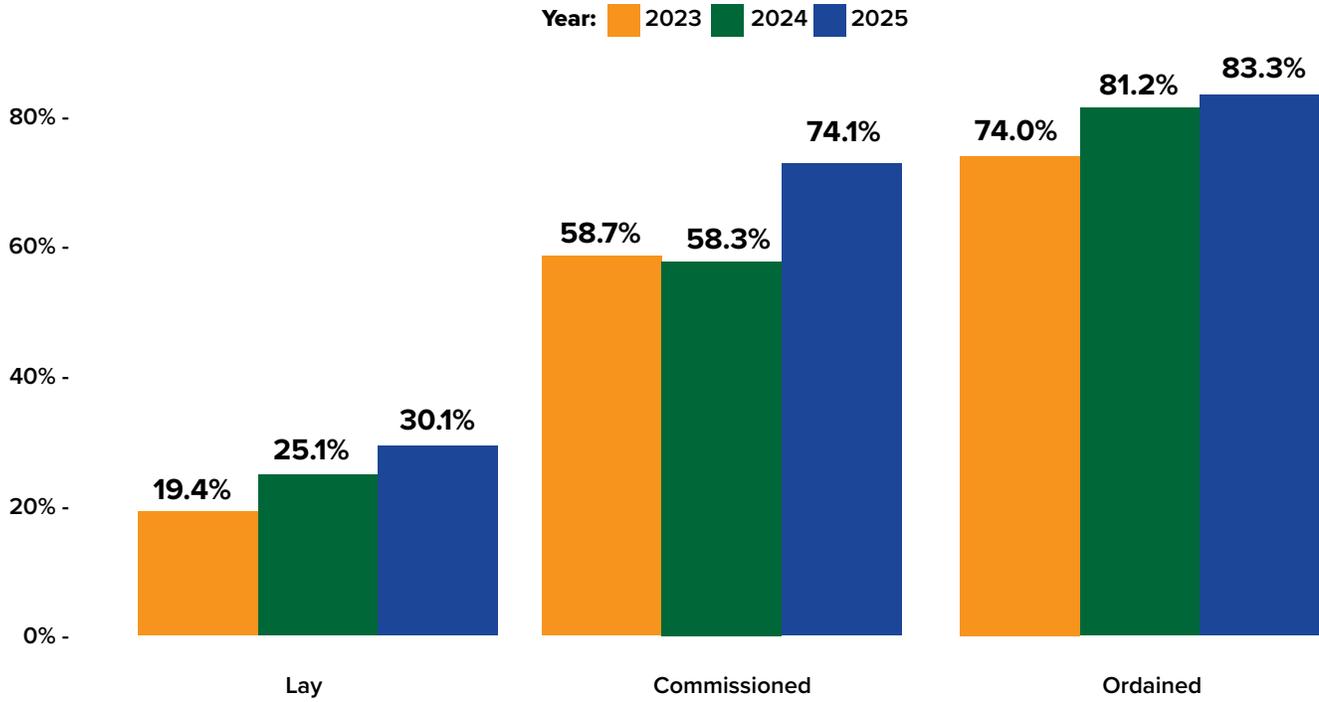
² Lutheran teachers, deaconesses, directors of Christian education, directors of Christian outreach, directors of parish music, directors of family life ministry, directors of church ministries

³ Especially youth involved in Christ Academy at Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne, Ind., Vocatio at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., LCMS Youth Gathering, LCMS YouthLead, Higher Things and Lutheran camps.

Intentional Conversations Increase

Talking to Youth, Comparison with Previous Survey

Percent of respondents who spoke with at least one youth about vocation (general or church work.)



2025 District Conventions embrace SAS

2025 District Convention SAS Resolutions

Note: 2022 Conventions are not included in these numbers

Adopted →

Specific SAS Resolution	Pray	District establish SAS Committee/Focus	Congregations establish SAS Committee/Focus	Uses SAS Resources and CPH Curriculum	Districts and Congregations Provide Financial Support	Worker Wellness and Compensation	Set a recruitment Goal	Teachers urged to complete Colloquy	Invite a Concordia University or Seminary	Include SAS in Winkels
16	4	6	6	11	11	7	2	1	3	1

Church Work Enrollment Increases
Concordia Universities

COVID

	Fall 2025	Fall 2024	Fall 2023	Fall 2022	Fall 2021	Fall 2020	Fall 2019	Fall 2018
Pre-Seminary	CUW-47 CUAA-0 CUI-19 CUC-24 CSP-45 CUNE-39 174	CUW-27 CUAA-10 CUI-13 CUC-25 CSP-43 CUNE-38 156	CUW-38 CUAA-12 CUI-14 CUC-22 CSP-26 CUNE-36 148	CUW-47 CUAA-12 CUI-6 CUC-10 CSP-26 CUNE-35 136	CUW-60 CUAA-8 CUI-7 CUC-11 CSP-7 CUNE-35 CUTX-5 133	CUW-61 CUAA-11 CUI-9 CUC-18 CSP-6 CUNE-27 CUTX-1 CUNY-2 135	CUW-56 CUAA-10 CUI-15 CUC-26 CSP-8 CUNE-30 CUTX-1 CUNY-3 149	CUW-59 CUAA-15 CUI-19 CUC-31 CSP-8 CUNE-37 CUTX-10 CUNY-4 CUP-3 186
Lutheran Teacher	CUW-110 CUAA-12 CUI-34 CUC-47 CSP-25 CUNE-174 402	CUW-84 CUAA-30 CUI-33 CUC-38 CSP-29 CUNE-166 380	CUW-105 CUAA-32 CUI-27 CUC-50 CSP-32 CUNE-137 383	CUW-109 CUAA-25 CUI-26 CUC-42 CSP-32 CUNE-120 354	CUW-111 CUAA-22 CUI-27 CUC-60 CSP-24 CUNE-142 CUTX-11 397	CUW-111 CUAA-48 CUI-33 CUC-62 CSP-19 CUNE-114 CUTX-12 CUNY-7 406	CUW-92 CUAA-28 CUI-37 CUC-52 CSP-21 CUNE-150 CUTX-10 CUNY-8 398	CUW-124 CUAA-29 CUI-43 CUC-44 CSP-22 CUNE-215 CUTX-19 CUNY-9 CUP-3 508
Classical Lutheran Educator (Rostered as Lutheran Teacher)	CUW-6 CUC-2 CUNE-5 13							
Director of Christian Education	CUI-26 CUC-11 CSP-20 CUNE-36 93	CUI-23 CUC-9 CSP-18 CUNE-29 79	CUI-29 CUC-10 CSP-14 CUNE-30 85	CUI-32 CUC-9 CSP-14 CUNE-30 85	CUI-28 CUC-13 CSP-13 CUNE-45 CUTX-35 134	CUI-24 CUC-14 CSP-13 CUNE-37 CUTX-43 CUNY-0 131	CUI-21 CUC-18 CSP-15 CUNE-53 CUTX-54 CUNY-0 161	CUI-35 CUC-24 CSP-17 CUNE-68 CUTX-54 CUNY-0 CUP-0 198
Director of Christian Outreach	CSP-2	CSP-2	CSP-3	CSP-3	CSP-2	CSP-0	CSP-4	CSP-0
Pre-Deaconess	CUW-0 CUAA-0 CUI-8 CSP-6 CUNE-13 21	CUW-1 CUAA-1 CUI-1 CSP-4 CUNE-13 20	CUW-0 CUAA-0 CUI-1 CSP-4 CUNE-14 19	CUW- CUAA- CUI-4 CSP-4 CUNE-11 19	CUW-1 CUAA-1 CUI-5 CSP-1 CUNE-8 CUTX-0 16	CUW-1 CUAA-2 CUI-5 CSP-1 CUNE-3 CUTX-0 12	CUW-1 CUAA-3 CUI-5 CSP-2 CUNE-0 CUTX-0 11	CUW-0 CUAA-2 CUI-0 CSP-2 CUNE-2 CUTX-0 CUP-2 8
Director of Church Ministry	CUW-34	CUW-34	CUW-46	CUW-48	CUW-50	CUW-44	CUW-12	CUW-14
Director of Parish Music	CUW-4 CUAA-0 CUI-8 CUC-5 CSP-1 CUNE-10 28	CUW-2 CUAA-2 CUI-12 CUC-2 CSP-1 CUNE-5 24	CUW-3 CUAA-2 CUI-7 CUC-3 CSP-3 CUNE-13 31	CUW-5 CUAA-5 CUI-6 CUC-3 CSP-3 CUNE-10 32	CUW-4 CUAA-8 CUI-5 CUC-0 CSP-1 CUNE-14 CUTX-2 34	CUW-2 CUAA-6 CUI-6 CUC-2 CSP-1 CUNE-0 CUTX-6 CUNY-0 23	CUW-7 CUAA-1 CUI-4 CUC-2 CSP-3 CUNE-12 CUTX-1 CUNY-0 30	CUW-10 CUAA-2 CUI-6 CUC-4 CSP-2 CUNE-7 CUTX-0 CUNY-0 31
Directors of Family Life Ministry	CUAA-1	CUAA-4	CUAA-5	CUAA-48	CUAA-9	CUAA-15	CUAA-9	CUAA-11
TOTAL	768	699	720	725	775	766	774	956

+69

Church Work Enrollment Increases

Deaconesses

COVID

	Fall 2025	Fall 2024	Fall 2023	Fall 2022	Fall 2021	Fall 2020	Fall 2019	Fall 2018
Deaconess	CUC-9 CSL-68 CTSFW-24 101	CUC-9 CSL-53 CTSFW-31 93	CUC-11 CSL-46 CTSFW-32 89	CUC-10 CSL-40 CTSFW-31 81	CUC-12 CSL-36 CTSFW-35 83	CUC-10 CSL-33 CTSFW-34 77	CUC-12 CSL-24 CTSFW-46 82	CUC-13 CSL-24 CTSFW-33 70

+8

Church Work Enrollment Increases

Seminaries

COVID

	Fall 2025	Fall 2024	Fall 2023	Fall 2022	Fall 2021	Fall 2020	Fall 2019	Fall 2018
MDiv	CSL-186 CTSFW-141 327	CSL-177 CTSFW-146 323	CSL-190 CTSFW-161 351	CSL-179 CTSFW-159 338	CSL-199 CTSFW-157 356	CSL-201 CTSFW-152 353	CSL-193 CTSFW-145 338	CSL-193 CTSFW-158 351
Alternate Route	CSL-8 CTSFW-11 19	CSL-11 CTSFW-9 20	CSL-6 CTSFW-6 12	CSL-8 CTSFW-6 14	CSL-10 CTSFW-6 16	CSL-16 CTSFW-5 21	CSL-17 CTSFW-10 27	CSL-14 CTSFW-10 24
CHS	CSL-9	CSL-11	CSL-7	CSL-9	CSL-10	CSL-14	CSL-15	CSL-13
CMC	CSL-25	CSL-23	CSL-23	CSL-21	CSL-21	CSL-25	CSL-22	CSL-16
EIIT	CSL-25	CSL-29	CSL-24	CSL-32	CSL-30	CSL-28	CSL-26	CSL-24
SMP	CSL-121 CTSFW-38 159	CSL-113 CTSFW-32 145	CSL-122 CTSFW-26 148	CSL-117 CTSFW-25 142	CSL-102 CTSFW-19 120	CSL-109 CTSFW-19 128	CSL-107 CTSFW-19 126	CSL-93 CTSFW-15 108
SMP-GPC	CSL-21 CTSFW-1 22	CSL-11 CTSFW-2 13	CSL-9 CTSFW-1 10	CSL-10 CTSFW-3 13	CSL-12 CTSFW-0 12	CSL-13 CTSFW-0 13	CSL-18 CTSFW-0 18	CSL-14 CTSFW-0 14
SMP-Ese	CTSFW-0	CTSFW-2	CTSFW-2	CTSFW-2	CTSFW-3	CTSFW-0	CTSFW-1	CTSFW-1
TOTAL	586	566	577	571	568	582	573	551

+20

Church Work Enrollment Increases

COVID

	Fall 2025	Fall 2024	Fall 2023	Fall 2022	Fall 2021	Fall 2020	Fall 2019	Fall 2018
TOTAL CHURCH WORKER ENROLLMENT	1,455	1,358	1,386	1,377	1,426	1,425	1,429	1,577

+97

Vision and Strategic Planning

In no fewer than forty LCMS conventions — since 1847 — the Synod repeatedly called for a greater focus on forming and recruiting more church workers that the Word of Christ would be preached, taught, shared, witnessed and told for the eternal salvation of all who hear and believe it. Over the years, there were efforts to address this need, but they were short-lived. Together, through Set Apart to Serve, we have made great strides in addressing the need to form and recruit workers for the church.

Since 1987, my wife and I have built a marriage, established careers, raised our four children and continue to give thanks to God for their spouses and our ten grandchildren. Over 40 years, we have built a wonderful family culture. Some things we did along the way failed; some proved successful. We experienced our times of need and struggle, and we have experienced our times of joy and bountiful blessings. Building a family culture does not just happen — it takes intentional effort, steeped in the Word of God, time and family and friends to encourage and support us. No one thing creates the complex, wonderful culture of a family. It is many things, many days, many years, many people — all under the hand of God.

Is *Set Apart to Serve* worth the effort? Are there any shortcuts? Will more church work formation and recruitment just happen? Will more church workers just appear? *Set Apart to Serve* **IS** worth it — everything that goes into it, over many days and many years — **TO BUILD A CULTURE** of forming, encouraging and recruiting our youth and adults to consider full-time church work.

Be a part of building this wonderful culture — in your family, congregation, school, circuit, district, or whatever your vocation, wherever you serve. To learn more, go to lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve.

“Enrollment in church work programs is up everywhere, specifically pre-seminary enrollments have increased significantly. The pre-seminary students we’ve talked with this year are engaged and girding their loins for robust, faithful service in the parishes and missions of our LCMS.”

– Dr. Jon Bruss, President, CTSFW (From the President: The College Tour, April 2025)



“Set Apart to Serve has no doubt played a role in this encouraging report!”

– Kristine Bruss, CTSFW Communications



Set Apart to Serve is funded entirely by voluntary contributions. Contact LCMS Mission Advancement at 888-930-4438 or mission/advancement@lcms.org to learn how you can help strengthen the culture of church work recruitment in the LCMS.



lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve