

# SET APART TO SERVE

LCMS CHURCH WORK RECRUITMENT

## REPORT TO THE SYNOD PRESIDENT

— and over 900 significant collaborators and stakeholders —

SPRING '26

### KEY POINTS FOR THE SPRING QUARTER

- 1 Quarterly Report
- 2 We're All in This Together
- 3 Second-Career Teacher Ad Campaign
- 4 SAS Pilots/Focus Groups through June
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- 6 SAS Schedule This Summer

### Quarterly Report

To keep you connected and informed about *Set Apart to Serve* without overloading your inbox, this report will now be sent quarterly instead of monthly. If you have questions or would like to connect between reports, please reach out at [james.baneck@lcms.org](mailto:james.baneck@lcms.org)

### We're All in This Together

I spoke to a very kind gentleman the other day who expressed his passion about having more pastors and commissioned church workers in our Synod. He started, "I think you guys should ..." He had ideas about what the SAS leadership team should do to get more church workers. This man was genuine and sincere, but it got me thinking ... how do ALL OF US TOGETHER continue to grow the culture of *Set Apart to Serve* with every person in the Synod (ordained, commissioned and layperson) by intentionally and purposefully forming and recruiting church workers among our youth and adults?

I've often mused that we should get everyone in the Synod a T-shirt that reads, "I am a church work recruiter." This report goes out to more than 900 people. I'm asking all 900 of you to please help send out this message in your own congregation, family and school. Kindly and boldly share with those around you that we're all in this together, and that a culture of church work formation and recruitment blossoms and grows right where each of us lives — to supply the church with laborers in the harvest for generations to come.

### Second-Career Teacher Ad Campaign

*This is a follow-up to the January report.*

SAS and four district education executives just completed a three-month Facebook teacher advertisement campaign that ran in their respective districts. These ads invited teachers who are both LCMS and non-LCMS members teaching at a non-LCMS school to consider teaching at an LCMS school. This ad campaign ran December 2025 through February 2026.

At the conclusion of the campaign, there were 1,768 leads.

- › Florida (Jennifer Tanner) – 341 leads
  - › Michigan (Travis Grulke) – 518 leads
  - › Nebraska (Bob Ziegler) – 428 leads
  - › St. Louis (Josh Swartz) – 481 leads
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- TOTAL 1,768 leads**

These are phenomenal results!

- › 1,768 leads, with an average cost of \$5.66 per lead (compared to Facebook average of \$23.10 per lead).
- › To date, this campaign has resulted in three teacher interviews, several teachers in active conversation with the ed execs, one specialized deaf ministry teacher candidate and several leads in queue.
- › We gained valuable insights that establish a solid foundation to build future campaigns.

*Note:* Non-rostered teachers teaching at our LCMS schools are encouraged to complete colloquy. For more information, go to [resources.lcms.org/multimedia/teacher-colloquy-webinar/](https://resources.lcms.org/multimedia/teacher-colloquy-webinar/).



## SAS Pilot/Focus Groups through June

On January 12, the SAS leadership team met to set a course for five new pilots or focus groups to run through 2026.

- 1 District Focus Team Pilot** – SAS is partnering with the Iowa West, Mid-South, Northern Illinois, and Rocky Mountain districts, which currently have or are developing a SAS focus team (committee, task force). The goal is to produce and share tested church worker recruitment strategies and resources that can be used in all LCMS districts.
- 2 Lay Leader/Congregation Focus Team Pilot** – SAS is partnering with congregational lay leaders throughout the Synod to form and sustain focus on developing a culture of church work formation and recruitment in the congregation. Best practices will then be shared with all LCMS congregations.
- 3 Circuit Visitors Focus Groups** – Through two separate focus groups, SAS will partner with a representative group of circuit visitors including the Texas, Southeastern, Montana, Florida-Georgia and South Wisconsin districts to discuss how SAS can better equip circuit visitors to build a culture of church work formation and recruitment, especially at Winkels, congregation visits, forums, convocations and more. Note: the 2025 circuit visitor pilot helped SAS develop a SAS circuit visitor newsletter [mailchi.mp/lcms/newsletter-for-circuit-visitor-sas-january-2026](https://mailchi.mp/lcms/newsletter-for-circuit-visitor-sas-january-2026).
- 4 School (CPH Curriculum) Focus Group** – Through two separate focus groups, SAS is partnering with school principals and administrators to better understand how schools are currently using the CPH SAS curriculum. We continue to develop best practices for all LCMS schools to consistently incorporate this curriculum in their school so that our congregations and schools will be equipped with church workers for generations to come. At no cost, the SAS curriculum is available here: [resources.lcms.org/initiatives/set-apart-to-serve-curriculum](https://resources.lcms.org/initiatives/set-apart-to-serve-curriculum)
- 5 Influential Adult Pilot** – Influential adults are those who, according to our research, are most influential in forming and recruiting church workers. These adults include pastors, DCEs, youth group leaders, deaconesses, teachers, parents and lay leaders. Through this pilot, SAS will continue to learn how these adults can best form, encourage and actively engage with our youth to consider full-time church work and also learn how we can enhance awareness, resources and best practices for these influential adults.

## SAS Coffee Hour Line-up

For the last several years, the KFUO *Coffee Hour* program has featured SAS every Friday. The upcoming line-up of guests focuses on Concordia university and seminary theology faculty who are teaching our future church workers and laypersons who are actively engaged with SAS in their congregations. Listen to *The Coffee Hour* at [kfu.org/tag/set-apart-to-serve](http://kfu.org/tag/set-apart-to-serve).

- › **March 6** - The Rev. Dr. Jason Lane (Associate Professor of Historical Theology, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis) and the Rev. Dr. Peter Nafzger (Associate Professor of Practical Theology, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis) discuss forming church workers at CSL.
- › **March 13** - Dr. Jeffrey Blersch (Professor of Music, Concordia University Nebraska) and the Rev. Dr. John Genter (Assistant Professor of Theology, Concordia University Nebraska) talk about forming church workers at CUNE.
- › **March 20** - The Rev. Dr. Jonathan Ruehs (Assistant Dean of Christ College at Concordia University Irvine) and Carrie Donohoe (Director of LCMS Recruitment, Christ College Program Coordinator, and Assistant Director of LCMS Placement at Concordia University Irvine) discuss forming church workers at CUI (re-broadcast).
- › **March 27** - James Baumgartner (LCMS OIM) and Quintin Cundiff (LCMS ONM) discuss international missionary recruitment and planting new churches in the U.S.
- › **April 3** - Dr. Sam and Lois Eatherton discuss teaching and leading music at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis and St. Paul's in Des Peres and how music helps form church workers.
- › **April 10** - Jennifer Duffy and Veronica Cheney discuss the partnership between LCMS Communications and *Set Apart to Serve*.

## SAS Schedule This Summer

- › **April 13-15** - Visit Concordia St. Paul campus
- › **April 27-28** - Visit Concordia Nebraska campus
- › **May 18-21** - Discuss SAS at LCMS Theology Faculty Conference at CSP
- › **June 24-26** - Teach the Office of the Ministry at Christ Academy, CTSFW
- › **June 23-26, June 30-July 3, July 14-17** - Present SAS at Higher Things youth gatherings
- › **July 18-23** - Staff SAS booth at the Synod Convention

*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).*



THE  
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MISSOURI SYNOD

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