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LCMS CHURCH WORK RECRUITMENT
ANNUAL REPORT

SET APART TO SERVE 



**“PRAY EARNESTLY TO THE LORD
OF THE HARVEST TO SEND OUT
LABORERS INTO HIS HARVEST”**

(Matt. 9:38)



Dear Friends in Christ,

It was a productive year for *Set Apart to Serve* (SAS) throughout The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), as evidenced in this report. Since the 2019 LCMS Convention, SAS has focused on forming and recruiting our youth to consider a full-time church work vocation. Since December 2022, SAS has also focused on recruiting men and women to consider a full-time church work vocation as a second career, especially men for the office of the holy ministry, and men and women to serve as Lutheran school teachers.

An Impactful Experience

In September 2024, I was invited to share the theology, strategies and resources of SAS with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania (CELCL). Learning about this church body and interacting with their leaders, pastors and church musicians made a great impact on me and my leadership of SAS. In brief, this church body suffered greatly in World War II, as their churches were burned, and pastors and laypersons were murdered. With no more than a two-year reprieve from Nazi Germany, this same church body was persecuted under the communist Soviet Union. Lutheran churches were turned into grain storage and sports venues, and pastors and lay leaders were sent to labor camps in Siberia. In 1990, Lithuania gained its independence from the Soviet Union. In 2001, the CELCL entered church fellowship with the LCMS.

Throughout the persecution and suffering of our Lithuanian brothers and sisters, they continued to treasure and cling to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Salvation in Christ continued to be their dearest treasure. And because of this faith and conviction, they continued to form, raise up and recruit pastors and full-time servants to preach, teach, witness and spread the Word of Christ because “faith comes by hearing” (ROM. 10:17).

I pray that God instills this same Gospel conviction and fervor in families, congregations and schools, and among our parents, pastors, commissioned church workers, laity and church leaders throughout the Missouri Synod. To this end, SAS focused its efforts in 2024 on messaging and increasing *awareness* of SAS to our districts, pastors and commissioned church workers, but especially to our laity — parents, lay leaders and everyone in the pew. By increasing awareness of the need for church workers, the responsibility of every Christian in forming and recruiting church workers, and the SAS strategies and *resources* we have made available for use, SAS is working to build a Synodwide culture of church work formation.

In the name of Jesus,

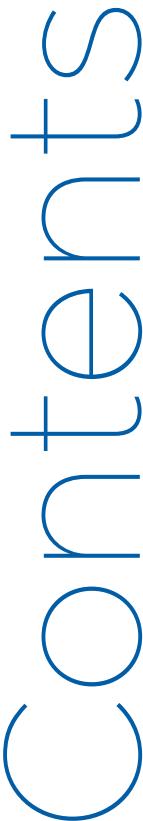
Rev. Dr. James A. Baneck

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF LCMS PASTORAL EDUCATION

SAS 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.





Building a Culture

- More than an initiative
- Goals
- SAS Team and Weekly Focus
- Collaboration and Partnership

Building Awareness

- Strategies to bring a greater awareness of SAS to laity
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International Component

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- LCMS Church Worker Wellness
- LCMS Church Worker Wellness alliance
- Church Worker Appreciation

Funding Set Apart to Serve

Developing a Five-Year Plan

Building a Culture

More than an Initiative

When SAS began in 2019, there was much discussion about how to describe it. SAS is not an LCMS theme. It is not a triennial focus. It is not a project or a campaign. Jesus' words in Matthew 9:37–38 are foundational to SAS. These words transcend decades and centuries from the time of Christ until He returns on the Last Day:

The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.

As God has evidenced throughout Scripture, He uses *means* to do His work. In praying for laborers who will preach and teach the life-giving Gospel of Jesus Christ, He uses you and me — every pastor, commissioned church worker, Christian parent and layperson — to form, recruit, encourage and support every boy and girl, man and woman, to serve in a full-time church work vocation.

This work takes great effort on the part of us all. In forming and recruiting full-time church workers, it takes the effort of every pastor, teacher, DCE, parent, youth worker, lay person, district leader, seminary, Concordia university and LCMS entity. **We are not taking part in an initiative — we are building and forming a culture in every LCMS congregation, school, and entity to form and recruit servants who will deliver the Gospel to God's people in a full-time vocation.** This is what God's people do. This is who we are.

Please encourage your pastors and teachers, congregations and schools, church workers and laity to explore our excellent *SAS resources*. We want to see these resources used in our pulpits and classrooms, choir lofts and youth rooms, mercy interactions and witness opportunities with workers who will preach and teach the Word of Christ for the saving faith of all God's people, that all may gather around His heavenly throne and worship the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and reigns for all eternity.

Goals

SAS seeks to fulfill two primary goals:

1. Immediately increase fruitful relationships and conversations between influential adults and youth (and adults) to form and encourage them toward full-time church work

vocations. This engagement may take place in homes, congregations and Lutheran schools (early childhood through seminary).

2. Significantly increase the number of individuals enrolled in church work formation/educational programs at our Concordia University System institutions, LCMS seminaries, and colloquy programs, so that the Synod's congregations and schools are adequately served in the coming decades with full-time servants who proclaim and teach the Word of Christ for the saving faith and eternal salvation of God's people.

SAS Team and Weekly Focus

The core SAS leadership team includes:

- The LCMS Office of Pastoral Education (Rev. Dr. James Baneck, Glenn Rollins and Robyn Armbrust)
- LCMS Communications (Jennifer Duffy, Sarah Reinsel and Veronica Cheney). In addition, several other individuals from LCMS Communications play a key role in various capacities, including:
 - SAS website
 - Social media
 - Writing, copyediting and design
 - Analytics
 - *The Lutheran Witness and Reporter*
 - Convention displays
 - Interfacing with other LCMS units and entities in the work of SAS
- Standing Partnership, a St. Louis marketing and communications firm which is comprised of marketing and communications professionals who support SAS with expertise in research, stakeholder engagement and training, message development, communications resources, mission advancement and digital marketing tools. Approximately six individuals from Standing Partnership work with SAS at any given time.

This core team, along with many significant partners, meets with SAS leadership primarily to focus on the awareness plan, the youth tactical activation plan, the

second-career plan, the All Nations plan and international activity. Individuals and entities meeting with SAS weekly and/or monthly include:

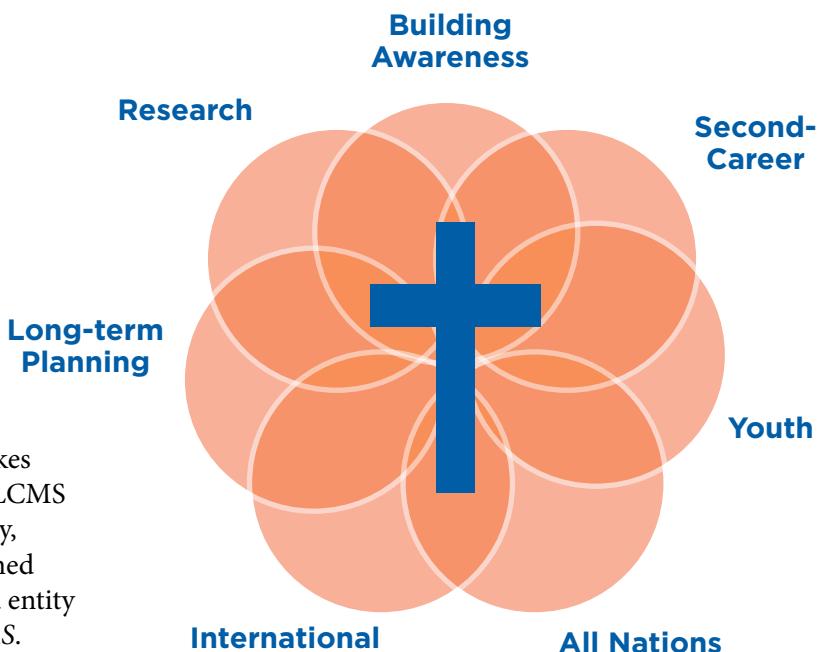
- Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (Rev. Jesse Kueker)
- Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (Rev. Matthew Wietfeldt)
- LCMS Youth Ministry (Rev. Dr. Mark Kiessling and DCE Julianna Shults)
- LCMS PALS, Church Worker Wellness, Church Worker Appreciation (Rev. Jonathan Manor)
- LCMS Statistics and Research (Ryan Curnutt)
- LCMS Mission Advancement (Mark Hofman, John Lewis, Mary Hamilton)

Collaboration and Partnership

For church work formation and recruitment (SAS) to become knit into the life and culture of the LCMS, it takes the collaboration, partnership and ownership of every LCMS congregation, school, district, circuit, institution, agency, entity, RSO and auxiliary, and every pastor, commissioned church worker, parent and layperson. Every person and entity in this report is a collaborator, partner and owner of SAS. Other significant partners include:

- Black Clergy Caucus
- Chinese Lutherans in Mission Building (CLiMB)
- LCMS Colloquy (Office of the LCMS First Vice-President)
- Concordia Plan Services
- Concordia Publishing House
- Concordia University System
- Higher Things
- Hispanic Missionary League
- KFUO Radio
- Lutheran Church Extension Fund
- LCMS Deaconess Ministry
- LCMS Districts (presidents, education executives, SAS committees, circuit visitors)
- LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces
- LCMS Office of International Mission
- LCMS Rosters, Statistics and Research Services
- LCMS School Ministry
- Lutheran Church Extension Fund
- Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML)
- National Association of DCEs

Several themes, topics and partners overlap in the ongoing work of SAS.



The main work and responsibility of the core SAS leadership team is to collaborate with several stakeholders to oversee and execute SAS. This involves executing and analyzing research, developing resources, building partnerships, collaborating with stakeholders, building awareness, securing funding and planning for the long-term sustainability of SAS. When there is opportunity, the SAS leadership team will encourage youth and adults to consider full-time church work at youth gatherings and events. These conversations, however, are meant to reinforce the forming and recruiting of church workers by pastors, commissioned church workers, parents and laity that should be taking place in every congregation and Lutheran school.



Building Awareness

The momentum of SAS is strong coming out of the September 2023 launch of initial resources. The goal for 2024 was to continue to increase awareness of SAS. Research shows that SAS awareness is significantly increasing among pastors and commissioned church workers. However, awareness among laity has shown only a modest increase thus far. One of the 2024 SAS priorities was to increase SAS awareness among laity while also maintaining focus on ordained and commissioned workers. The key message to everyone in the LCMS, especially the laity, is “you are a church work recruiter!” Everyone plays a role in forming and recruiting church workers.

Strategies to bring a greater awareness of SAS to the laity include:

- Partnering with districts to build awareness with laity, which includes developing a Council of Presidents toolkit, meeting with district working group (committee) pilots, and developing targeted channels of communication.
- Building direct connections between SAS and lay leaders

partnering with LCMS Church Worker Wellness. This would include utilizing the LCMS lay leader database and researching lay audiences.

- Leveraging specific audience channels to increase awareness and use of tools and resources, including email blasts, articles from *Reporter* and *The Lutheran Witness*, social media, etc.
- Actively working through ordained and commissioned workers to reach laity, which would include research surveys, broadening speaking engagements, and leveraging the channels most frequently used by this audience.
- Engaging directly with teachers through the launch and promotion of the *CPH SAS curriculum*, participating in speaking engagements to teachers and education groups, and developing an ad campaign to encourage Lutheran public school teachers to consider teaching in a Lutheran school.
- Reinforcing messaging to pastors through circuit visitors, which included working with a pilot group of select circuit visitors to test strategies and resources.

- Equipping district officers (presidents, education executives and others) to maintain SAS awareness by providing them with tools, talking points, presentation slides and FAQs.
- Reaching parents through youth organizations and events, such as the LCMS Youth Gathering, Higher Things, CSL's Vocatio, CTSFW's Christ Academy, and Lutheran camps; Connecting with parents via social media.
- Engaging with youth about church work. This includes having SAS conversations with youth in the pilot congregations, developing strategies and resources to connect with youth at youth events, and utilizing social media that connects with youth.

The following demonstrates how SAS built awareness in 2024.

SAS awareness by percentage (percentages reflect individuals saying they are aware of SAS)

	2022	2023	2024
Pastors	61	89	88
Commissioned Workers	47	68	88
Laity	33	42	58

In 2024, SAS made a concerted effort not only to grow awareness of the need for church work formation and recruitment, but also make sure that church work formation and recruitment is happening in every LCMS congregation, school and entity. Within the culture of the LCMS, messaging to the laity is often through the pastor and commissioned workers, as well as through district and circuit leaders.

This chart shows the various ways SAS builds awareness:

TACTIC/ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	PARTNERS	INTENDED AUDIENCE	DATE
District Working Group (Committee) Pilot Program	SAS is working with six districts who have or are developing a district SAS working group (committee). They are testing SAS resources and sharing their resources/best practices. The completed SAS resources will be posted on the SAS website for all districts to use.	Mid-South, Missouri, Nebraska, Montana, Minnesota South and Northern Illinois districts.	The LCMS district congregations, schools, church workers, laity, and entities they serve.	Meetings held on May 6, June 3, Oct. 7, 2024.
Awareness Email Engagement Campaign	SAS sent a series of emails to increase the awareness of SAS and the SAS CPH curriculum. #1 – general SAS commercial (54% open rate), #2 – District working group promotion (43% open rate), #3 and 4 – CPH Curriculum promotion (53% and 54% open rate).		Congregation lay leaders, LCMS school teachers and administrators, district leadership.	Emails were sent April 8, April 17, May 8, Aug. 7, 2024.
Circuit Visitors Pilot Project and Engaging Laity	Twelve circuit visitors from six LCMS districts are partnering with SAS in the development of SAS resources for circuit visitors to use with those whom they serve.	English, Florida-Georgia, Indiana, Minnesota North, Ohio and Pacific Southwest districts.	Circuit pastors, commissioned church workers, congregations, and schools.	Meetings held on April 29, Aug. 5, Nov. 18, 2024.

All SAS resources are located at lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve.

KFUO Coffee Hour Program

The *Coffee Hour* is a daily program on KFUO radio (AM 850) that focuses on stories of the intersection of Lutheran life and a secular world, hosted by Andy Bates and Sarah Gulseth. Since 2022, the Coffee Hour has devoted nearly every Friday to *Set Apart to Serve*. All these programs are available at kfuo.org/tag/set-apart-to-serve.

2023	GUEST	TOPIC
Nov. 3	Rev. Matthew Richard, pastor at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Minot N.D., author of <i>Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up</i> and <i>Will the Real Church Please Stand Up</i> , CPH	Richard talks about his journey into the pastoral ministry from the Lutheran Brethren Church and the LCMS colloquy process.
Nov. 10	Rev. Joel Fritsche – director of vicarage and deaconess internships and assist professor of exegetical study at CSL and Rev. Dr. Todd Peperkorn – director of vicarage and assist professor of pastoral ministry and missions at CTSFW	Fritsche and Peperkorn talk about their journey into the pastoral ministry, what vicarage is and what seminary students gain from vicarage.
Nov. 17	Deaconess Dr. Tiffany Manor – Managing Director for Human Care and Ministerial Support and Director of Life Ministry with LCMS Office of National Mission and Rev. Ken Krueger – Vice President and Chief Customer Officer of LCMS Concordia Plan Services	Manor and Krueger discuss their journey into church work, why church worker wellness is important to them, and how the LCMS is addressing the wellness of our church workers.
Nov. 24	Rear Admiral Gregory Todd – Navy Chaplain and 28th Chief of Navy Chaplains and Rev. James Hopkins – Navy Chaplain (rebroadcast)	Todd and Hopkins talk about their path to become Navy chaplains, the need for military chaplains today, and the challenges and rewards of chaplaincy.
Dec. 1	Rev. Dr. Cory Rajek – LCMS Regional Director for Eurasia and Rev. Charles Ferry – LCMS Regional Director for Asia Region	Rajek and Ferry talk about their unique paths to the pastoral ministry, how they became LCMS missionaries, how missionaries serve in the church, and steps toward becoming a missionary.
Dec. 8	Deaconess Amy Rast – Assoc. Director of Deaconess Formation at CTSFW, Deaconess Dr. Gillian Bond – Director of Deaconess Studies at CSL, and Deaconess Kristin Wassilak – Program Leader for Deaconess Studies at CUC	Rast, Bond and Wassilak discuss their journeys to serving as deaconesses, how they've served as deaconesses, and sharing wisdom for women considering diaconal formation.
Dec. 15	Chaplain Steven Hokana – Asst. Director of LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces and Lee Hinton – Administrative Coordinator for LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces	Hokana and Hinton talk about their own time in the armed forces, how Christmas is observed during deployment, how chaplains make a difference in the lives they serve, and how to become a military chaplain.
2024	GUEST	TOPIC
Jan. 12	Dr. Jonathan Rudy – cantor at Grace Lutheran Church in Clarksville, Tenn.	Rudy talks about his journey in becoming a church musician, his service at Grace Lutheran, and how Grace forms and recruits church workers, particularly in their music program.
Jan. 19	Michael and Allison Zeller, members at Our Savior Lutheran Church, Fenton, Mo. and parents of three sons	The Zellers talk about how they teach the faith to their sons at home and how they encourage them to consider full-time church work.
Jan. 26	Rev. Joshua Hayes – pastor at St. John Lutheran Church, Palmer, Kan.	Hayes talks about his journey into pastoral ministry and how he and St. John's forms and recruits church workers in a rural congregation.
Feb. 2	Rev. Harrison Goodman – Content Executive of Higher Things and Rev. Randy Sturzenbecher – President of Higher Things	Goodman and Sturzenbecher discuss the Higher Things book, <i>Letters of Encouragement</i> , containing letters and essays to young men considering the pastoral ministry, sponsored by SAS.
Feb. 16	Thomas Wrege – Principal of Zion Lutheran School in Georgetown, Texas	Wrege discusses his journey from the military to school administrator, and how faithful Lutheran school teachers encourage children to consider church work vocations.
Mar. 1	Rev. Dr. Scott Murray – Senior pastor at Memorial Lutheran Church, Houston, Texas and LCMS third vice-president.	Murray discusses his journey into the pastoral ministry, his service at Memorial Lutheran, and how he and his congregation encourage young men and women to consider full-time church work.
Mar. 8	Rev. Sam Flick – pastor at Divine Redeemer Lutheran Church, Harland, Wis.	Pastor Flick discusses his formation as a pastor, his congregation's emphasis on raising up future church workers, and opportunities to encourage children in the faith.
Mar. 15	Rev. Dr. Jamison Hardy – Bishop (district president) of the LCMS English District	Hardy talks about his story in becoming a pastor, what the English District is doing to encourage men and women to consider full-time church work, and his encouragement to use SAS resources.
Mar. 22	Eden Keefe – President of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML)	Eden talks about her personal interest in SAS, why the LWML is interested in forming and recruiting church workers, and the \$100,000 grant LWML gave to SAS
April 5	Jason Kohm – Fourth year seminarian at CSL and Zachary Staehr – Fourth year seminarian at CTSFW	Kohm and Staehr talk about how they decided to study for the pastoral ministry, their path to and through seminary, their vicarage experiences, and how they feel looking forward to Call Day.
April 12	Alicia Levitt – Director of Academic Excellence and Interim Executive Director of the Lutheran Schools Partnership in NE Indiana and Jacob Pennekamp – Head of School for Concordia Lutheran High School, Ft. Wayne, Ind.	Levitt and Pennekamp talk about their journeys into church work, the role each of them plays in forming and recruiting church workers, the dual-credit program of the high school and the "Champions for Church Workers" program in the partnership.

April 19	Rev. Dr. James Baneck – Executive Director of LCMS Pastoral Education and <i>Set Apart to Serve</i>	Baneck is guest on KFUO's Shareathon to talk about the SAS stories the <i>Coffee Hour</i> shared over the last two years, how these stories help shape SAS, and why it's important to share these stories.
April 26	Scott Treptow, Josh Meeks, Emily Minor, Justin Weber, and McKenna Stanley – Concordia University Chicago DCE students and Dr. Debbie Arfsten, professor of the DCE program at CUC	CUC students talk about what the formation of a DCE looks like, how they became interested in becoming DCEs, and what classes they take as DCE students. Arfsten talks about the DCE program and DCE placement in the LCMS.
May 3	Henry and Stacey Eising – second-year seminarian family at CSL	The Eisings talk about preparation leading up to vicarage assignment day, what vicarage is, how seminary field work and classes prepared Henry for vicarage, and what happens after vicarage.
May 10	Paige Mielke and Grace Sugg – Director of Church Ministries students at Concordia University Wisconsin	Mielke and Sugg talk about why they chose the DCM program and what classes and DCM formation look like at CUW. Grace, a senior, shared that she would soon be serving at Ascension Lutheran Church in Quebec Canada.
May 17	Virginia Schweigert – deaconess student beginning in Fall 2024 and her pastor Rev. Warren Woerth, Pastor at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Arnold, Mo.	Schweigert talks about how she learned about the deaconess vocation, why she was pursuing being a deaconess as a second career, and how her previous vocations will serve her in the work as deaconess.
May 24	Rev. Sean Daenzer – LCMS Director of Worship and LCMS International Center Chaplain	Daenzer talks about how the Lord guided him to become a pastor, how his love for church music and worship developed, and how the Divine Service shaped him and future church workers.
May 31	Rev. Dr. Charles Gieschen – provost at CTSFW and Rev. Dr. Ronald Mudge – provost at CSL	Gieschen and Mudge discuss their unique journeys into church work, the various aspects of seminary life that shaped their individual formation, what has changed in pastoral formation and seminary life since their days at the seminary, and the rigors of current seminary education.
June 7	Ross and Jenni George – new second career seminarian family from Memorial Lutheran, Houston, Texas	Ross and Jenni talk about Ross' first career and how he made the decision to pursue pastoral ministry, what's involved in the transition to the seminary, and how the Divine Service formed and prepared him to consider being a pastor.
June 14	Elizabeth Crawford – studying to be a Lutheran school teacher at Concordia University Nebraska	Elizabeth talks about her faith formation growing up, how she decided to be a Lutheran school teacher, and how her teachers formed her through her years attending a Lutheran school.
June 21	Erin Rodgers – Lutheran teacher at First Lutheran Church and School, Knoxville, Tenn.	Erin talks about who most influenced her to consider and become a Lutheran teacher, her journey in becoming a teacher, and how her congregation and school supports and forms future church workers.
June 28	Rev. Joe Cox – head of Academics at Lutheran High School South, St. Louis, Mo.	Cox 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 adults, and helping them consider full-time church work.
July 5	Anna Bloomfield – Visual Arts teacher at Crean Lutheran High School, Irvine, Calif.	Bloomfield talks about who influenced her to become a Lutheran school teacher, types of things a visual arts teacher get to share with students, what gives her joy as a teacher, and how she encourages her students to consider full-time church work.
July 12	Debbie Arnbruster – Lutheran teacher at St. Mark's Lutheran Church and School, Eureka, Mo.	Debbie talks about her experiences in Lutheran education as a student, how she was formed in her Lutheran faith and vocation at Lutheran schools, and how she builds relationships and encourages students to consider full-time church work.
July 19	Jacob Roggow – Director of Parish Music at Zion Lutheran Church, Fort Myers, Fla.	Jacob talks about where his interest in music and parish music began, his formation as a DPM at CUNE, and how he cares for his own mental health as a church worker.
July 26	Olivia Thielke – Director of Parish Music student at Concordia University Irvine	Olivia talks about where her interest in church music began, who has been most influential in shaping her as a child of God and church musician, and how her Lutheran education is preparing her to serve in parish music.
Aug. 2	Rev. Larry Peters – Senior Pastor at Grace Lutheran Church, Clarksville, Tenn.	Peters talks about how his congregation is an intentionally welcoming congregation, how they welcome new Lutherans into Lutheran liturgy and practice, the realistic challenges of calling a new pastor, and forming and recruiting church workers
Aug. 9	Kayla McGowan – DCE at Our Savior Lutheran Church and School, Aiea, Hawaii and Katie Morgan – DCE at Family of Christ Lutheran Church and School, Colorado Springs, Co.	Kayla and Katie talk about their own paths in becoming a DCE, how they uniquely serve as a DCE in their congregations, how they serve with other church workers in their congregation and school, and their joy as DCEs.
Aug. 16	Emmit Ohlde – Ninth grader who attended a recent Higher Things conference	Emmit talks about his experience at Higher Things (HT), what he enjoyed about the worship and learning, how HT is helping him consider the pastoral ministry, his passion for athletics, and how he strives to live his faith.
Aug. 23	Brianna Pike and Josh Rueter – Concordia University church work students	Brianna and Josh talk about their church work programs, their work as SAS youth adult representatives at the 2024 Higher Things conferences talking to high schoolers about church work, and how this experience shaped how they view their own future vocations as church workers.
Aug. 30	Deaconess Kristin Wassilak – Program leader for Deaconess Studies and Classical Lutheran education, Rev. Dr. Chad Kendall – Assistant vice-president for Mission and Identity and professor theology, and Rev. Simeon Raddatz – University chaplain and program lead for the pre-seminary program	Representing CUNE, Wassilak, Kendall, and Raddatz talked about what vocation looks like in daily life and in church work, what influenced each of them to pursue church work, some of their greatest challenges and joys in church work, and Careers for Christ at CUNE for high schoolers considering church work.

Sept. 6	Hanna Weaver, Jakob Nath, and James Pape – Concordia University church work students	Hanna, Jakob and James talk about their church work programs, their work as SAS youth adult representatives at the 2024 Higher Things conferences talking to high schoolers about church work, and how this experience shaped how they view their own future vocations as church workers.
Sept. 13	Evan Magness – pre-seminary student at CUNE and his parents, Philip and Cheryl Magness	The Magness family talk about Evan's formational journey in pursuing the pastoral ministry, especially how he was shaped and formed in a Lutheran family, and how worship and congregational life plays a significant part of his spiritual and vocational formation.
Sept. 20	Rev. Peter Deberny – pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Mastic Beach, N.Y.	Deberny talks about his journey into pastoral ministry, who influenced him to consider becoming a pastor, what gives him joy in serving as a pastor, and how he is sustained through God's Word.
Sept. 27	Rev. Dr. Ely Prieto – Assoc. Professor of Practical Theology and Director of the Center for Hispanic Studies (CHS) at CSL and Rev. Paul Flo – Assistant to the Director of CHS	Prieto and Flo talk about their own journeys into pastoral and Hispanic ministry, the needs that led to the creation of CHS, and how students are equipped at CSL for Hispanic ministry.
Oct. 4	Rev. Christopher Sommer – Head of campus wellness at Lutheran High School South, St. Louis and LHSS Theology Academy students Ellie and Kevin	Sommer, Ellie, and Kevin talk about the Lutheran South Kaleo Theology Academy at LHSS, why Ellie and Kevin enrolled in the program, what they're learning, and their plans for graduation.
Oct. 11	Rev. Idonis King – pastor at Saint Trinity Lutheran Church, St. Louis Mo.	King talks about his journey to the pastoral ministry, his seminary formation, his recent ordination and installation at Saint Trinity, and his vision for Trinity in forming and recruiting youth for full-time church work.
Oct. 18	Ellie, Eunice and Ernie Clausing	The Clausing siblings talk about what it was like growing up on the mission field and their own journey into church work.
Oct. 25	Al Bardeleben	Bardeleben, a retired Lutheran teacher, tells the story of his great-grandmother and great-grandfather and the faith foundation they laid, which he credits to several church workers in his family.
Nov. 1	Rev. Dr. David Loy (Professor of Philosophy, Theology, and Ethics, and 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)	Loy and Donohoe talk about what Christ College at CUI is, why church worker formation is important to them and to the university, what makes CUI a unique place for church worker formation, how alumni are serving today, and who they see influencing youth and young adults to consider church work vocations.

Monthly Reporter Articles

Reporter is the Synod's official newspaper. Its content is prepared by LCMS Communications. SAS submits a monthly article for the *Reporter* to maintain SAS awareness before LCMS church workers, lay leaders and entities.

MONTH	STORY	LINK
November 2023	SAS Days at the Concordias – SAS traveled to each of the Concordia universities to visit with leadership, recruiters, students, laity and others to talk about SAS and church work recruitment.	reporter.lcms.org/2023/concordia-church-work-days/
December 2023	Town Hall Highlights Resource Hub – Through a virtual town hall, SAS shared the newest resources and reviewed data that reveals the importance of individual connections in encouraging youth to consider full-time church work.	reporter.lcms.org/2023/town-hall-highlights-resource-hub/
January 2024	Set Apart to Serve hosts Deaconess Summit – The deaconess program leaders from CUC, CSL and CTSFW met with SAS to have mutual conversation and collaboration concerning the formation and recruitment of LCMS deaconesses.	reporter.lcms.org/2023/set-apart-to-serve-hosts-deaconess-program-leaders/
February 2024	Set Apart to Serve launches church work curriculum for schools – In partnership with CPH, SAS developed a church work formation and recruitment curriculum that spans early childhood through adult education.	reporter.lcms.org/2024/set-apart-to-serve-curriculum-open-for-school-preorders/
March 2024	Set Apart to Serve establishes Advisory Council – Significant leaders across the Synod agreed to serve on the SAS advisory council to provide in-depth feedback, perspective and insights gained from working as or with church workers.	reporter.lcms.org/2024/set-apart-to-serve-establishes-advisory-council/
April 2024	LWML mission grants support Life, Youth, Church Work Recruitment – LWML President Eden Keefe presented SAS with a \$100,000 check on March 7 as part of the 2023 LWML mission grants.	reporter.lcms.org/2024/lwml-mission-grants-support-life-youth-church-work-recruitment/

May 2024	Until the Lord comes: Everyone a church work recruiter – Church work formation and recruitment is a lifelong activity of the church. This article focuses on fostering continued awareness, reaching youth, encouraging church work as a second career and emphasizing that every baptized Christian is a church work recruiter.	reporter.lcms.org/2024/lwml-mission-grants-support-life-youth-church-work-recruitment/
June 2024	Districts Partner in Church Work Recruitment – All 35 LCMS districts are partnering in SAS through the youth pilot program, district education executives communication plan, circuit visitor pilot program, district working group (committee) pilot program, and second-career teacher ads.	reporter.lcms.org/2024/districts-partner-in-church-work-recruitment/
August 2024	Identifying ... Catechizing ... Encouraging future church workers. It is vital to be intentional in forming and recruiting future church workers.	This was published in the print issue.
September 2024	SAS Summer Update: On the Road – SAS participated at the three Higher Things events, Vocatio at CSL, Youth National Workers Conference in New Orleans, and the MO District LWML convention.	reporter.lcms.org/2024/sas-summer-update-on-the-road/
October 2024	SAS, PALS and Seminary Support – This four-page Reporter insert highlights SAS priorities.	This was published in the print issue.

The Lutheran Witness

The purpose of *The Lutheran Witness* (LW) is to teach readers how to interpret the world from a Lutheran perspective and keep them updated on Synod news. LW featured six SAS articles during 2024 that coincided with LW's monthly themes.

MONTH	STORY		LINK
Jan.	Forming Church Workers in the Divine Service – St. Paul tells us that saving faith comes by hearing the Word of Christ. To form church workers, we first form Christians. This happens in the Divine Service in Word and Sacrament.	Online	witness.lcms.org/2024/forming-church-workers-in-the-divine-service/
March	Church Worker Communities – Church work students and current church workers gather in community for study, prayer, worship and fellowship. This takes place at universities, seminaries, conferences and in continuing education.	Print and Online	witness.lcms.org/2024/church-worker-communities/
May	The Church Prays for Church Workers – Jesus commands us to pray for church workers. He answers this prayer through means — us, His people.	Online	witness.lcms.org/2024/the-church-prays-for-church-workers/
Aug.	Church Workers Are Formed in Community – LCMS church workers are formed in the community of the congregation, family, Lutheran school, Concordia university, seminary and continuing education.	Online	witness.lcms.org/2024/church-workers-are-formed-in-community/
Oct.	Confessing Church Workers – Church workers are immersed in the Lutheran Confessions that they may rightly understand, teach and confess Christ to all God's people.	Print and Online	witness.lcms.org/2024/confessing-church-workers/
Dec.	For You to Dwell within my Heart – From Scripture and the example of Martin and Katie Luther, we understand the importance of the Christian family in forming a potential church worker.	Online	witness.lcms.org/tag/set-apart-to-serve/

Speaking Opportunities

The SAS leadership team has attended many conferences and events throughout 2024 to inform and encourage all SAS stakeholders to be personally involved in church work formation and recruitment in each of our local settings. The opportunities include:

Jan. 15	Lutheran Concerns Association Conference, Ft. Wayne
Jan. 23-24	Concordia University, Nebraska (CUNE), Seward, Neb.
Jan. 31-Feb 2	National Association of DCEs Conference, Houston, Texas
Feb. 4	Trinity Lutheran Church, Davenport, Iowa
Feb. 6	Council of Presidents, St. Louis
Feb. 21-24	Best Practices Conference, Phoenix, Ariz.
March 1	YouthLead, St. Louis
March 9-12	Lutheran Schools Administrators Conference, Dallas, Texas
March 18-19	Concordia University Irvine, Irvine, Calif.
April 8	Concordia University Ann Arbor, Ann Arbor, Mich.
April 11-12	Concordia University Chicago, Chicago, Ill.
April 14	Our Savior Lutheran Church, Green Bay, Wis.
April 15-16	Concordia University Wisconsin (CUW), Mequon, Wis.
April 18-20	Concordia University, St. Paul, St. Paul, Minn.
May 2	Immanuel Lutheran School, Wentzville, Mo.
May 12	Memorial Lutheran Church, Houston, Texas
May 29-30	LCMS U Minneapolis, Minn.
June 7-8	LWML Missouri District Conference, Independence, Mo.
June 25	Vocatio, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis
June 21-25	Youth National, New Orleans, La.
June 25-26	PALS Facilitators, St. Louis
June 25-28	Higher Things (HT) at CUW
July 9-12	LCMS Worship Institute, CUNE
July 16-19	HT at University the of Ozarks, Clarksville, Ark.
July 23-26	Lewis and Clark College, Portland, Or.
Aug. 20	Lutheran Church of Korea, St. Louis
Sept. 9-12	Council of Presidents, St. Louis
Sept. 10-15	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania, Palanga, Lithuania
Sept. 20	CSL and CTSFW Vicarage Supervisors, St. Louis
Sept. 22-24	ALSS Fall Heartland Conference, CUW
Oct. 9-11	LCMS Rocky Mountain District All Workers Conference, Breckenridge, Co.
Oct. 17-18	LCMS Minnesota North and Minnesota South Districts' Educators Conference, Mankato, Minn.
Oct. 21-24	Black Clergy Caucus, Memphis, Tenn.
Oct. 31	CTSFW Admissions and Executive Leadership Team, Ft. Wayne, Ind.
Nov. 4-5	North Wisconsin and South Wisconsin Districts' Educators Conference, Wisconsin Dells, Wis.
Dec. 10	LCEF Field Staff, District VPS, and Ministry Solutions Team Members, St. Louis
Dec. 7-10	CONFEDEX, Savannah, Ga.

Advisory Council

In 2024, SAS developed an Advisory Council that consists of a cross section of LCMS stakeholders who advise SAS based on their experience as church workers, educators and/or influential adults in the lives of potential church worker candidates. The Advisory Council meets three times per year. The introductory meeting took place on February 26, which served as preparation for the in-person meeting in St. Louis on July 30. On October 2, the Advisory Council met for a third time online. The Advisory Council's guidance will impact SAS by:

- Guiding resource improvements;
- Establishing priorities for the future;
- Learning about pain points and obstacles;
- Identifying new guides and trainings; and
- Clarifying and updating messaging.

In the 2024 meetings, the following trends and drivers were specifically addressed:

- What are the biggest challenges facing prospective church workers? In five years?
- Are we addressing those challenges? What is working? What is not working?
- What can SAS do to help?
- What problem could we help solve that we haven't discussed?
- New resources review of "Engaging Laity" for pastors and "How to Engage with Youth" for parents

Input from the Advisory Council is incorporated into the strategies, resources and future goals of SAS. SAS Advisory Council members are:

- Rev. Keith Boheim, executive director, Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation
- Dr. Bernard Bull, president, Concordia University, Nebraska, Seward, Neb.
- Robert Finch, pre-seminary student at Concordia University, St. Paul, St. Paul, Minn.
- Dr. Alan Freeman, director of LCMS School Ministry
- Rev. Jesse Kueker, admissions officer, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis
- David Kuschel, assistant to the president, Concordia Plan Services
- Marli Ockander, teacher, Sioux Falls Lutheran School, Sioux Falls, S.D.
- Anthony Pellegrini, executive director, Higher Things
- Rev. Daniel Weber, pastor, St. Luke's Lutheran Church, Federal Way, Wash.
- Rev. Matthew Wietfeldt, assistant vice president of admission, director of Christ Academy, Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne
- Rev. Dr. Kevin Wilson, president, LCMS Ohio District
- Kaye Wolff, longtime leader in the LCMS and LWML, Southfield, Mich.



Stakeholder Mapping

Stakeholder mapping identifies entities and groups within LCMS who:

- May be impacted by or have an interest in the *Set Apart to Serve* initiative
- May have the ability to support or influence the *Set Apart to Serve* initiative in the future with funding, relationships and/or reputation

SAS is experiencing tremendous interest and support throughout Synod. SAS has identified approximately 50 stakeholders specifically partnering or associated with church worker formation and recruitment. Each quarter, the SAS leadership team reviews each of these stakeholders based on their level of influence and the frequency of contact and partnership. SAS has developed a plan to interact and partner with each stakeholder for the ongoing activity and success of church worker formation and recruitment.

District Education Executives Partnership and Communications

Most LCMS districts have an education executive (often called “ed exec”) on staff. Ed execs often provide consulting services and assistance to the LCMS schools, administrators and teachers of the district. Ed execs are also key partners of SAS, as they promote and share church work formation and recruitment best practices with their constituents.

SAS is developing a quarterly e-newsletter to equip district education executives with *Set Apart to Serve* information and resources to work with pastors, principals and lay leaders in their districts to help recruit the next generation of church workers.

Each issue will include:

- Foundational Scripture verse and prayer;
- Promotion and best practices of the new CPH SAS church work recruitment curriculum;
- A highlighted statistic from recent SAS research; and
- A spotlight on one of the many SAS resources that can be found at resources.lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve.

The first SAS district ed exec e-newsletter went out in October of this year.

Monthly President's Report

When SAS began, the LCMS was undertaking an endeavor which would require significant time, resources and collaboration. With work as significant as this comprehensive, Synodwide, long-term initiative, SAS thought it necessary to submit a monthly report to the President of Synod. Recipients of this monthly report have expanded to over 600 SAS stakeholders. In 2024, significant SAS stakeholders received SAS updates on:

- Purpose and Focus
- District Collaboration
- Advisory Council
- Pilot Program Re-engagement
- Speaking Opportunities Throughout the Synod
- KFUO Coffee Hour programs
- CPH curriculum
- Awareness Plan
- Youth Tactical Activation Plan
- Second-Career Activation Plan
- Second-Career Journey Mapping
- All Nations Plan and Summit
- International Focus Plan
- Visits to Concordia universities
- District Working Group Pilot Program
- Circuit Visitor Pilot Program
- Ongoing Research Consulting and Surveys
- Mission Advancement and Funding
- Collaboration with PALS
- New Resources

Individuals may sign up to receive this monthly report at mailchi.mp/lcms/special-initiatives.

Quarterly Council of President's Report

The collaboration and support of the Council of Presidents (COP), which is composed of LCMS district presidents and LCMS vice-presidents, is vital to church work formation and recruitment in LCMS congregations, schools and entities. In 2024, SAS presented the COP with an update and call to action at their quarterly meetings. This year, SAS presented on:

- 2024 Goals
- District Working Group Pilot Program
- District Committee toolkits
- Circuit Visitor Pilot Program
- Youth Pilot Re-engagement
- Education executives quarterly e-newsletter
- Journey mapping and messaging
- Resource development
- All Nations Summit
- Advisory Council
- Encouragement to establish a district SAS (recruitment) committee

Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support (PALS)

PALS, a program in the LCMS Office of Pastoral Education, helps pastors and their wives (and families) transition from the seminary through the first three years into their pastoral ministry. The director of PALS is the Rev. Jonathan Manor. PALS is facilitated in each district by a pastor and his wife who meet six days a year with PALS pastors and wives for worship, continuing education, casuistry and fellowship.

These PALS facilitators also help new pastors and their wives incorporate SAS into their ministry and vocations, so they can build a culture of church work formation in their families, congregations and schools. SAS presented to the PALS facilitators in St. Louis on June 25–26. SAS also provides information about church worker formation, recruitment and resources in the monthly PALS newsletter, PenPALS.

Ongoing Research

Message testing is conducted to ensure that the key messaging for the SAS initiative resonates with its two target audiences: potential church workers and key influential adults. These results provide important insight into how the audience received the message points, what wording resonated most with the audience, and how the messaging can be adjusted to be more effective. Survey questions reflect what SAS strives to learn each year so that we can continue to develop a Synodwide culture of church worker formation and recruitment.

Building a culture of church work formation and recruitment is a marathon, not a sprint. It takes the determination, passion, effort and patience of everyone in the Synod.

Note: in the following tables, no information is available for cells left empty.

Summer Youth Survey

The annual youth survey was sent out in the summer of 2024. This is the fourth iteration of surveys of LCMS youth that have taken place each summer since 2021. Since 2023, youth surveys are distributed by contacting LCMS congregations with instructions for them to encourage their youth to take the survey. Samples from the 2023 and 2024 surveys were better balanced across all grade levels, whereas the previous survey samples over-represented high school juniors and seniors.

SUMMER YOUTH SURVEY	2024	2023	2022	2021
Responded to the survey	322	850	141	198
Distribution list	Contacting LCMS congregations*	LCMS youth list	LCMS youth list	LCMS youth list
Male/female ratio	47/53	48/52	50/50	47/53
School grade range	Grade 1– Graduated**	1–12+ Evenly represented	1–12+	1–12+ (78% 9–12 grade)
Attended Lutheran high school	21.1%	21.6%	20%	13%
Relative is a church worker	59%	53.6%	48%	
Attends weekly worship (Divine Service)	66.8%	70.3%	71%	71.1%
Involved in congregation's youth activities	71.1%		63%	
Baptized or confirmed LCMS member	93.5%	95.7%	80%	
Planning on becoming a full-time church worker	9%	3.4%	5.8%	
Would consider becoming a full-time church worker, but have not yet decided	23%	23.2%	26.6%	
I have not thought about becoming a full-time church worker	27%	29.9%	26%	
No, I am not interested in becoming a full-time church worker	41%	43.4%	41.6	
Likely to somewhat likely to attend a Concordia university	19%	20%	24%	
Unlikely to not at all likely to attend a Concordia university	40%	39.4%	47.9%	
Not sure or don't know to attend a Concordia university	41%	40.6%	28.2%	
Have heard about the <i>Set Apart to Serve</i> initiative	17.4%	9.8%	11.2%	5%
A lot to adequate information is available to you about church work vocations	46.9%	37.7%	40.0%	37%

In the past year, an ordained or commissioned church worker spoke to you about considering a church work vocation	25% (72% did not)	29% (71% did not)	31% (69% did not)	
Correlation between a church worker talking to a youth about church work and the youth then considering it	57%	49%	58%	
New questions added to the 2024 survey:				
Someone has talked to you about church work vocations	Yes (72%) No (28%)			
I recently graduated from a Concordia university another university no college	17 67 17%			
If you've considered attending a Concordia university, which one(s) are you considering***	CUNE (43) CUW (31) CUC (19) CUAA (17) CUSP (14) CUI (11)			
Greatest obstacles that keep youth from considering church work	No interest Low pay Lack of information Years of education Tuition cost			
Have a good to somewhat good understanding of "vocation"	64%			
Understanding "vocation" as a job/career vs. called to be/do as a baptized child of God across all part of your life	67% 90%			
Average of youth (Grades 7-12) who do NOT talk with an adult about vocation	51.3%			
Average of youth (Grades 7-12) who do NOT think about vocation in their own life	47.3%			

*Due to the difficulty in obtaining direct contact information on LCMS youth, SAS moved to contacting LCMS congregations with instructions for them to encourage their youth to take this survey.

**Grades 1–6 (5%), Grade 7 (11%), Grade 8 (12%), Grade 9 (20%), Grade 10 (13%), Grade 11 (14%), Grade 12 (14%), Graduated (11%).

***When youth selected multiple CUS schools both preferences were counted. Results are actual numbers, not percentages.

Of the youth considering a full-time church work vocation, the following table lists the vocations they would most consider, in descending order. 2024 reflects the actual number of youth. 2022 and 2023 reflect the percentage of youth.

CHURCH WORK VOCATION	2024 Actual number	2023 Percentage	2022 Percentage	2021 Not Surveyed
Lutheran school teacher	43	53.4	50	
Director of Christian Education	31	35.6	29.2	
Pastor (boys only responded)	36	76.8	72.0	
Director of Parish Music	14	19.2	20.8	
Director of Christian Outreach	13	13.7	16.7	
Deaconess (girls only responded)	15	20.8	21.7	
Director of Family Life Ministries	9	10.5	16.7	
Director of Church Ministries	14	9.6	12.5	



Spring Adult and Congregation Survey

The adult and congregation survey was sent out to all congregations via an e-blast in the spring of 2024, along with reminder e-blasts to those who hadn't responded after a week. The emails encouraged congregations to share the survey broadly with their laity through a survey link in their bulletin. This adult and congregation survey has added several new questions from previous years.

Spring Adult and Congregation Survey	2024	2023	2022	2021 Not Surveyed
Total responses to the survey	404	1,687	1,019	
Ordained responses	25%	33%	32%	
Commissioned worker responses	6%	4%	10%	
Lay person responses	69%	62%	58%	
Male/female ratio	53/47	49/51		
Who responded to this survey	Grandparent (48%) Parent (30%) Over 60 years of age (57%) 41-60 years of age (34%) Under 41 years of age (8%)			
Districts responses	All except OK and SID	All	All	
Pastors aware of <i>Set Apart to Serve</i> by percent	82.2	71.3	45	
Commissioned workers aware of <i>Set Apart to Serve</i> by percent	62.5	50.7	30	
Laypeople aware of <i>Set Apart to Serve</i> by percent	29.7	18.1	11	
Percent of congregations producing one or more church workers (of those who responded)	35%	59%	52%	
Commissioned worker spoke to at least one youth about church work	68%	26%	25%	
Layperson spoke to at least one youth about church work	18%	19%	24%	

New questions added to the 2024 survey:

Reasons why congregations are not speaking to youth about church work	Too few youth No youth are interested I don't know what to say I have no interaction with youth I assume others are responsible for that I steer them toward other career paths	
In the last year, have you spoken with youth in these age groups about church work vocations?	Infant baptism-grade 6 (7.7%) Youth in confirmation instruction (15.1%) Youth grades 9-12 (21.5%) College age young adults (9.4%)	
If you have spoken to youth about church work, how many youth have you talked to?	1 youth (27.5%) 2 youth (14.1%) 3 or more youth (14.1%) In a large group (8.9%)	
Compared to 5 years ago, the percentage of people who sense an increased number of people interested or somewhat interested in church work	Ordained (37%) Commissioned workers (31%) Laypeople (28%)	
Compared to 5 years ago, the percentage of people who sense see people interested or somewhat interested in church work as a second career	Ordained (37%) Commissioned workers (23%) Laypeople (26%)	
Compared to 5 years ago, the percentage of people who fell more prepared to talk about church work opportunities with youth and adults	Ordained (71%) Commissioned workers (75%) Laypeople (48%)	
In the last year, have you heard your congregation talk about the important role you play in encouraging youth to consider a church work vocation?	Yes (32.6%) No (67.4%)	
Pastors who spoke to 1 or more youth about attending an LCMS Concordia university*	56%	
Commissioned workers who spoke to 1 or more youth about attending an LCMS Concordia university	37%	
Laypeople who spoke to 1 or more youth about attending an LCMS Concordia university	15%	
Pastors who spoke to 1 or more adults about considering church work as a second career	63%	
Commissioned workers who spoke to 1 or more adults about considering church work as a second career	29%	
Laypeople who spoke to 1 or more adults about considering church work as a second career	14%	
Have the children in your household heard about church work opportunities at your Lutheran school?	Yes (39%) No (61%)	
Have the children in your household heard about church work opportunities in your congregation's Sunday school?	Yes (29%) No (71%)	

*LCMS Concordia universities are located in Ann Arbor, Mich., Chicago, Ill., Irvine, Calif., Mequon, Wis., Seward, Neb. and St. Paul, Minn.

Fall Influencers Survey

Each fall, an annual survey is sent to primary church worker influencers (pastors, commissioned church workers, lay leaders, and lay youth leaders). The 2024 survey is the third iteration of this survey. The purpose of this survey is to measure the awareness of the initiative and track any changes among the behaviors and patterns of LCMS influencers. Influencer surveys are distributed via email directly to random representative samples of church workers and lay leaders.

Fall Influencer Survey	2024	2023	2022	2023
Number of respondents	469	494	292	
Percent of congregations producing one or more church workers (of those who responded)	51%	59%	52%	
Pastors aware of <i>Set Apart to Serve</i>	88%	89%	61%	54%
Commissioned workers aware of <i>Set Apart to Serve</i>	88%	68%	47%	39%
Lay youth workers aware of <i>Set Apart To Serve</i>	58%	42%	33%	26%
Congregation elders aware of <i>Set Apart to Serve</i>	33%			
Compared to 2019 – I now feel more prepared to talk to people about church work opportunities	2024 Commissioned cong. workers (56%) Commissioned teachers (59%) Pastors (63%) Lay elders (42%) Lay youth leader (55%)		2023 Commissioned cong. workers (49%) Commissioned teachers (47%) Pastors (52%) Lay elders (NA) Lay youth leader (47%)	
Compared to 2019 – Lay adults in my congregation now show more interest in church work as a second career	2024 Commissioned cong. workers (15%) Commissioned teachers (11%) Pastors (29%) Lay elders (12%) Lay youth leader (17%)		2023 Commissioned cong. workers (17%) Commissioned teachers (7%) Pastors (23%) Lay elders (NA) Lay youth leader (20%)	
Compared to 2019 – Young people in my congregation or school now show more interest in church work as a vocation	2024 Commissioned cong. workers (21%) Commissioned teachers (28%) Pastors (27%) Lay elders (19%) Lay youth leader (21%)		2023 Commissioned cong. workers (17%) Commissioned teachers (7%) Pastors (23%) Lay elders (NA) Lay youth leader (20%)	
New questions added to the 2024 survey				
LCMS youth attend LCMS schools (including early childhood)	16%			
Have started a committee on church worker recruitment	Congregations (3%) Schools (8%)			
Top 6 SAS resources used by pastor, commissioned workers, and Lutheran teachers (Resources found at resources.lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve)	2024 Talking to young people about vocation Encouraging future church workers Introduction to <i>Set Apart to Serve</i> FAQs about Set Apart to Serve The 8 LCMS Church Work Vocations Bulletin insert – General			
Pastor spoke with at least one youth about church work	25% yes 29% no	32%	26%	
Commissioned worker spoke to at least one youth about church work	30% yes 13% no	26%	25%	
Commissioned Lutheran teacher spoke to at least one youth about church work	39% yes 18% no			

Lay youth leader spoke to at least one youth about church work	19% yes 42% no	19%	24%	
Congregation elder spoke to at least one youth about church work	19% yes 72% no			
Pastor spoke with youth in a large group about church work	12%	18%	12%	
Commissioned worker spoke with youth in a large group about church work	30%	26%	18%	
Commissioned Lutheran teacher spoke with youth in a large group about church work	39%			
Lay youth leader spoke with youth in a large group about church work	14%	25%	16%	
Congregation elder spoke to youth in a large group about church work	0%			
Average of pastors, commissioned workers, elders and lay leaders talking to youth (early childhood-grade 6) about church work	32%	27%		
Average of pastors, commissioned workers, elders and lay leaders talking to youth (grade 7-8/confirmation age) about church work	50%	47%		
Average of pastors, commissioned workers, elders and lay leaders talking to youth (grades 9-12) about church work	65%	74%		
Average of pastors, commissioned workers, elders and lay leaders talking to college age young adults about church work	335	34%		
Pastor spoke with at least one adult about church work as a second career	34% yes 40% no	40% yes	35% yes	
Commissioned worker spoke to at least one adult about church work as a second career	25% yes 63% no	23% yes	21% yes	
Commissioned teacher spoke to at least one adult about church work as a second career	21% yes 64% no			
Lay youth leader spoke to at least one adult about church work as a second career	12% yes 79% no	25% yes	22% yes	
Congregation elder spoke to at least one adult about church work as a second career	23% yes 72% no			



Youth Component

Set Apart to Serve began with conversations in 2018 about an imminent church worker shortage and the need to raise up a new generation of church workers. The 2019 LCMS convention adopted Resolution 6-01, “To Support and Participate in the Comprehensive Church Worker Recruitment Initiative.” This resolution encouraged the Synod “to commend, financially support, and directly participate in this comprehensive, multi-year church worker recruitment initiative.” The focus of Res. 6-01 was to raise up a new generation of church workers, instill church work vocations as sacred and joyful, develop the whole person in potential church workers, and support and care for our existing church workers so that they will be healthy advocates of next-generation church workers.

Through research, focus groups, Synodwide collaboration, subject matter experts, and pilot congregations and schools, SAS developed numerous resources for primary influencers on young people considering full-time church work. These influencers are pastors, commissioned church workers,

parents, laity, LCMS districts and youth peers. Resources were developed for three general age groups: conception-grade 6, grades 7–8 (general confirmation age), and grades 9–12. These resources were released to the Synod at the Synodwide SAS town hall on Sept. 27, 2023. See resources.lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve.

SAS set two primary goals for the youth component in 2024:

1. To increase engagement between influencers and young people
2. To increase young people’s understanding of vocation

SAS did a reset on the 2024 youth survey to better compare growth and challenges in the coming years. Conclusions in the 2024 survey include:

- Awareness of SAS is gradually growing among LCMS youth, but most are still unaware of it.
- Church workers talking to youth about church work vocations remains the most common characteristic of

those who say they are considering church work.

- However, less than one third of youth say a church worker has spoken to them about considering a church work vocation, and these conversations are even less common with girls or students not attending an LCMS school.
- About one-third of youth admitted they do not fully understand what “vocation” means, but over 90% were able to recognize the correct option when it was given to them.
- Many youth are not actively thinking about their future vocation until starting their senior year of high school, but even then, a surprisingly high number still admit to not giving it much thought.
- Aside from lack of interest in church work (or having another career in mind), one of the most commonly cited obstacles to church work is lack of exposure (shown by the number who cited “need more information” or “not thought about it”).

These are the following strategies for the 2024 youth component of SAS:

Youth Pilot Re-engagement

SAS collaborated with pilot congregations and schools representing all 35 LCMS districts in the development of youth resources. They tested the resources developed by SAS, provided SAS with additional resources, and became advocates for SAS in their ministry context, circuit and district.

SAS met with several of the original youth pilot representatives at three re-engagement meetings during 2024. In these meetings, the following items were discussed:

- What was working well with SAS in their congregation or school?
- How does the word “vocation” resonate with young people in their congregation and how can SAS help build awareness of that concept?
- What additional resources should SAS consider?
- Feedback on two new resources: “Engaging Laity in Your Congregation” and “Helping Parents Prepare Youth for Church Work Vocations.” These resources will be available soon.

Pilot participants also assisted SAS with “youth round tables.” Youth from their congregations were asked to view selected SAS video clips and provide their critique as to messaging, effectiveness and any other observations. The youth critique will help SAS in the development of future videos geared toward a youth audience. What we learned from these round table discussions will be incorporated in the 2025–2030 SAS plan.

Collaboration with LCMS Youth

LCMS Youth Ministry serves under the LCMS Office of National Mission. SAS leadership meets monthly with the Rev. Dr. Mark Kiessling, director of LCMS Youth Ministry, and DCE Julianna Shults, LCMS Youth Ministry program manager. SAS collaborates with these youth subject matter experts to discuss and plan for significant SAS presence and participation in YouthLead and the LCMS Youth Gathering. Kiessling and Shults also provide overall consulting work, expertise in youth research, and an SAS best practices e-source.





Second-Career Component

The second-career component of SAS began in December 2023. Primary collaborators include the two seminaries, LCMS School Ministry, LCMS Colloquy and the SAS leadership team. In addition to the strategies in the sections below, SAS is also:

- Developing a resource that describes the various routes to ordination and teaching in a Lutheran school;
- Building awareness of second-career routes;
- Partnering with LCMS groups in the development and execution of a social media campaign;
- Developing a periodic second-career survey to establish a baseline and measure short- and long-term progress;
- Developing resources for influencers, congregations, seminaries, Concordia universities and districts specifically for second-career recruitment;
- Collaborating with LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces (MAF) to develop resources pertinent to military second-career recruitment; and

- Developing an information and recruitment resource for district education executives.

Journey Mapping

Second-career journey mapping is an exercise that informs the SAS leadership team about the path an adult takes moving from one career path to a full-time church work vocation. In September and October, SAS facilitated journey mapping events at Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis and Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. Separate 90-minute journey mapping sessions were conducted first with the second-career seminarians, and then with their wives. A pizza dinner was hosted for their families between the two sessions.

We asked the second-career seminarians and their wives to consider the following stages in their journey:

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

For each of the stages, we asked the seminarians and their wives these five questions:

1. What steps did you take?
2. What key questions and decisions were involved?
3. Who and what did you interact with in this stage?
4. What were the pain points and barriers?
5. When did you take these steps?

Compilation and next steps of this journey mapping exercise will be the focus for 2025. These journey maps will help develop resources for men considering the pastoral ministry as a second career in the future, for influencers of these men, and for the seminaries walking beside these men and their spouses in this journey.

SAS is very grateful to the Lutheran Church Extension Fund for gifting the men and their spouses who participated in these journey mapping exercises with an LCEF gift card.

Second-Career Teacher Facebook Ad Campaign

The two greatest church worker shortages currently in the LCMS are first, Lutheran school teachers, and second, pastors. In 2024, SAS began a pilot project with the Minnesota South and South Wisconsin districts of the LCMS in exploring new ways to recruit Lutheran school teachers as a second career.

SAS is partnering with these two districts to create a Facebook digital ad campaign. These ads are being strategically designed to target educators — both LCMS members and Christian non-members alike — who are currently teaching in public schools who may be looking to switch to teaching in a Lutheran school. Using targeted ads and messaging, SAS aims to showcase the unique benefits and values of teaching at an LCMS school.

A similar pilot campaign ran last year. This campaign targeted potential pastors, with the ads sending them to weareyourseminaries.org, a website hosted by Concordia Seminary, St. Louis and Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne. Results showed a positive response, and because of this, we believe working with these districts will help us understand how to further amplify our message and reach prospective LCMS teachers throughout the Synod.



All Nations Component

In August, SAS hosted an all-day summit in St. Louis with leaders from the Black Clergy Caucus (BCC), the Hispanic Missionary League, and Chinese Lutherans in Mission Building (CLiMB). Participants included:

- Rev. S T Williams Jr.
- Rev. Greg Manning
- Rev. Juan Zamora
- Deaconess Perla Rodriguez
- Rev. Steve Law
- DCE Brian Ho
- Rev. Stephen Heimer

This summit allowed SAS to share its history, strategies and resources with these representatives. Moreover, it was a valuable opportunity to listen to the wisdom and needs of these leaders in forming and recruiting youth and adults in all of our congregations, families and schools, even as St. John describes in Revelation 5, “And they sang a new song [to the Lamb], saying, ‘Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God *from every tribe and language and people and nation*, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth” (REV.5:9). We also discussed ongoing collaboration in the design and development of resources, translation projects, work in multi-cultural contexts, SAS participation in various conferences, and how to engage parents/non-traditional parents.



International Component

In September, the Rev. Darius Petkunas, Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania (CELCL), invited Dr. Baneck to Palanga, Lithuania, to present at its pastors and church musicians fall conference. During this three-day conference, Baneck led a discussion on SAS, the LCMS church work formation and recruitment initiative. Topics included:

- The Biblical and Confessional Foundation: Importance and Urgency of Church Work Formation and Recruitment
- God Saves through Means
- *Set Apart to Serve*, the LCMS Church Work Formation and Recruitment

- Forming a Baptized Christian and Church Worker
- Resources for Church Work Formation and Recruitment
- Recruiting Second-Career Pastors and Teachers
- Addressing the Challenges
- The Divine Service: Forming Saving Faith from Conception to Death

This conference provided fruitful conversation and the sharing of ideas to form pastors for the proclamation of the Gospel for the saving faith of all who hear and believe it both in the CELCL and the LCMS.

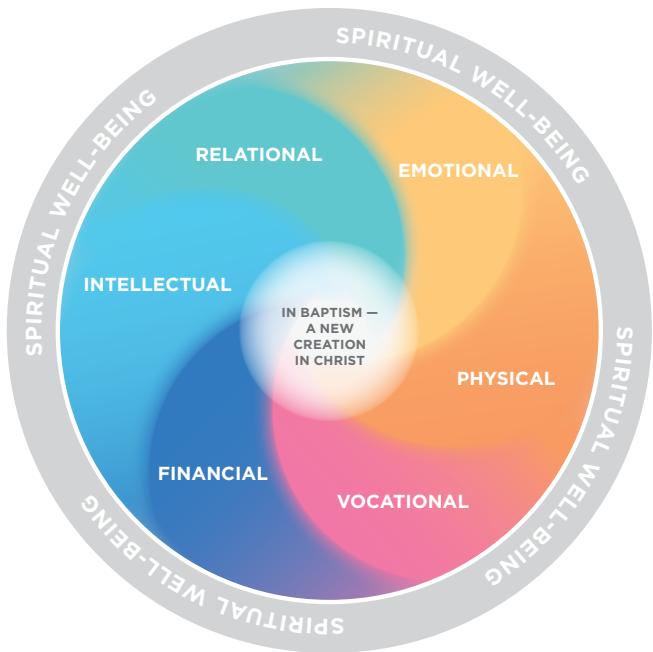


Church Worker Wellness and Church Worker Appreciation

Church Worker Wellness

2019 Convention Resolution 6-01, which marked the official beginning of SAS, resolved to “[support, encourage and care] for existing church workers for the welfare of the workers, for the proclamation and witness of the Gospel, and for workers to be healthy advocates of next-generation church workers.”

Church worker wellness is a significant factor in church work formation and recruitment. Church worker wellness, or the lack thereof, is often a roadblock or inhibitor which causes current church workers to not encourage youth to consider a church work vocation. At the same time, several others in the LCMS were each addressing church worker wellness in their field of service. In the last two years, Concordia Plan Services, the LCMS Council of Presidents, and SAS teamed up under the leadership of the LCMS Office of National Mission (ONM) in the formation of a Church Worker Wellness Alliance. Under the leadership of Deaconess Dr. Tiffany Manor, this alliance is focusing on bringing greater awareness and action steps of the laity in caring for their full-time ordained and commissioned workers in our LCMS congregations, schools and entities. The alliance is focusing on how we care for one another as the baptized children of God in Christ Jesus, which includes our love and care for those who preach, teach and share the Gospel to all God’s people — from conception through death.



Church Worker Wellness Alliance – 2024 Action Steps/Goals

Overall Goal: Build a culture of wellness across the Synod and improve church worker wellness

- For lay leaders: raise awareness of church worker wellness and provide value during decision-making processes and times.
- For professional church workers: build worker stewardship, equip them with resources and remove barriers to wellness.
- Collaborative work with corporate Synod, LCMS district presidents and Concordia Plan Services.
 - Continued conversations and presentations with stakeholders across the Synod to build a culture of wellness.
Targeted attention is being given to help young workers develop resiliency.
- ONM pilot program: districts are providing referrals to congregations that have been exemplary in caring for and supporting their workers, and to workers who are well in body and soul and are thriving as they serve our Lord's church. Interviews with the lay leaders and the workers will discover practices and programs that have been fruitful in improving overall wellness. Results will be shared with Synod leadership, and then pilot congregations will be identified to incorporate the practices and programs.
- ONM and the LCMS Office of Pastoral Education are collaborating to explore ways the Concordia universities and seminaries can prepare church work students for resiliency in their future vocational service.
- Church worker appreciation year-long focus with targeted dates for appreciation of each of the eight LCMS church work vocations. The campaign includes e-blasts, print stories and social media engagement.
- Published Wellness Wheel resource with theological description and explanation of each area of the Wellness Wheel.
- Quarterly emphasis on each area of the Wellness Wheel.

Church Worker Appreciation

SAS is partnering with LCMS Church Worker Wellness to encourage our congregations and schools to give recognition and show appreciation to our LCMS ordained and commissioned church workers. Every Christian vocation bears the cross of Christ in sacrifice, humility and service. In particular, Satan tempts and attacks those who proclaim and teach the life-giving Word of Christ, “prowling around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (2 PETER 5:8).

SAS and LCMS Church Worker Wellness are also teaming up to bring awareness of designated church worker days throughout the year that our congregations and schools are encouraged to observe. These days include:

- April 28 – Director of Parish Music Appreciation
- May 5–9 – Teacher Appreciation
- June 26 – Director of Christian Education Appreciation
- October 25 – Deaconess Appreciation
- October – Pastor and All Church Workers Appreciation



Funding Set Apart to Serve

Pastors and commissioned church workers¹ in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod are all so very vital in the preaching, teaching, witnessing and sharing of the Word of Christ (**ROM.10:17**) for the salvation of God's people.

Since the founding of the LCMS in 1847, almost every convention has been adopting resolutions to recruit ordained and commissioned church workers. The need continues to be great in 2024.

SAS seeks to make church work formation and recruitment a part of the Synod's life and culture in every congregation, school, district and entity, a culture built and participated in by every pastor, commissioned church worker, parent and layperson. In order to facilitate the building of this culture throughout Synod, SAS needs expert personnel, marketing and communications expertise, development of resources, building awareness, travel, promotional material and research — all of which require financial resources.

Set Apart to Serve is funded entirely by donor-designated gifts. Overseeing the funding of SAS is included in the responsibilities of the core leadership team. Weekly focus includes:

- Ongoing interaction with SAS mission advancement experts from Standing Partnership and LCMS Mission Advancement;
- Building relationships with donors who have an interest in SAS and church work recruitment;
- Grant writing;
- MADV resources (donor impact statement, project priority statement, grant bank document); and
- Aligning available funds with execution of SAS priorities and work.

To learn more or find out how you can help strengthen the Synod's culture of church work recruitment, contact LCMS Mission Advancement at 888-930-4438 or mission.advancement@lcms.org.

¹ Lutheran school teachers, directors of Christian education, deaconesses, directors of Christian outreach, directors of parish music, directors of family life ministries, and directors of church ministries



Developing a Five-Year Plan

From its inception, SAS has framed church work formation and recruitment as what Christ's church does and continues to do *until the Lord returns*. On Nov. 19, the SAS core team, in partnership with major partners, met to develop a long-range, five-year SAS plan, which will address sustainability, funding, ongoing leadership, areas of focus, barriers, culture-building and more.

*You are a church worker recruiter.
Who can you encourage to consider a full-time
church work vocation?*



THE
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MISSOURI SYNOD

lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve