

SET APART TO SERVE

LCMS CHURCH WORK RECRUITMENT

REPORT TO THE SYNOD PRESIDENT

— and over 900 significant collaborators and stakeholders —

JAN. 2026

KEY POINTS FOR THIS MONTH

- 1 2024 Annual Report
- 2 Second-Career Teacher Ad Campaign
- 3 SAS Pilot/Focus Groups for 2026
- 4 SAS Coffee Hour Line-up
- 5 Increase in Church Worker Enrollments

Annual Report

The 2025 SAS Annual Report was sent out shortly before Christmas. Please click here if your December schedule kept you from reading this report files.lcms.org/f/sas-annual-report-2025.

This report represents the wonderful and industrious partnership of everyone in the Synod, as together we build a lasting culture of church work formation and recruitment throughout the Synod. Please note the “Call to Action” on page 2.

Second-Career Teacher Ad Campaign

Supplying our LCMS schools with rostered teachers is our greatest church worker need in the Synod. Pastors are our second greatest need.

SAS and four district education executives are currently partnering in a three-month Facebook teacher advertisement campaign that is running in all or parts of their respective districts. These ads invite 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 runs December 2025 through February 2026.

As of January 14, 2026, 671 leads have been received, broken down by district as follows:

- › Florida (Jennifer Tanner) – 148 leads
- › Michigan (Travis Grulke) – 174 leads
- › Nebraska (Bob Ziegler) – 177 leads
- › St. Louis (Josh Swartz) – 172 leads

These are phenomenal results – and we’re only halfway through this campaign! The education executives are following up on these leads and connecting likely candidates with the Lutheran schools in their district.

This is the second iteration of this teacher ad campaign. In 2025, SAS partnered with the LCMS Minnesota South (Sean Martens) and South Wisconsin (Chris Cody) districts, which resulted in 398 leads.



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/.

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** – Through this pilot, SAS will partner with 6–8 districts (currently being selected) who currently have a SAS focus team (committee, task force). The goal is to produce and share strategies and resources that will be used for all LCMS districts in their district work of church worker recruitment.
- 2 **Lay Leader Pilot (and all laity)** – Through this pilot, SAS will partner with lay leaders throughout the Synod to learn about and guide ways to connect with all laity to be actively involved in church work formation and recruitment of youth and adults in our congregations, families and schools.
- 3 **Circuit Visitors Focus Groups** – Through two separate focus groups, SAS will partner with a representative group of circuit visitors 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.
- 4 **School (CPH Curriculum) Focus Group** – Through two separate focus groups, SAS will partner with school administrators and teachers to better understand how schools are currently using the CPH SAS curriculum. We will also develop best practices for all LCMS schools to consistently incorporate this curriculum into their school so that our congregations and schools will be equipped with church workers for generations to come.
- 5 **Influential Adults 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 journey 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 in SAS in their congregations. Listen to The Coffee Hour at kfuo.org/tag/set-apart-to-serve.

- › **Feb 9** – Austin Albers (high school history teacher) and Jon Pinn (5th grade teacher), Sioux Falls Lutheran School, Sioux Falls, S.D.), who have been identified by church work students as encouraging them to consider full-time church work
- › **Feb 16** – Mark Wolters and Debbie Larson (laypersons)
- › **Jan 23** – Tom Jennings and Blake Pieper (laypersons)
- › **Jan 30** – Brian German and Aaron Moldenhauer (CUW faculty)
- › **Feb 6** – John Schmall and DoRena Wirgau (laypersons)
- › **Feb 13** – Kirk Clayton and Simeon Raddatz (CUC faculty)
- › **Feb 20** – Mark Koschmann and Reed Lessing (CSP faculty)
- › **Feb 27** – Scott Ashmon and Scott Stiegemeier (CUI faculty)

Increase in Church Worker Enrollments

There is a *Set Apart to Serve* culture running through the entire Synod! One measurement of this culture's impact is the church worker enrollments at our Concordia universities and seminaries. Please join me in praying these numbers continue to increase.

	FALL 2024	FALL 2025	DIFFERENCE
Pre-seminary*	156	174	+18
Lutheran Teacher	380	402	+22
Classical Educator		13	+13
Director of Christian Education	79	93	+14
Director of Christian Outreach	2	2	0
Pre-deaconess	20	21	+1
Director of Church Ministry	34	34	0
Director of Parish Music	24	28	+4
Director of Family Life Ministry	4	1	-3
Deaconess**	93	101	+8
All Pastoral Routes***	566	586	+20
TOTAL	1,358	1,455	+97

*Concordia universities

**CUC, CTSFW, CSL

***CTSFW, CSL

See the 2025 Annual Report for more impact statistics files.lcms.org/f/sas-annual-report-2025.

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.



THE
LUTHERAN CHURCH
MISSOURI SYNOD

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