

A White Paper on the Current Context of Pastoral Formation

By Rev. Dr. James A. Baneck, executive director of the LCMS Office of Pastoral Education

In July 2019, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) in convention adopted Resolution 6-01, “To Support and Participate in the Comprehensive Church Worker Recruitment Initiative.” It was adopted by 94%. With Aslanian Market Research, we just completed 10 focus groups and over 2,000 surveys for this initiative. A comprehensive report will be shared with the church. Meanwhile, Standing Partnership, a marketing and communications firm, is leading us through a long-term, comprehensive, Synodwide church worker marketing and communications initiative.

Through this, I hope to initiate an ongoing conversation throughout the Synod around identifying, catechizing, encouraging and supporting church workers for the next generation. The following are some thoughts about today’s context, along with current Synod statistics.

“Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (MATT. 9:38).

Today’s Culture

MUCH IS BEING WRITTEN ABOUT TODAY’S CULTURE. In the sense that the culture is affecting the church today, we are drawn to the accelerating and growing movement of secularization. Secularization is the cultural process in which religion (and specifically Christianity) loses its social and cultural significance and influence. As a society moves deeper into secularization, it moves further away from morals, ethics, beauty, law and ultimately God. Finding evidence of this is not difficult: sexual orientation, abortion, the breakdown of marriage and the family, lawlessness, hatred and violence against authority, and the ruin of absolute truth. Secularization is the intentional agenda of the film industry, television, media outlets, segments of government, education, the sports industry and even organized churches (and even those who call themselves Christian).

Bill Maher, host of HBO’s “Real Time with Bill Maher,” recently made this comment: “Religion must die for mankind to live.” His view is joined by today’s well-known scientists Neil deGrasse Tyson and Bill Nye; atheists Ryan Bell, Richard Dawkins and Tracey Moody; along with humanists like Chris Stedman. These individuals “[speak] for a large demographic of Americans who feel the same way. Religious disinterest is at an all-time

high.”¹ On the popular daytime show “The View,” Joy Behar recently mocked Vice-President Mike Pence for talking to Jesus and even called it a “mental illness.”

These are but a few examples in a deteriorating religious climate of a further decline in religious identification and practice. Pseudoscience, modernization and affluence are some of many ingredients that have moved our American culture away from Christianity, even to the point of undermining and ridiculing it. To the satisfaction of Marx and Nietzsche, American culture has turned away from organized religion, and this has been escalating even more in the last two decades. In the *Journal of Lutheran Mission*, George Hawley writes, “A quiet crisis has been brewing in American Christianity for decades. Simply put: Christians make up a much smaller percentage of the population than they did a generation or two ago. This phenomenon affects Christian denominations across the board in one way or another.”²

The current cultural climate has affected pastoral formation and those serving in this office, not to mention

¹ Randall S. Frederick, “The State of Seminary Education,” *Theology & the City*, Nov. 19, 2015, accessed March 19, 2020, theologyandthecity.com/2015/11/19/the-state-of-seminary-education/.

² George Hawley, “The LCMS in the Face of Demographic and Social Change: A Social Science Perspective,” *Journal of Lutheran Mission* 3, no. 3 (December 2016): 5.

every congregation and Christian. However, the question must be asked if it is really all that different from previous generations. There is no doubt that American culture has experienced a decline in morality, seen especially in sexual promiscuity and the value of life, and is no longer normed by Christian values and ethics. People of every era wrestle with the question of pastoral formation and pastoral care in a perverse and wicked generation. The church seems to be caught off guard with this era's rapid decline and ever-so-quickly changing world. However, the Scriptures remain changeless: "Preach Christ crucified" (1 Cor. 1:23), and "preach the word ... in season and out of season" (2 Tim. 4:2). Pastoral formation entails forming men who are faithful to the Word and Confessions for each sinful age and preaching Christ, the ageless hope of salvation for all the world.

Millennials

IT IS INTERESTING TO CONSIDER the state of the LCMS within each generational context. The LCMS was growing during the greatest generation and the silent generation. The baby-boom generation saw the Synod in its greatest growth, with a rapid increase in churches and schools. With the great birth boom after World War II, churches and schools were built to accommodate this growth.

Who are the millennials?

1. Millennials have a love for a fight. Often, this shows itself in millennials not taking ownership of their issues but rather blaming the system, parents or the generation before them for whatever battle they are waging. Millennials use social media to express their thoughts and opinions and expect a response, dialog and debate.
2. Millennials want to be connected to their peer friends, even those not of the same faith. At the same time, they also place great trust in and have a desire for the generation ahead of them to guide and lead them.
3. Millennials love "hanging out" with other people. They are not interested in socializing that involves an agenda or structure. They socialize for the sake of socializing, which allows the time for such activity to simply unfold. When these social times are scheduled, they need to be regular but not mandatory. During these social times, millennials will often gravitate toward the subjects of sports, YouTube, TV

shows, art and music.

4. Millennials want to be players at the table. They are engaged and feel they have something to say. The challenge for boomers is to sit and listen to them. Millennials love to engage in the hard questions. They want to be asked these questions, to which they have something to contribute.
5. Millennials are a frugal generation. They have witnessed generations before them accumulate great debt, and they want to avoid the same. They are also adventurous. They have no problem living in a smaller home with less stuff so they can travel and see the world.
6. Millennials are a "back to basics" generation. They recycle, and they are "green." Christian millennials have a genuine care for God's creation and want to be good stewards of it. In addition, they enjoy organic foods and gardening, and they love to buy from local vendors who sell fresh fruits and vegetables, handmade products and artisanal goods.

What are millennials looking for in a church? The answer is quite optimistic. First, they are looking for **community invested in relationships**. They seek relationships and a sense of family. The millennial is not interested in a church that seeks a relationship for the sake of "getting them into the church"; rather, they are interested in a place that has a genuine interest and love for people. When ministering to millennials, the church needs to think of ministering to them "in the long term," investing in the ongoing life of the individual. This is prime for pastoral care.

Ted and Chelsey Doering write about "first, second, and third places." Millennials love being in their "first place." This is their home and the people with whom they live. Their "second place" is their work. These are people they probably see more than anyone else — eight or more hours every workday. "Third places" are very important for millennials. These are defined as "anchor places of community," which involve a community life that fosters broader, more creative interaction.³ The church is a prime "third place" for millennials to interact, be heard and engage with God and neighbor. Within this third place, millennials want to contribute to the Body of Christ.⁴

³ Ted Doering and Chelsey Doering, *Myth of the Millennial* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 130.

⁴ Doering, *Myth*, 36.

Millennials have a strong craving to socialize with the older generations, and they desire their mentorship. Generally, millennials value the opinions, experiences and time the older generations will give them. They love to hear the older generation's stories. They desire the knowledge, expertise, wisdom and experience of the older generations. For the church, this involves a loving investment of time, apprenticeship and acknowledging that this mentorship is making way for the next generation to lead. At the same time, "attitude reflects leadership."⁵ Older generations must earn the respect of the millennial. Therefore, there is great responsibility put upon the older generation to lead with integrity, invested care and respect.

Millennials are drawn back to the family. They want to be with their parents, siblings, grandparents and extended family members. Consider how this great opportunity is handed to the church. Within the realm of pastoral formation, consider the opportunity this presents to pastors inviting them to consider the holy ministry, the relationship of seminary professors with their students, and how the Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support (PALS) program mentors to our new pastors entering their first call.

Second, they want **preaching** that reminds them of their sin and proclaims Jesus as the forgiveness of their sin. They want a Jesus who will speak to their anxieties over financial burdens, perfectionism and feeling alone. They want a Gospel that will give them hope in a difficult world. Third, they want **authenticity**. A millennial can smell disingenuousness, deception and untruthfulness a mile away. Millennials are not receptive to the church's marketing plans to sell Jesus. They are not interested in trying to make Jesus look more attractive, cool, accessible, entertaining or relevant. They want the real Jesus from real people who believe in Him. They want a Jesus who came to forgive sin. Fourth, they want a place that **welcomes** new people, not to make them become members, but because of a genuine care for and interest in people. Millennials do not appreciate the "hard sell." Fifth, even though it is difficult not to refer to millennials as "they," millennials are not appreciative of this title. Millennials want to be "**we**." They want to be a part of the whole, a part of the community.

Pages are full of print, statistics and anecdotal stories concerning millennials and the church. What is given here is but a brief sketch and generalities to open the dis-

cussion and thinking about this vibrant force of young people in the church. What can we expect from our millennial pastors? What can we expect from a congregation with millennials? From the raw generational data, we might conclude that our millennial pastor will:

1. Engage his people with the hard questions of theology and life.
2. Lead his church to be an intergenerational community with an emphasis on building relationships.
3. Be budget conscious and frugal, except for the few things he thinks are most important, for which he is willing to invest.
4. Desire the church to be simple rather than elaborate, from architecture to governance.
5. Not expect "quick" results when it comes to the faith choices of his people, but be patient and build a relationship with them.
6. Expect a congregation that is more communal, with less of a silo mentality.
7. Preach the Scriptures with the intent of being relational, conversational and engaging.
8. Not be so inclined to vision statements and goals, but his philosophy will be more "just do it."

There are both positives and cautions in this list. Pastoral formation (especially in the seminary) is vital in molding these millennial traits for the good of the church. The church will be wise to draw on the strengths of these generational traits, while at the same time forming the man through the wisdom and experience of the biblical and confessional church.

The following is a breakdown of generations and world events during that generation. Laid on top of this are significant LCMS events during that generation along with Missouri Synod general growth and decline patterns.

⁵ Doering, *Myth*, 165.

Generation (as of 2018)	World Event	LCMS Event	LCMS Baptized Members	LCMS Congregations
The lost generation Born between 1890–1915		1839: St. Louis seminary est. 1846: Fort Wayne seminary est. 1847: The LCMS est. 1847: President Walther 1850: President Wyneken 1864: Concordia, Chicago est. 1874: Fort Wayne sem to Springfield 1878: President Schwan 1881: Concordia, Bronxville est. 1881: Concordia, Wisconsin est. 1894: Concordia, Nebraska est. 1899: President Pieper 1905: Concordia, Portland est.	1847: 4,099 +845,806 1910: 849,905	Before 1926: 2,724
The greatest generation Born before 1928 Ages 89+	1918: WWI ends	1911: President Pfothenhauer 1922: Concordia, Selma est. 1926: Concordia, Texas est.	1927: 691,051	1927: 1,009
The silent generation Born between 1928–1945 Ages 72–89 Children of Greatest Generation	1928: Micky Mouse is created 1929: Stock Market crashes 1930: Roosevelt's New Deal 1935: Hoover Dam dedicated 1945: A-bombs dropped on Japan	1935: President Behnken	1928: 1,122,174 +347,315 1945: 1,469,489	1928: 2,786 +916 1945: 3,702
Baby boomers Born between 1946–1964 Ages 53–71 Children of Greatest and Silent Gen	1955: Rosa Parks arrested on bus 1962: Cuban Missile Crisis 1963: JFK assassination 1969: Moon landing 1955–75: Vietnam War	1962: President Harms 1963: Concordia, Ann Arbor est.	1946: 1,517,231 +1,227,343 1964: 2,744,574	1946: 3,817 +1,782 1964: 5,599
Generation X Born between 1965–1984 Ages 33–53 Children of baby boomers	1955–75: Vietnam War 1969: Woodstock 1972: Watergate/Nixon 1981: First home computers	1969: President Preus 1974: St. Louis seminary walk-out 1976: Concordia, Irvine est. 1981: President Bohlmann	1965: 2,788,241 -65,222 1984: 2,723,019	1965: 5,594 +435 1984: 6,029
Millennials Born between 1984–2004 Ages 13–33 Children of boomers and Gen X	1986: Challenger explosion 1989: Fall of Berlin Wall 1990–91: Gulf War 1999: Columbine school shooting 2001: World Trade Center bombing 2004: Facebook launched 2008: Obama elected	1992: President Barry (b. 1931) 2001: President Kuhn 2001: President Kieschnick (b. 1943) 2010: President Harrison (b. 1962)	1985: 2,732,791 -269,044 2004: 2,463,747	1985: 6,137 -97 2004: 6,040
Generation Z Born between 2005–2016	2009: American recession 2010: ObamaCare passed 2012: Marijuana legalized in WA/CO 2012: LCMS wins Hosanna-Tabor case 2015: Supreme Court allowed same-sex marriage	2013: President Harrison re-elected 2016: President Harrison re-elected	2005: 2,440,864 -423,030 2016: 2,017,834	2005: 6,044 -76 2016: 5,968

Culture of the Church

AERICAN RELIGIOUS IDENTITY has made some interesting changes from 2010 to 2014, according to an article in *Christianity Today*. Ryan Burge identifies the following:

1. Overall, 18.9% of individuals in the study changed religions from 2010 to 2014. This means that nearly one in five Americans changed their faith identity over a four-year period.
2. The defection rate of atheists was about 18%. In addition, 48% of agnostics defected, and 42% of those who described their faith as “nothing in particular” defected.
3. Those who identify as “nothing in particular” are nicknamed the “nones.” Of the 42% of nones who defected, half of them moved to atheism. The other half returned to the church (two-thirds became Protestant, one-third became Catholic).
4. The agnostics who defected made a clear shift to become fellow nones.
5. Agnostics are much more likely to move away from organized religion, while nones stand as a bridge between some faith and no faith.⁶ This is a tremendous mission field within our own neighborhoods.

Analysis of LCMS Pastorate

THE AGES OF THE LCMS’ active ordained pastors are as follows:

- 9% Under 35 years old (Millennials)
- 16% Ages 35–44 (Younger Generation X)
- 21% Ages 45–54 (Older Generation X)
- 35% Ages 55–64 (Younger boomers)
- 15% Ages 65–74 (Older boomers)
- 3% Ages 75–84 (The silent generation)
- 1% Ages 85–94 (The greatest generation)

⁶ Ryan P. Burge, “Plenty of the ‘Nones’ Actually Head Back to Church,” *Christianity Today*, Feb. 6, 2018, accessed March 19, 2020, christianitytoday.com/news/2018/february/nones-agnostics-religious-identity-switching-cces-christian.html.

Conclusion

We can draw together these several lines of discussion and summarize what it means to think of a child as God’s gift if we think of children within three angles of vision: in the light of our created nature; in the light of the new creation into which we are baptized; and in the light of the redeemed creation God promises, when all of us will share as members of Christ’s Body in the marriage feast of the Lamb.

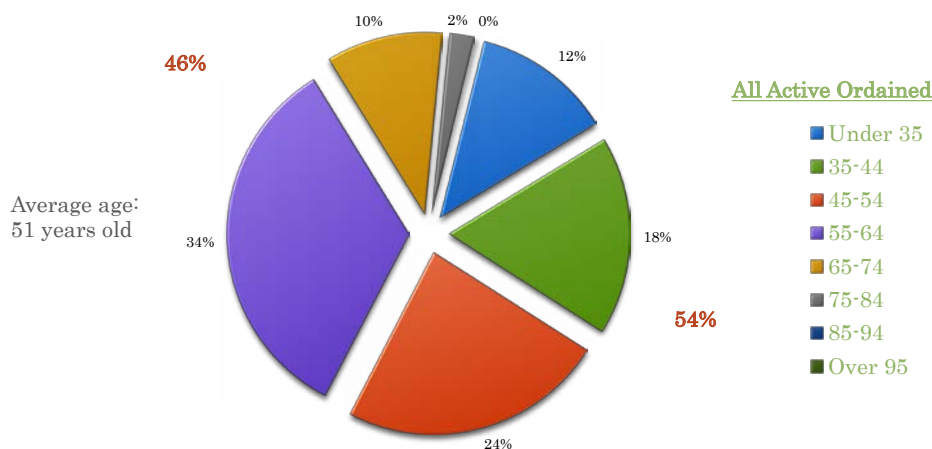
We are created as embodied creatures, occupying a fixed place within the generations of humankind. Lines of kinship and descent locate and identify us, and the sexual union of a man and a woman is naturally ordered toward the birth of children. Hence, the child is less a product of our will and choice than a gift God bestows on the embodied love of a man and a woman. In this way, God continues to sustain and care for the creation.

Nevertheless, that natural kinship is always in need of transformation. We need to be shaped in a way of life that does not think of children as our possessions. Therefore, within the church we bring children for baptism into the new life we share in Jesus, the crucified and risen One. In handing the child over for baptism, parents acknowledge that, in the most fundamental sense, this child is not “their own.” The kinship that identifies us is not determined by DNA; it is the life we share in the new community that is Christ’s Body.

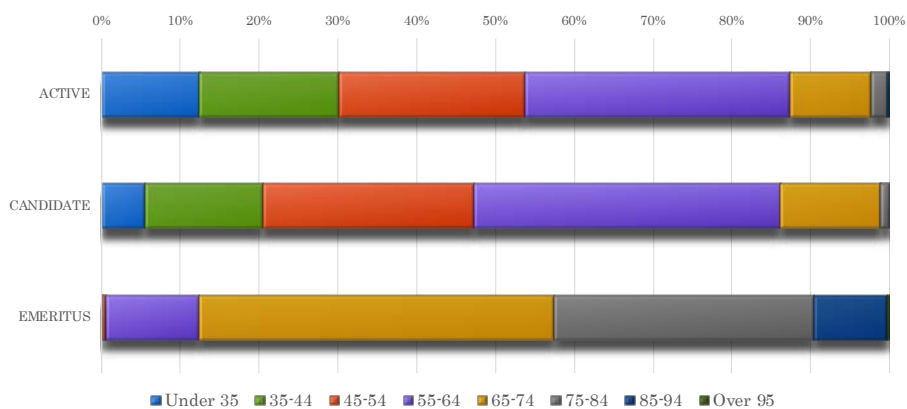
Finally, we live toward a day in which the creation redeemed in Christ will be fully perfected. Even now we are given a hint of that day in the Eucharistic meal the church shares. And in that redeemed creation, all of us — husbands and wives, parents and children — will share as brothers and sisters in the great Eucharist that is the wedding feast of Christ and His church.

One-half of the LCMS' active pastorate is 55 years and older.

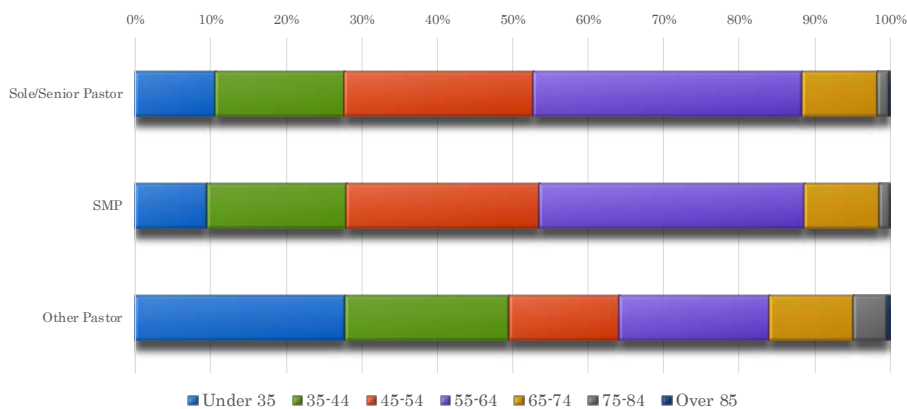
Ages of Active Ordained Ministers



Ages of all Ordained on the Roster

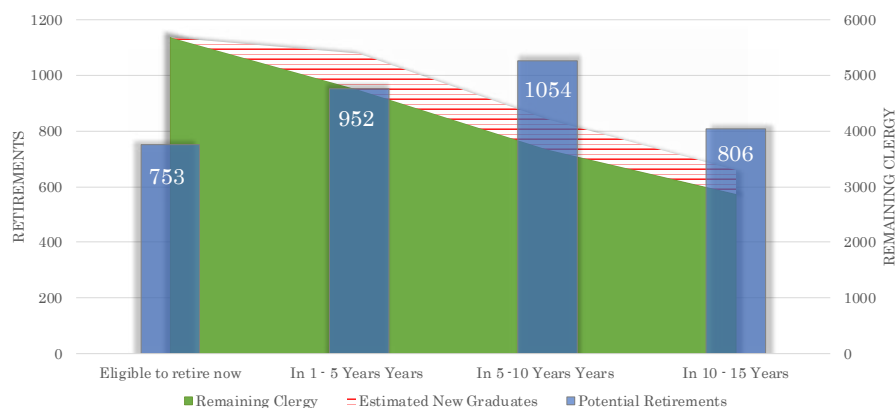


Ages of Pastors Called to Congregations



If current trends stay the same regarding retirements versus new graduates (considering a 5% decrease each year in new graduates), the LCMS pastoral force will decline by 50% in the next 15 years. This is an estimate from 6,000 pastors in 2017 to 3,000 pastors in 2032.

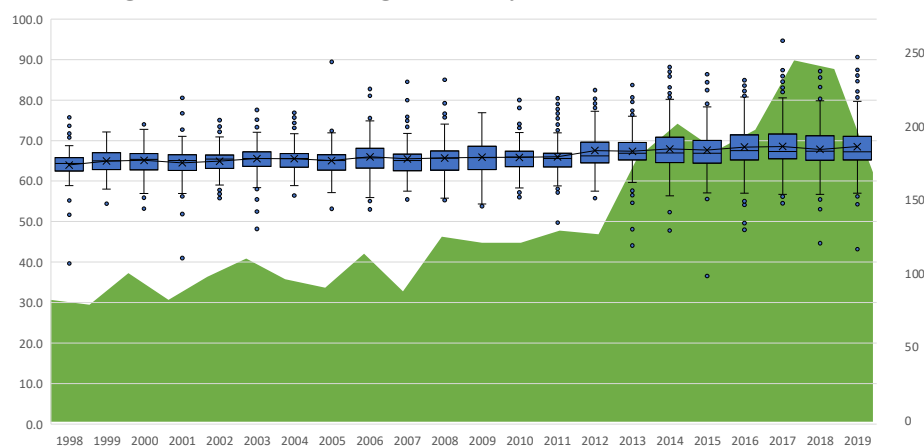
Active/Candidate Ordained Ministers Approaching Retirement Age (67)



"Remaining clergy" refers to the number of ordained ministers today. It does not factor in others losses to the Roster. New graduates are an estimated projection based on current trends in "new graduates" ordained to the Roster (around 150/yr currently, but declining by an average of 5% each year).

This chart shows a slight trend upward in retirement age, from 65 years old in 1998 to 69 years old in 2015.

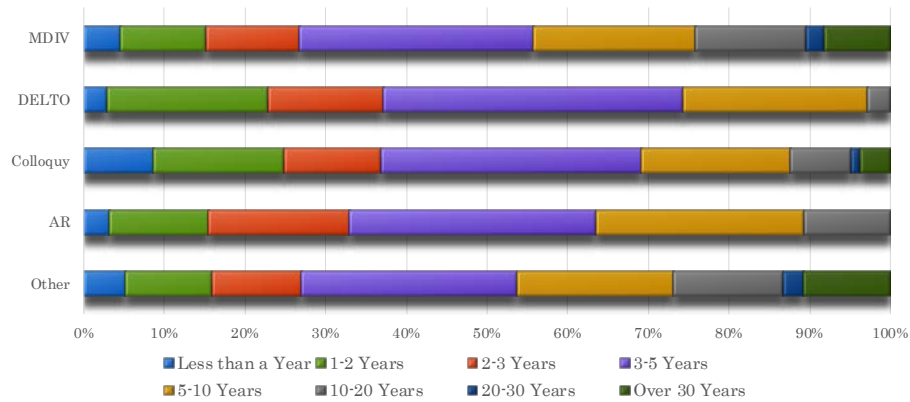
Annual Ordained Retirements since 1998 (Average Retirement Age Slowly Rose from 65 to 69)



These numbers are based on dynamic data from LRSS that does not "double count" anyone who retired from the Roster but was later reactivated.

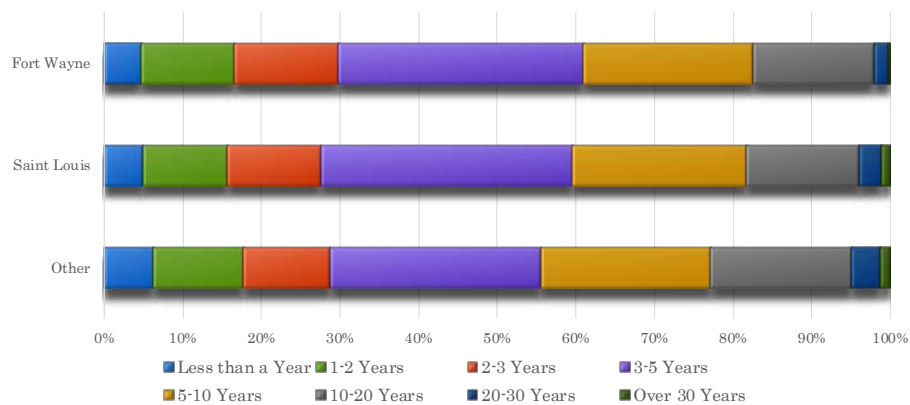
This chart demonstrates little difference in length of call by degree route.

Average Call Length by Degree Route (calls beginning after 1997 that have ended) – no effect



This chart demonstrates little difference in call length by seminary.

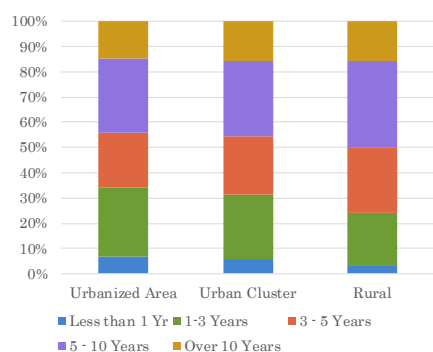
Average Call Length by Seminary (calls beginning after 1997 that have ended) – no effect



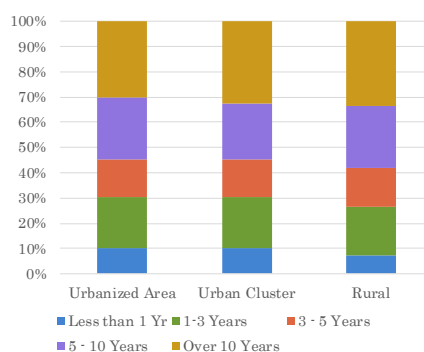
This chart shows little difference in length of call by community.

Average Length of Calls by Community (All Pastoral Calls from 1988 to Today)

Closed Calls (Avg. = 6.4 years)

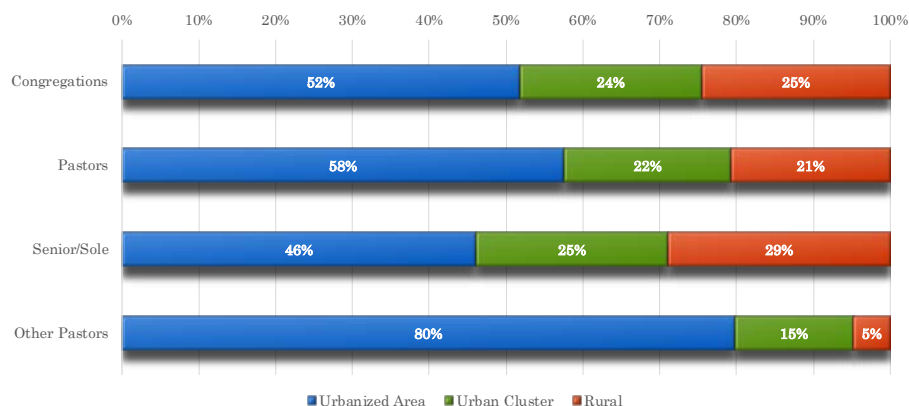


Open Calls (Avg. = 8.3 years)



This chart shows where our current pastors are serving. Generally, most of our pastors and congregations are situated in urbanized or urban areas.

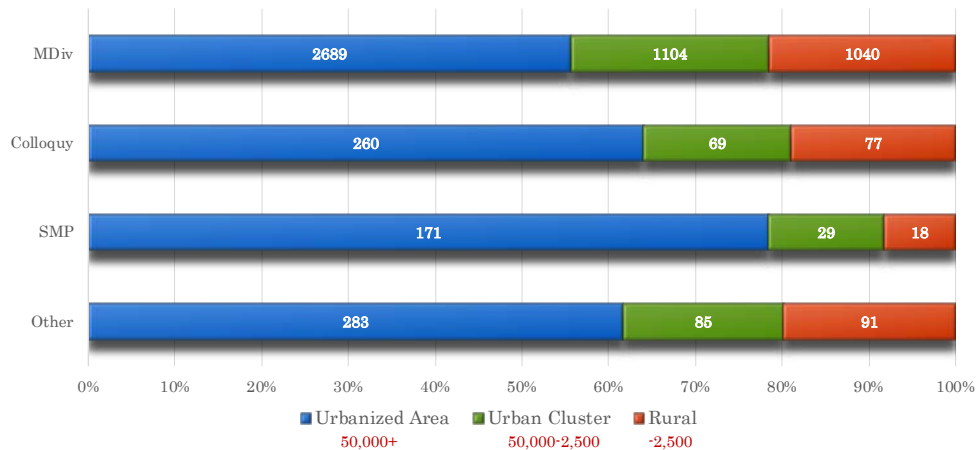
Where are Current Pastors Serving? (Pastors by Position Type / Congregations shown for comparison)



Based on official census classifications. Urbanized Area: metropolitan area (connected cities and suburbs) with a population of 50,000 or more. Urban Cluster: a region of adjacent small cities or towns totaling between 2,500-50,000 residents. Rural = low population area, farming communities or open country.

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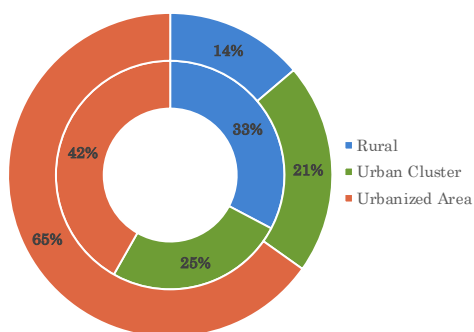
Where are Current Pastors Serving? (Congregation Pastors by Degree Route)



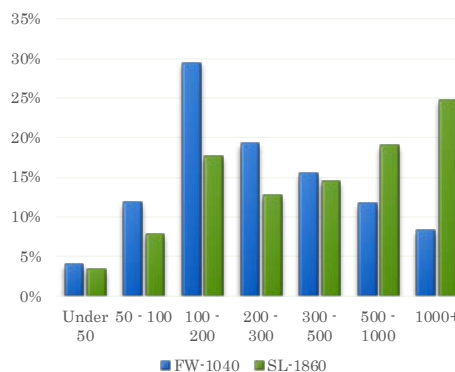
This chart is significant in noting that 65% of St. Louis graduates serve in urbanized areas, while the same percentage (66%) of Fort Wayne graduates serve in rural and urbanized areas. Also, the size of congregations served by St. Louis graduates is 689 baptized members; for Fort Wayne graduates, it is 356 baptized members.

Comparison of Seminary Graduates (since 2000) by the Congregations Serving Today

Communities Served by Graduates
(inner = FW | outer = STL)



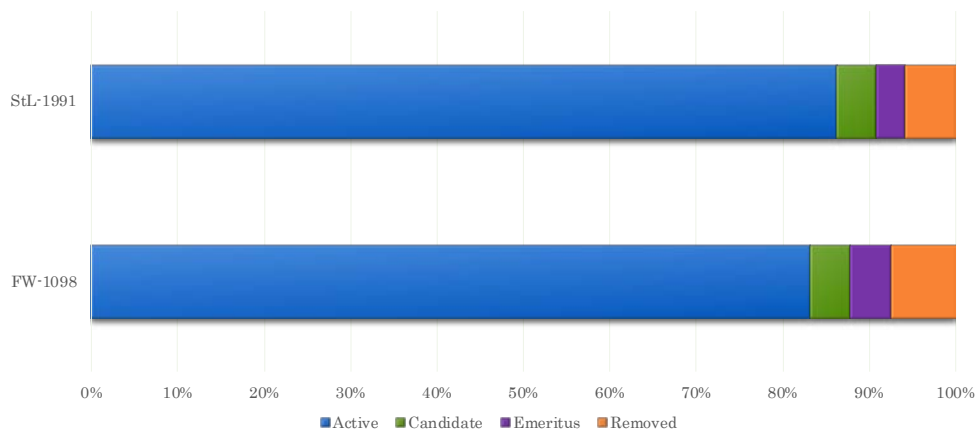
Baptized Membership of Current
Congregations Served by Graduates



For pastors serving multiple congregations, community types were counted for each congregation but Membership numbers are combined into a single total per pastor. Numbers (FW-356 / STL-689) indicate the average baptized membership served by pastors (includes all pastor positions not just senior/sole).

This chart demonstrates the status of pastors by seminary, with a slight edge of St. Louis seminary on active status.

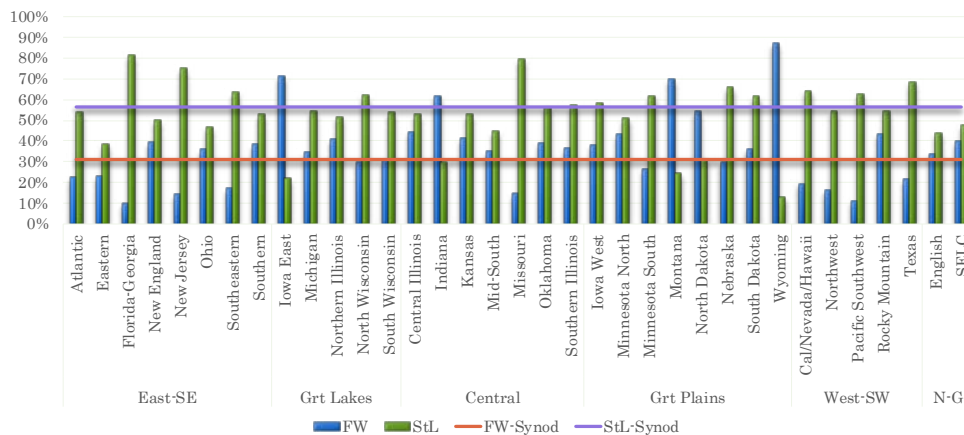
Current Status of Seminary Graduates Since 2000 who were Ordained



Numbers provided (StL-1892 / FW-1051) indicate the total number of graduates since 2000 who were ordained. There may have been graduates of the seminaries who were never ordained, but they were not considered as their data does not show in the Roster. Totals include MDiv, AR, DELTO, SMP, etc.

This chart demonstrates the placement of seminary graduates by district since 2000.

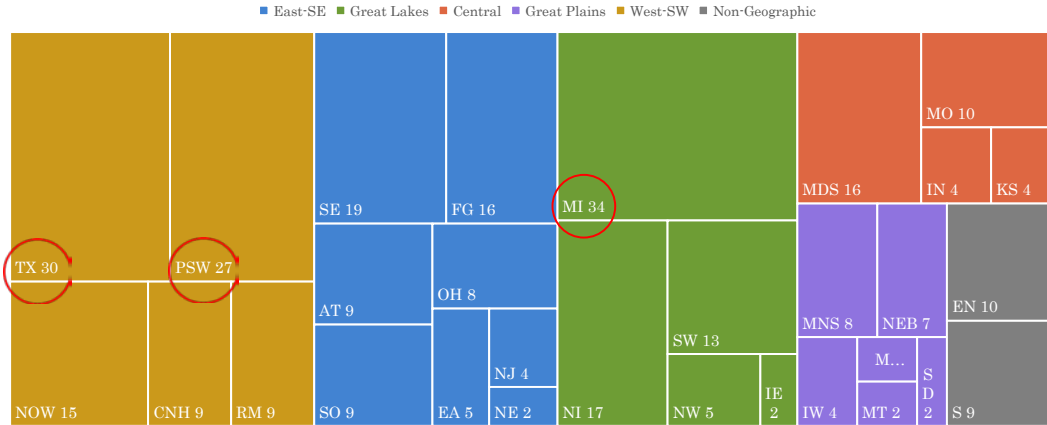
Placement of Seminary Graduates by District (since 2000)



Placement refers to their first ordained call after graduating. Horizontal lines provide the overall Synod percentage of newly ordained graduates.

The following two charts demonstrate SMP placement. SMP candidates are growing more than any other route toward ordination.

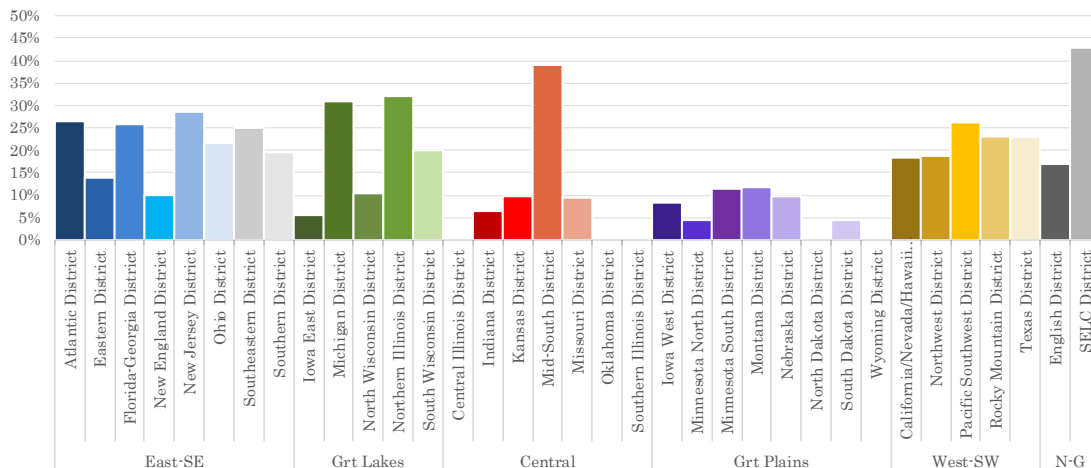
Placement of SMPs (2010-2017) by District and Region



232 total SMPs placed.
Three Districts (North Dakota, Southern Illinois, and Wyoming) have not placed an SMP.

The following two charts demonstrate SMP placement. SMP candidates are growing more than any other route toward ordination.

Percentage of SMPs Among All Pastors Placed in Each District Since 2010



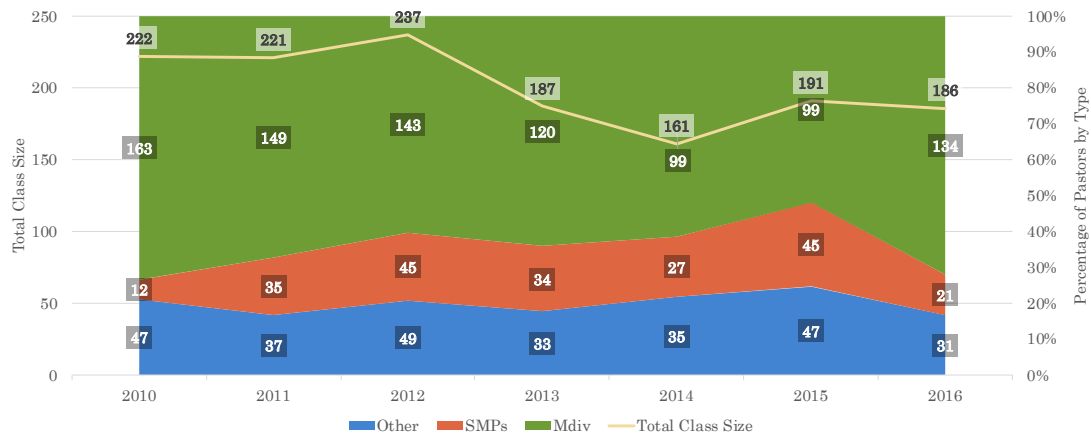
Placement Analysis by District (2000–2019)

	District	CTSFW Grads	CSL Grads	CTSFW Percent	CSL Percent
East-Southeast	Atlantic District	22	48	31%	69%
East-Southeast	Eastern District	18	28	39%	61%
East-Southeast	Florida-Georgia District	16	114	12%	88%
East-Southeast	New England District	18	22	45%	55%
East-Southeast	New Jersey District	6	24	20%	80%
East-Southeast	Ohio District	38	47	45%	55%
East-Southeast	Southeastern District	27	97	22%	78%
East-Southeast	Southern District	46	61	43%	57%
Great Lakes	Iowas District East	44	15	75%	25%
Great Lakes	Michigan District	95	135	41%	59%
Great Lakes	North Wisconsin District	29	61	32%	68%
Great Lakes	Northern Illinois District	50	77	39%	61%
Great Lakes	South Wisconsin District	37	75	33%	67%
Great Plains	Iowas District West	45	67	40%	60%
Great Plains	Minnesota North District	48	63	43%	57%
Great Plains	Minnesota South District	45	110	29%	71%
Great Plains	Montana District	23	6	79%	21%
Great Plains	Nebraska District	46	122	27%	73%
Great Plains	North Dakota District	19	15	56%	44%
Great Plains	South Dakota District	29	55	35%	65%
Great Plains	Wyoming District	30	5	86%	14%
Central	Central Illinois District	34	45	43%	57%
Central	Indiana District	97	48	67%	33%
Central	Kansas District	36	58	38%	62%
Central	Mid-South District	30	44	41%	59%
Central	Missouri District	34	213	14%	86%
Central	Oklahoma District	20	32	38%	62%
Central	Southern Illinois District	18	34	35%	65%
West-Southwest	California-Nevada-Hawaii District	20	78	20%	80%
West-Southwest	Northwest District	26	90	22%	78%
West-Southwest	Pacific Southwest District	25	156	14%	86%
West-Southwest	Rocky Mountain District	47	58	45%	55%
West-Southwest	Texas District	54	183	23%	77%
Non-Geographic	English District	45	60	43%	57%
Non-Geographic	SELC District	18	25	42%	58%
Saltwater	Northwest District	26	90	22%	78%
Saltwater	California-Nevada-Hawaii District	20	78	20%	80%
Saltwater	Pacific Southwest Texas District	25	156	14%	86%
Saltwater	Texas District	54	183	23%	77%
Saltwater	Southern District	46	61	43%	57%
Saltwater	Florida-Georgia District	16	114	12%	88%
Saltwater	Southeastern District	27	97	22%	78%
Saltwater	New Jersey District	6	24	20%	80%
Saltwater	Atlantic District	22	48	31%	69%
Saltwater	New England District	18	22	45%	55%

Region	CTSFW Grads	CSL Grads	CTSFW Grads	CSL Percent
East-Southeast	191	441	30%	70%
Great Lakes	255	363	41%	59%
Great Plains	285	443	39%	61%
Central	269	474	36%	64%
West-Southwest	172	565	23%	77%
Non-Geographic	63	85	43%	57%
Total	1235	2371	34%	66%

Total combined newly placed seminary graduates since 2010.

Newly Placed Pastors Since 2010



Enrollment Report (2019–2020)

Enrollment	Fort Wayne	St. Louis	Combined
Incoming M.Div. Class	34	42	76
Returning Head Count	111	151	262
Total M.Div. Students Head Count	145	193	338
Total Alternate Route Students	10	17	27
TOTAL RESIDENTIAL	155	210	365
Total SMP	19	107	126
Total SMP Spanish Track	1	NA	1
Total CHS	NA	15	15
Total CMC (Irvine)	NA	22	22
Total EIIT	NA	26	26
Total SMP-GPC	NA	18	18
TOTAL NON-RESIDENTIAL	20	188	208
TOTAL ORDINATION	175	398	573

Enrollment	Fort Wayne	St. Louis	Combined
Total Master of Arts	3	24	27
Total M.A. Diaconess	46	14	60
Total M.A. Pastoral Studies	1		1
Total S.T.M.	16	30	46
Total Ph.D.	41	105	146
Total D.Min.	20	48	68
TOTAL GRADUATE PROGRAM	127	221	348
Diaconess non-M.A.	NA	10	10
Others	11	8	19
TOTAL OTHERS	11	18	29
GRAND TOTAL	313	637	950

Seminary Profile (2019–2020)

Residential Students	Fort Wayne	St. Louis
Top 4 Districts Represented by 2019–2020 Entering Class	MI, IN, TX, SW/MO	MO, SW, MI, RM
Average Age	28.5	26.8
Total Single	14	22
Total Married	21	22
Total Second Career	49%	32%
Total Lifelong LCMS	70%	70%
Completed Above Baccalaureate	3%	11%
Graduated LCMS Concordia Univ.	53%	50%
Top LCMS Concordia Univ. Attended	CUW, CUNE	CUC, CUAA/CUW/CUNE
Average GPA Total Class	3.46	3.31

These charts give us significant insight into the present and future picture of pastoral formation in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod:

1. 46% of our pastors are age 55 or older.
2. With current retirement rates and seminary enrollment realities, the LCMS active/candidate Ordained Ministers roster will decrease in half, from 6,000 to 3,000, in the next 15 years. The unknown is how many congregations there will be in the LCMS at that time, to which we are working on calculating.
3. The average age of retirement for pastors has climbed from 65 years old in 1998 to 69 years old in 2019.
4. 47% of sole or senior pastors are age 55 or older.
5. Length of calls shows little or no effect in relationship to ministry route (M.Div., Delto/SMP, Colloquy, AR or other).
6. Also, the length of call shows little or no difference by seminary.
7. Average length of call is not affected by community size. Length of call remains consistent whether the call is in an area that is urbanized, urban or rural.
8. Although we may think of ourselves as a more rural church body, 52% of our congregations are located in and 58% of our pastors serve in urbanized areas (population 50,000-plus). 24% of our congregations are located in and 22% of our pastors serve in urban clusters (small cities or towns totaling 2,500–50,000). 25% of our congregations are located in and 21% of our pastors serve in rural areas (population under 2,500).

9. 80% of our “other” pastors — which include EIIT, CMC and SMP-Spanish speaking routes serving urban ethnic and inner-city ministries — serve in urban areas.
10. By ministry route: Approximately 55% of M.Div. pastors serve in urban areas, 23% serve in urban clusters and 22% serve in rural areas. Approximately 65% of colloquy pastors serve in urban areas, 19% serve in urban clusters and 16% serve in rural areas. Approximately 78% of SMP pastors serve in urban areas, 14% serve in urban clusters and 8% serve in rural areas. Approximately 62% of our “other” pastors (EIIT, CMC) serve in urban areas, 18% serve in urban clusters and 20% serve in rural areas.
11. By seminary: 25% of Fort Wayne graduates serve in urban areas, 42% serve in urban clusters and 33% serve in rural areas. 65% of St. Louis graduates serve in urban areas, 21% serve in urban clusters and 14% serve in rural areas.
12. Fort Wayne graduates are serving congregations that average 356 baptized members, while St. Louis graduates are serving congregations that average 689 baptized members.
13. Approximately 83% of Fort Wayne pastors are on active status, while approximately 86% of St. Louis pastors are on active status. Fort Wayne and St. Louis pastors are equal in candidate status. Fort Wayne has slightly more (by a percent or two) deceased and removed pastors.
14. “The LCMS Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program is driven by the ministry needs of the field and exists to train pastoral leaders from existing or planned ministry and/or mission contexts where their presence is critical to a specific ministry in which they are serving. The program provides contextual theological education leading to ordination and placement into the pastoral office for men in their specific ministry” (SMP Manual). Considering this, the following is the number of SMP pastors per region: Great Lakes — 71, West-SW — 90, East-SE — 72, Central — 34, Great Plains — 23, Non-Geographic — 19. The districts with the largest number of SMP pastors are Texas, Pacific Southwest and Michigan. The districts with zero SMP pastors are North Dakota, Southern Illinois and Wyoming.
15. The “Placement of Seminary Graduates by District (Since 2000)” chart is self-explanatory. The districts with the highest St. Louis calls are Missouri, South Wisconsin, Michigan and Rocky Mountain. The districts with the highest Fort Wayne calls are Michigan, Indiana, Texas, South Wisconsin and Missouri.
16. M.Div. graduates from the combined seminaries fell from 136 graduates in 2010 to 81 in 2019. SMPs increased from 12 graduates in 2010 to 29 in 2019. Others (AR, EIIT, CMC) decreased from 47 graduates in 2010 to 9 in 2019. This shows that the TOTAL number of seminary graduates decreased from 222 graduates in 2010 to 119 in 2016.

What do these statistics tell us?

1. Our clergy members are aging and retiring at a faster rate than we are bringing in new seminary students.
2. If we do nothing, statistically the LCMS will have half the pastors in 15 years that we had in 2016.
3. “Length of call” shows no difference with comparison to which seminary the pastor graduated from.
4. “Length of call” shows no difference with comparison to the size of the community the pastor is serving.
5. More pastors in the LCMS are serving in urbanized and urban areas than in rural areas.
6. SMP and “other” pastors overwhelmingly serve in urbanized and urban areas, rather than in rural areas.
7. St. Louis graduates tend to serve more urban and urban cluster areas, while Fort Wayne graduates tend to serve more urban cluster and rural areas.
8. The status of pastors shows little difference between graduates of both seminaries, with over 83% of LCMS pastors on active status, 5% on candidate status and 5% on emeritus status.
9. The greater number of SMP students are St. Louis graduates and are utilized largely in Texas, Michigan and Northern Illinois.
10. The number of graduates from St. Louis is consistently higher than from Fort Wayne.

Coming next: What are some non-negotiables in pastoral formation?

