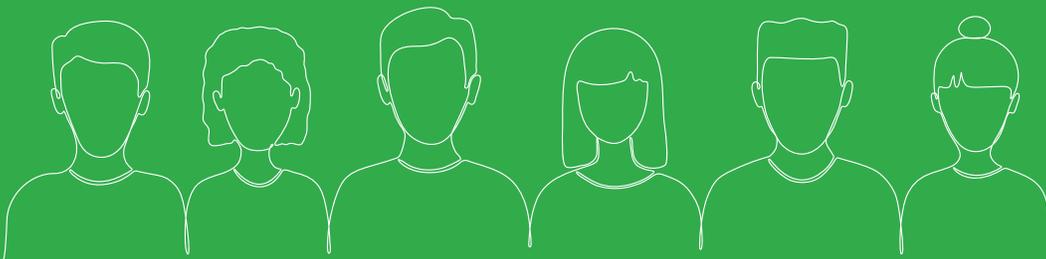




— FORMING A —
CONGREGATION

Set Apart to Serve
Focus Team



RESOURCE OVERVIEW

SOME CONGREGATIONS in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) already have an active church work formation and recruitment focus team, whether that was begun under *Set Apart to Serve (SAS)* or on the congregation's own initiative. Some congregations are just now starting one. Others are planning to start soon.

For congregations that already have a focus team, this resource will complement the work that has already been done. For congregations just getting started, this resource provides a foundation, laying out suggestions and examples of how a congregation might develop an *SAS* focus team. This is not meant to be a prescriptive document, so no exact steps need to be followed.

Many LCMS districts also have *SAS* focus teams or are in the process of forming one. Check with your district to see if it has an *SAS* focus team and explore possibilities for collaboration.

Note: The naming of groups focused on a particular task can vary throughout the Synod (e.g., focus team, working group, team, committee, focus group, task force, etc.). This resource will refer to it as a focus team, though any term may be used as it suits the congregation.

WHAT'S INCLUDED:

- › **A HISTORY** of how the LCMS has built a culture of church work formation and recruitment
- › **AN OVERVIEW** of *Set Apart to Serve*
- › **WHY SAS FOCUS TEAMS ARE IMPORTANT** for raising up the next generation of church workers
- › **AGENDA TEMPLATE** suggestions
- › **APPENDIX** providing a history of LCMS convention resolutions concerning church work recruitment

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

SET APART TO SERVE

History

Building a culture of church work formation and recruitment has been a primary focus of the LCMS since its inception in 1847.

- › In the original 1894 LCMS Articles of Incorporation, the fourth of seven objectives and purposes of Synod called for the Synod “to support the establishment and maintenance of theological seminaries, colleges, universities, and other institutions of learning to train ministers of religion—ordained, ministers of religion—commissioned, and laity for service in the Evangelical Lutheran Church.”
- › In the revised 1920 LCMS Constitution, the third objective called for “the training of ministers and teachers for service in the Lutheran Church.”
- › The 2023 LCMS Constitution, in its third objective, calls for the Synod to “recruit and train pastors, teachers, and other professional church workers and provide opportunity for their continuing growth.”
- › See Appendix A for LCMS convention resolutions concerning the role districts and circuits play in church work formation and recruitment.

WHO IS SYNOD?



Synod refers collectively to the association of self-governing Lutheran congregations and all its agencies on the national and district levels (2023 Bylaw 1.2.1(v)). Committed to a common confession and mission, congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod join with one another in the Synod to support one another and to work together in carrying out their commonly adopted objectives (Bylaw 1.1.1).

Set Apart to Serve

The overarching goal of *SAS* is to develop an intentional culture of church work formation and recruitment in every LCMS congregation, family, school, district and entity. It is our intention that forming and recruiting full-time church workers become second nature — that is, this is what we naturally do from one generation to the next. The purpose of an *SAS* culture is to supply the church with pastors who preach and teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and commissioned church workers who will teach and share God’s Word in their full-time church work vocations.

This church work formation and recruitment culture is developed by:

- 1 Influential Christian adults having intentional conversations with youth and second-career adults about considering a full-time church work vocation. Influential Christian adults are pastors, commissioned church workers,¹ parents and other laypeople in congregations and schools.
- 2 Guiding youth and adults to a Concordia university or seminary to enroll in a church work program for LCMS certification.

SAS is a collaborative, Synodwide culture. Fully engaged partners include both seminaries (including Vocatio and Christ Academy), every Concordia university, all 35 districts of the LCMS, Concordia Publishing House, Lutheran Church Extension Fund, Lutheran Women’s Missionary League (LWML), Higher Things, LCMS Youth Ministry (Youth Gathering, YouthLead), LCMS School Ministry, LCMS Colloquy, Black Clergy Caucus (BCC), Hispanic Missionary League, Chinese Lutherans in Mission Building (CLiMB), LCMS Mission Advancement, LCMS Worker Wellness, Concordia Plan Services, LCMS Office of International Mission and more.

¹ Lutheran schoolteachers, directors of Christian education, deaconesses, directors of Christian outreach, directors of parish music, directors of church ministries, directors of family life ministries

This Resource

Some congregations in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) already have an active church work formation and recruitment focus team, whether that was begun under *Set Apart to Serve* (SAS) or on the congregation's own initiative. Some congregations are just now starting one. Others are planning to start soon. The purpose of this resource is to complement what congregations may already be doing with church work formation and recruitment, and provide a foundation for congregations just getting started.

INSTEAD OF CREATING A NEW FOCUS TEAM, consider adding SAS to a current committee or group that already meets regularly.



Forming an SAS Focus Team²

The purpose of an SAS (or church work formation and recruitment) focus team is to assist congregations and schools in intentionally forming, recruiting and encouraging youth (conception–12th grade) and adults to consider full-time service in the church for preaching, teaching and sharing the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ to all people from one generation to the next. The responsibilities of the congregation's SAS focus team may include:

- › **IMMERSING** yourselves in SAS strategies and resources and integrating these resources in the life of the congregation (e.g., Sunday school, Vacation Bible School, Bible study, youth group, Lutheran school, mission trips).
- › **INFORMING** and assisting influential adults in your congregation about how to encourage both youth and adults to consider full-time church work. These influential people are pastors, Lutheran school teachers, DCEs, other LCMS commissioned church workers, parents and laity. Youth influencers also include high school and college-age peers. Adult second-career influencers also include spouses.
- › **ENCOURAGING** and assisting your congregants in their ongoing efforts of church worker appreciation and caring for the overall wellness (e.g., spiritual, physical, emotional, financial) of their church workers.
- › **ADVOCATING** that your congregation provide financial assistance for church work students attending our Concordia universities and seminaries.

The following are ideas your congregation may want to consider in forming or enhancing an SAS focus team within your specific structure and context.

- 1 Select an experienced, committed individual who is passionate about church work formation and recruitment who will lead the formation and work of the congregation's SAS focus team.
- 2 Select individuals to serve in this focus team. Members should have a passion for church work formation and recruitment and represent varied skill sets. You may consider having clergy, commissioned workers, laity and high school youth represented on this focus team.
- 3 If possible, it is suggested that all meetings be held in person. Determine the frequency of meetings (e.g., monthly, quarterly).
- 4 Determine the focus team budget (e.g., resources, conferences, events).

² The naming of groups focused on a particular task can vary throughout the Synod (e.g., focus team, working group, team, committee, focus group, task force, etc.). This resource will refer to it as a focus team, though any term may be used as it suits the congregation.

AGENDA TEMPLATE

Suggested Two-Hour Agenda Template

Local context and needs will help shape the focus team's agenda. This agenda template is a suggested starting point.

Scripture, Confessions and Prayer (30 minutes)

The congregation's focus team is strongly encouraged to begin each meeting with substantial time in the Word, the Lutheran Confessions and prayer. The focus team may begin their meetings by using any of the Bible studies, devotions and resources suggested below.

- › SAS CPH curriculum Adult Leader Guide, which includes four units: "What is the Church?," "Who are our Church Workers?," "Caring for our Church Workers" and "Culture of Church Work." cph.org/set-apart-to-serve
- › Bible study: Seeing Yourself in a Church Work Vocation thelc.ms/Seeing-Yourself-in-a-Church-Work-Vocation-Leader
- › Bible study: I AM the Alpha and the Omega thelc.ms/I-AM-the-Alpha-and-Omega-Leader
- › Augsburg Confession (see "Lutheran Doctrine and Practice Today,") cph.org/lutheran-doctrine-and-practice-today-part-1-2-3-downloadable

Keep an eye out for the additional SAS devotions and Bible studies listed below. These will be published soon.

- › Matthew 9:35–38
- › Developing a Church Worker
- › The Church Worker Under the Cross
- › Five Essential Experiences
- › "Moments of Truth" diamonds in the journey maps

Review an SAS resource (30 minutes, including video)

SAS recommends that one of these resources be assigned for reading prior to the meeting. Appoint a team member to be responsible for leading a discussion on the assigned resource. Develop a plan that will implement this resource within your congregation.

These resources are all available at lcms.org/sas-resources or by scanning the QR code.

- › The 8 LCMS Church Work Vocations
- › Introduction to *Set Apart to Serve* (See also: presentation and talking points for congregations, and presentation and talking points for teachers)
- › FAQs about *Set Apart to Serve*
- › Three resources: Talking to young people about vocation, Encouraging future church workers, Messaging templates for influential adults



PRAYER

LORD OF THE HARVEST, as
You bid Your disciples to pray for harvest laborers, so we ask You to continue to send workers of Your Word. Raise up, we pray, servants of Your Word that Your church may proclaim Your saving cross until You come in glory, for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
AMEN.



**SCAN TO
VIEW ALL
AVAILABLE
SAS RESOURCES**

- › Essential Experiences Workbook & Individual Tracker Presentation
- › Youth Journey Map — Birth to Age 12 and Youth Journey Map Tracker
- › Conversation Guide for Ages 12–14, Youth Journey Map — Ages 12–14, and Youth Journey Map Tracker
- › Conversation Guide for Ages 14–18+, Youth Journey Map — Ages 14–18+, and Youth Journey Map Tracker

Watch for additional and updated resources on the SAS website.

The webpage “Professional church work vocations within the LCMS,” found at lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve#church-work-vocations, compiles information on the eight LCMS church work vocations and directs users to the Concordias’ own webpages on the church work programs they offer.

In addition to one of the resources above, also have the focus team view one to two *SAS* videos during the meeting. Share your brief comments after viewing the [video\(s\)](#).

Education (30 minutes)

SAS recommends that one of these “white paper” resources be assigned for reading prior to the meeting. Appoint a group member to be responsible for leading a discussion on the assigned resource. Discuss how this resource may inform the overall church work formation and recruitment culture efforts of the congregation.

These white paper articles are available at lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve#articles under the “Articles & White Papers” header.

- › Renewing Our Commitment to Lutheran Education — Dave Bruns, LCMS Kansas District Board of Directors
- › A Timely Word from Luther on Recruiting Young Men for Pastoral Ministry — Rev. Dr. David Peter, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis
- › Pastoral Formation Prior to Seminary — Rev. Dr. James Baneck
- › Passing on the Mantle — Rev. Dr. Lee Hagan, LCMS Missouri District President
- › CTSFW Deaconess Formation: Knowledge, Skills & Virtues — Rev. Dr. James G. Bushur, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne
- › Current Context of Pastoral Formation — Rev. Dr. James Baneck
- › Building a Culture of Church Work Formation and Recruitment — Rev. Dr. James Baneck

Business and Action Plan(s) (30 minutes)

Each congregation will need to determine its own church work formation and recruitment priorities. Strive to set approximately one to three action plans to be implemented and evaluated at the next focus team meeting. Action plans may be short- or long-term.

- › Chairperson shares an *SAS* report. (This may include Synod, district or circuit news and updates. Chairperson may request the monthly *SAS* report by contacting setapart2serve@lcms.org.)
- › Chairperson provides update on research provided by the district *SAS* focus team, if available. You may also contact your district education executive or district president for information on:
 - The number of rostered ordained/commissioned church workers in the district.
 - The number of ordained and commissioned vacancies in the district.
 - The number of non-rostered and non-Lutheran teachers in your district’s LCMS schools, from early childhood through high school.

- The number of church work students and/or current church workers coming out of each district congregation.
 - The number of congregation closings/dual- and tri-point parish partnerships within the last 5, 10, 15 years and estimated closings and partnerships in the next 5–10 years.
 - The potential or desired number of new district church plants and schools in the next 5–10 years (urban, rural, multi-cultural, unchurched areas, etc.).
 - The number of potential counties in your district with no LCMS presence. (For help determining which counties, contact church.planting@lcms.org, call 888-843-5267 (THE LCMS), or visit lcms.org/how-we-serve/national/church-planting).
 - The number of congregations/schools currently supporting an LCMS overseas missionary or missionaries through the LCMS Office of International Mission, as well as the number of congregations/schools potentially interested in supporting a missionary.
 - The number of LCMS ordained and commissioned church workers by age range.
 - Determine who most influenced your congregation's ordained and commissioned church workers to consider full-time church work.
 - The number of congregations compensating LCMS church workers according to district guidelines in salary and benefits.
 - Determine ways to encourage church workers, as well as assess the overall spiritual, emotional and physical wellness of ordained and commissioned church workers (SAS research reveals the overall wellness of our church workers has a direct correlation to church work recruitment).
- SAS implementation in your congregation (and school).
- Develop a manageable, ongoing SAS (church work formation and recruitment) action plan for your congregation.
 - Develop a plan for presenting/sharing your group's work with your congregation and the congregations in your circuit. Discuss how you can collaborate with other congregations toward this effort.
 - Check with your district to see how you can collaborate with your district's SAS focus team.
- Collaborate with your LWML group, zone or district on SAS efforts. (Or consider having an LWML representative serve on your focus team. On both the local and national level, LWML is a strong advocate of SAS).
- Submit questions, ideas, comments to SAS (setapart2serve@lcms.org) for purposes of continued collaboration and refinement of overall strategies and resources.
- Develop or enhance scholarships for church work students from your congregation who are attending a Concordia university or seminary.

APPENDIX A

The role of congregations is fundamental in building a culture of church work formation and recruitment in the LCMS. The importance and responsibility of the congregation has been identified in several Synod conventions.

LCMS convention resolutions concerning church work recruitment that are specific to congregations:

- › In his address to the Central District, **Heinrich C. Schwan, LCMS president (1878–99)**, states, “One year after the other, our institutions place growing numbers of workers in opening fields, and they can scarcely supply half the need ... Let us continue to gather together *one congregation after another*, to found one school after another, to prepare preachers and teachers.”
- › **THE 1944 CONVENTION** called upon the responsibility of the districts, boards and congregations, stating, “Every District, every Mission Board, *every congregation*, is trying its utmost to fortify its front and get the necessary manpower ... Then, too, the qualification of the pastor or missionary and his leadership in his district and circuit dare not be overlooked.”
- › **THE 1950 CONVENTION** resolved that all districts and *all congregations* in each district be urged to assist in providing an adequate and geographically well-distributed supply of male students for our teachers’ colleges.
- › **THE 1956 CONVENTION** resolved that “the number of students for the ministry [should] be promoted more aggressively in numbers as well as in quality and that the districts, *congregations* and organizations within the Synod implement recruitment by expanding student and scholarship aid.”

It also resolved that “the recruitment of ministerial students and teacher training students be encouraged and promoted both in quantity and in quality, and that districts, *congregations* and organizations within Synod be encouraged to implement the effort of expanding student and scholarship aid.”

Furthermore, the 1956 convention resolved that “*congregations* be urged to support their teachers by improving salary, living, and working conditions, by extending the tenure of women teachers, and by enabling teachers to secure additional training.”

- › **THE 1965 SYNOD CONVENTION** urged each congregation to foster recruitment by assigning to a committee the task of recruitment at the *congregational level*:

“The committee will make adequate use of the recruitment assistance available to *each congregation*: the organized recruitment program of each synodical school; the District recruitment program of recruitment; the various recruitment aids available from the synodical schools, the Board for Higher Education, and other agencies. [Also] by assisting interested and qualified students who are in need of financial help.”

The 1965 convention also resolved that the Synod urge each District recruitment committee to “provide maximum guidance and coordination by urging and helping *congregations to apply themselves* to the recruitment task and to sponsor intercongregational recruitment activities, and to supply and disseminate recruitment materials and helps.”

- › **THE 1967 CONVENTION** resolved that the Synod urge all pastors, teachers, other church workers, *congregations*, and District recruitment committees to evaluate the effectiveness of their past recruitment efforts.

- › **THE 1973 CONVENTION** adopted that the Board of Higher Education be asked “to work through the District Presidents and circuit counselors to reach *all congregations* of the Synod, apprising them of these predicted shortages and that through this process *every congregation* be asked to search its membership for young people who might prepare for professional service in the Church.”

The convention also resolved “that *every congregation* be asked to encourage such young people, in every way possible, to enter one of Synod’s schools and that in light of the financial obligation such education involves, *every congregation* be strongly urged to support such students financially where necessary through their schooling.”
- › **THE 1975 CONVENTION** resolved that the Board of Parish Education together with the Board of Higher Education continue to assist *congregations*, the Districts, the synodical colleges, and the seminaries in expanding their recruitment effort by providing promotional materials, addressing all age levels, beginning with age five through college.
- › **THE 1977 CONVENTION** resolved that “the *congregation* recognize its responsibility to encourage young men to prepare for the pastoral ministry and strongly consider providing substantial financial aid to each of its sons entering the pastoral ministry training program.”
- › **THE 1979 CONVENTION** resolved that “the Synod hereby challenges each baptized member to increase his or her financial support of the Synod *through congregations* and Districts to underwrite the synodical share of training expense.”
- › **THE 1986 CONVENTION** resolved that “pastors and *congregations* be reminded of their crucial role in encouraging young men and women to study for church vocations, and that *every congregation* of the Synod be urged to establish an active church-worker recruitment committee.”

It was also resolved that “*congregations* annually submit names and addresses of potential future students for ministries to the nearest synodical college and that *congregations* be encouraged to establish scholarships and grant-in-aid to assist young men and women in pursuing church vocations.”
- › **THE 1989 CONVENTION** resolved that “Synod applaud the Board for Higher Education Services, the Districts who have appointed recruitment committees, and *congregations* who also established recruitment committees,” with the additional resolve that “*every congregation* of the Synod which does not have a student recruitment committee for synodical schools be encouraged to establish one.”
- › **THE 1992 CONVENTION** resolved (1) “That *congregations* establish intentional recruitment programs, including financial support for those entering full-time church work,” (2) “that *congregations* share the names and contact information of youth with the Board for Higher Education for the recruitment work of our Concordia universities,” (3) “that *The Lutheran Witness* and District newsletters highlight recruitment strategies of *congregations* from which church work students consistently come,” and (4) “that Districts train *congregational recruitment committees* to organize trips to our Concordia universities for young people to observe a variety of professional church workers in action.”
- › **THE 2001 CONVENTION** resolved that “*each congregation* and each pastor seek to identify, encourage, and recruit people within the church to be full-time workers and that *congregations* and individuals support church work students through their financial gifts and by participating in adopt-a-student programs through our synodical schools.”
- › **THE 2010 CONVENTION** resolved that “*each congregation* and district, and each pastor and church worker, identify, encourage, and recruit people within the church to be full-time workers in the Lord’s harvest field; that *congregations*, districts, and individuals be encouraged to call, support, and provide adequately for pastors, teachers, and other church workers, and that *congregations*, districts, and individuals be urged to increase support for church work students.”

› **THE 2019 CONVENTION** resolved that “all constituents [which includes *congregations*] of the LCMS be encouraged to commend, financially support, and directly participate in this comprehensive, multi-year church worker recruitment initiative” with the following objectives:

- Identifying, catechizing, encouraging, and supporting young boys and girls for church worker vocations;
- Instilling church worker vocations as sacred and joyful, a “calling from God,” vocations of integrity and fulfillment, grounded in Christ and baptismal salvation;
- Developing the “whole person” throughout this formation process: spiritually, in character, confessionally, physically, emotionally, synodically, and intellectually;
- Supporting, encouraging, and caring 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.

› **THE 2023 CONVENTION** resolved that

- The Synod *congregation* members and families, church workers, congregations, schools, and recipients of the ministry of Synod church workers and institutions be encouraged to pray for more ordained and commissioned workers in the church, for the continued and increased proclamation of the Gospel of Christ;
- Everyone in the Synod, including key influential adults (pastors, parents, teachers, deaconesses, directors of Christian education, youth workers, *congregation* members, and other church workers) be urged to encourage youth and adults to consider full-time church work;
- *Congregations*, schools, missionaries, and all recipients of the forthcoming [SAS] CPH curriculum be strongly encouraged to use SAS strategies, resources, and curriculum.

