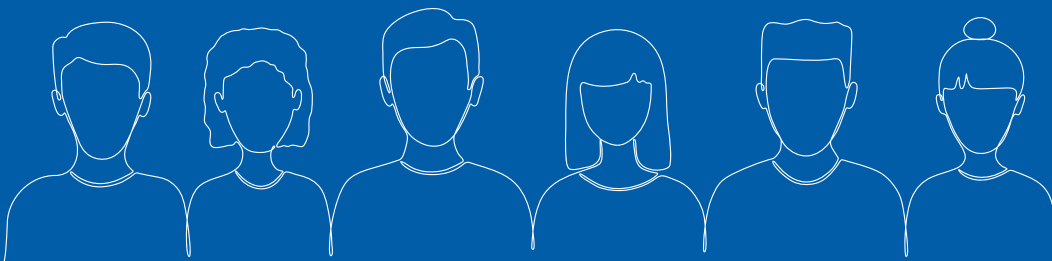




— FORMING A —
DISTRICT

Set Apart To Serve
Focus Team



RESOURCE OVERVIEW

SOME DISTRICTS 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 district's own initiative. Some districts are just now starting one. Others are planning to start soon.

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

A corresponding resource entitled, “Forming a Congregation *Set Apart to Serve* Focus Team” is available to assist congregations in forming their own SAS focus team. Districts are encouraged to collaborate with these congregation-level SAS focus teams.

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 district.

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.

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 will preach and teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and commissioned church workers who will teach, witness and share God’s Word in their full-time 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 districts 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 district's own initiative. Some districts are just now starting one. Others are planning to start soon. The purpose of this resource is to complement what districts may already be doing with church work recruitment, and provide a foundation for districts 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 a district 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 district's SAS focus team may include:

- › **ENCOURAGING** the SAS focus teams at the congregations in your district to be immersed 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 congregations to direct their influential adults 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 congregations 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 congregations provide financial assistance for church work students attending our Concordia universities and seminaries.

The following are ideas districts 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 district SAS focus team (e.g., district president, district education executive, board member, district ordained or commissioned church worker, or lay person).
- 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, initial meetings should happen in person. Determine the frequency of meetings (e.g., quarterly, three times a year, twice a year). It is recommended this focus team meet in person at least once a year.
- 4 Determine the focus team's budget (e.g., resources, travel, food, lodging, meals).

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 district.

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 district'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 with the suggestions 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 focus team member to be responsible for leading a discussion on the assigned resource. Also, determine how this resource can be used in your district, circuits, congregations and schools. Develop a plan that will implement this resource throughout the district.

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

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 team 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 focus team, district leaders and influential adults.

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 district will need to determine its own district church work formation and recruitment priorities. Whether using the following suggestions or focusing on your district’s 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.

- › District president and/or district education executive shares an *SAS* report (this report may include the circuit visitors’ role in church work formation/recruitment, specific work of the education executive in the district schools, district ed exec’s quarterly *SAS* newsletter, *SAS* monthly report to the Synod, etc.)
- › Ongoing research (consider an ongoing, manageable scope)
 - 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 congregation in the district.
 - 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, All Nations, 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 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 district congregations and schools
- Assist congregations with developing an ongoing SAS (church work formation and recruitment) focus team, utilizing the “Forming a Congregation *Set Apart to Serve* Focus Team” resource. files.lcms.org/f/forming-congregation-sas-focus-team
 - Develop a plan of presenting/sharing SAS with your district’s congregations and schools through personal district visitation, online conversations, online ideas and resources, or providing the district with an SAS contact person to answer questions and provide guidance.
- 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 in your district’s congregations who are attending a Concordia university or seminary.

APPENDIX A

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

The following list enumerates LCMS convention resolutions concerning church work recruitment that are specific to districts and circuits:

- › **THE 1950 LCMS CONVENTION** resolved that “*each District* Board for Parish Education be asked to appoint a student recruiting officer for their District” and “That Districts have full-time Superintendents of Education [that] will create an awareness in our congregations of their responsibility to provide expanded facilities for Christian elementary education.”
- › **THE 1959 LCMS CONVENTION** resolved “to commend those actively engaged in church work recruitment.” It also urged “*Districts* to continue an active program of selective recruitment and that District recruitment committees furnish annual reports to the Board of Higher Education for evaluation and guidance of the program.”
- › **THE 1962 LCMS CONVENTION** encouraged “*District* Recruitment Committees and *District* Student Aid Committees to continue to exercise leadership in recruitment activity.”
- › **THE 1965 LCMS CONVENTION** 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 1975 LCMS CONVENTION** resolved that “the Synod in convention urge each *District* to make recruitment for professional church workers a priority item on its next convention agenda.”
- › **THE 1986 LCMS CONVENTION** resolved that “*District* recruitment committees be directed to adopt specific and challenging recruitment goals, to communicate them to congregations, and to coordinate, support, and equip congregational recruitment committees for their mission.”
- › **THE 1989 LCMS 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,” and also resolved that “the Board for Higher Education be encouraged to continue to develop, update, and disseminate resource materials for the coordination and supervision of recruitment efforts by congregations, colleges, and *Districts*.”
- › **THE 1992 LCMS CONVENTION** resolved 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 2010 LCMS 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 *districts*] 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 all primary agencies of the Synod (i.e., boards, commissions, councils and committees, seminaries and universities, districts, CPS, and each Synodwide corporate entity) be requested to endorse, advocate, and engage with *SAS* as we strive together to accomplish one of the Synod’s crucial official objectives, to “Recruit and train pastors, teachers, and other professional church workers and provide opportunity for their continuing growth” (Constitution Article III 3) in our life together.