



# HELPING PARENTS PREPARE YOUTH for Church Work Vocations

## — OVERVIEW —

### DEAR PARENTS,

The goal of these parent resources is to give you good direction and support in understanding what church work could look like for your children, and to provide ways to have conversations with your children about church work.

The following resources are meant to be easily digestible and can be separated out as needed:

- › Key Points: Preparing Youth for Church Work
- › The Importance of Youth Church Attendance
- › How to Provide Encouragement Through Conversations
- › The Reality of Recruitment: Need by the Numbers
- › The Great Need for Church Workers

*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](mailto:mission.advancement@lcms.org).*

**SET APART TO SERVE**  
LCMS CHURCH WORK RECRUITMENT

# KEY POINTS

## Preparing Youth for Church Work

**AS PARENTS,** you shape your child in many ways. You have the key responsibility of forming your child's understanding of him or herself as a child of God. Continually reminding your child of his or her Baptism — that he or she has been washed clean from sin and clothed in Christ — will have a profound effect on how they approach the world.

As your child grows, conversations about careers and how they can use their strengths and interests in a life of service to God and love of neighbor will become more common. In these conversations, we encourage you to discuss how to direct these strengths and interests toward a church work vocation. This one-pager covers specific details about encouraging youth to become an LCMS church worker. Additional resources included in this resource guide will build on this information and provide more detail for you to use as you continue conversations with your child.



**SCAN TO VIEW  
ALL AVAILABLE  
SAS RESOURCES**

**WE NEED TO BE MORE INTENTIONAL** about identifying and encouraging youth to consider church work vocations.

### Ways to Make an Impact

- **IMMERSE** your children in the Word of Christ (DEUT. 6:4-9).
- **ATTEND** weekly Divine Service with your children.
- **HAVE** conversations with your children about church work. (Find conversation guides at [lcms.org/sas-resources](https://lcms.org/sas-resources).)
- **PRAY** for parental guidance.
- **PRAY** with your children.



*The Holy Spirit creates, nourishes and sustains saving faith through hearing the Word of Christ and receiving His life-giving Sacraments: Baptism and Holy Communion”*

*(Rom. 10:17; Luther's explanation of the Third Article).*

### Full-time LCMS Church Work Vocations

- Pastors (*men*)
- Deaconesses (*women*)
- Lutheran school teachers
- Directors of Christian education
- Directors of Christian outreach
- Directors of parish music
- Directors of family life ministries
- Directors of church ministries

### Key Statistics

- **ONLY HALF OF CHURCH WORKERS TALK TO YOUTH** about considering a church work vocation.
- Our 2023 survey found that **49.2% OF YOUTH WHO WERE APPROACHED** about church work would consider a church work vocation **VERSUS 17.4%** who would consider it but were not approached.
- **91% OF CURRENT CHURCH WORKERS** report being most influenced by attending weekly worship services as a child.

# The Importance of Youth CHURCH ATTENDANCE

**IN A SET APART TO SERVE SURVEY**, current church workers overwhelmingly stated that the one thing that most influenced them to consider church work was attending weekly Divine Service throughout their childhood, where they were fed God's Word and Sacraments through which the Holy Spirit creates, nourishes and sustains saving faith in Jesus Christ (ROM. 10:17).

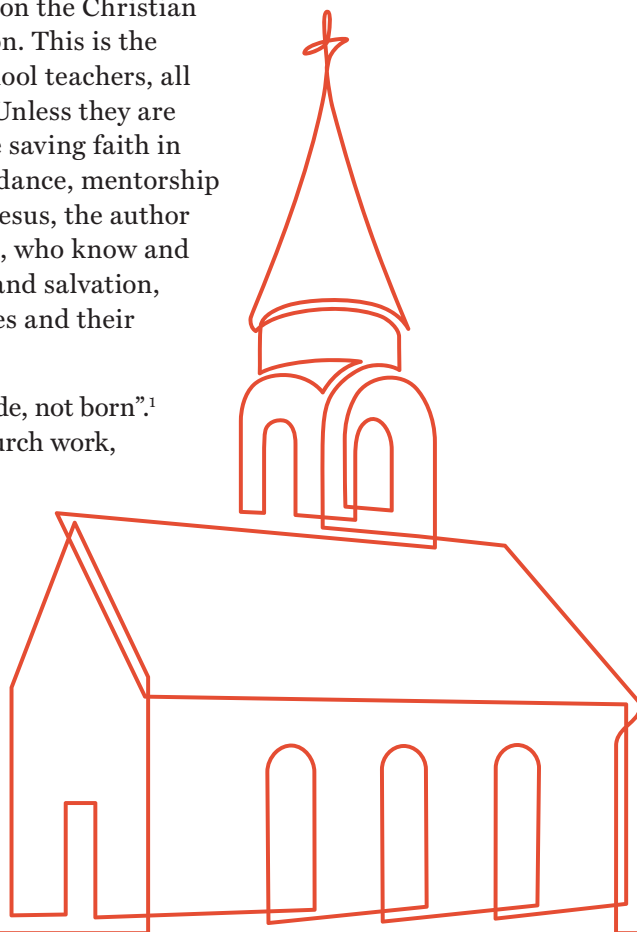
The best time to immerse your children in God's Word and teach them the Lutheran faith is NOW! If this is not currently a practice in your home, now is a great time to start.

Regardless of their age (conception through high school), there are numerous ways to immerse your children in the Word of Christ (DEUT. 6:4-9). First and foremost, ensure your children hear the Word and receive Christ's life-giving Sacraments in the Divine Service each Sunday. Other ways to immerse your child include Sunday school, catechism instruction, Vacation Bible School, Bible study, family devotions and conversations applying God's Word to faith and life.

The primary responsibility of Christian adults is to pass on the Christian faith to our children, that they may have life and salvation. This is the vocation of parents, grandparents, pastors, Lutheran school teachers, all full-time church workers, baptismal sponsors and laity. Unless they are taught, our children will not know Jesus Christ and have saving faith in Him. Our children need adult Christian instruction, guidance, mentorship and encouragement in order to keep their eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of their faith (HEB. 12:2). Faithful Christians, who know and believe Jesus as their priceless treasure, the giver of life and salvation, and the one thing needful (LUKE 10:42), immerse themselves and their youth in God's Word!

Early Church Father Tertullian writes, "Christians are made, not born".<sup>1</sup> Before we encourage our children to consider full-time church work, we first teach them God's Word through whom the Holy Spirit makes them Christians. Church workers are first Christians. There is nothing more important than the eternal salvation of our children, whether they become full-time church workers or pursue another godly vocation. However, it is good and right that we encourage our Christian children to consider a sacred and joyful church work vocation.

<sup>1</sup> Tertullian, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 3: Latin Christianity. Ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 32.



# How to Provide Encouragement Through CONVERSATIONS

**THROUGH EXTENSIVE RESEARCH**, *Set Apart to Serve* (SAS) has concluded that words of encouragement from influential adults are among the most important factors that influenced current LCMS pastors and other church workers on the path to their vocations. As a parent, you are the most powerful influencer in your child's life, as God has placed them in your care.

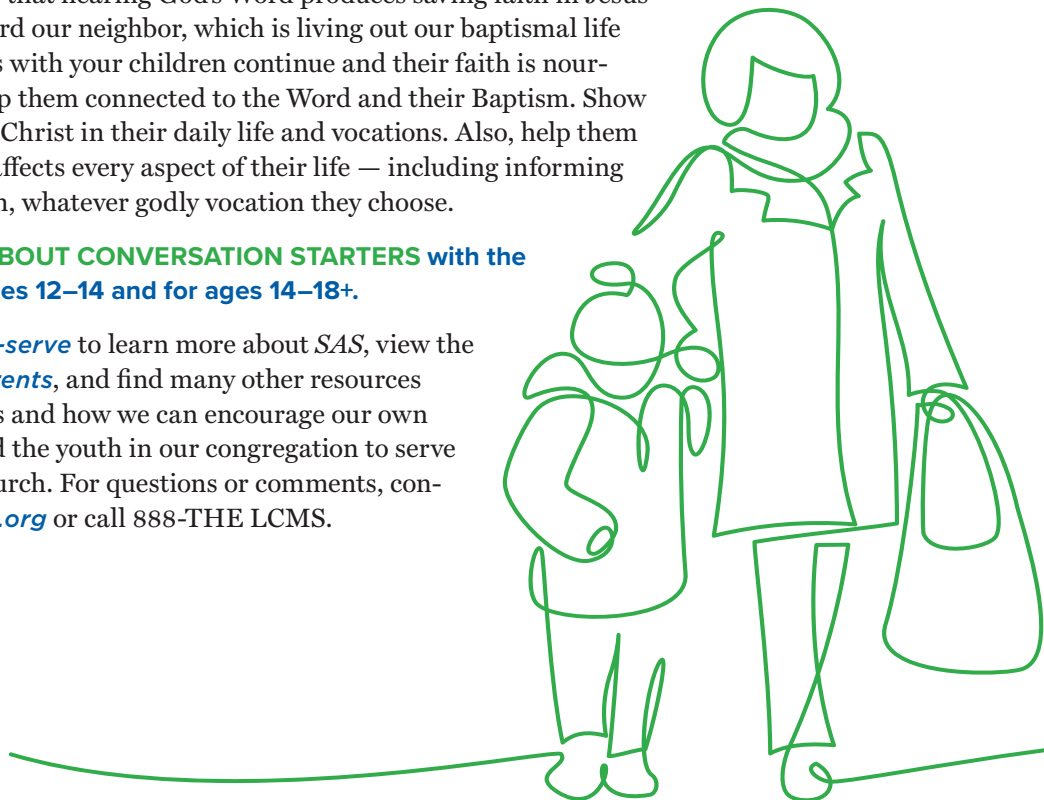
You can play a vital role in the ongoing life of Christ's church through daily interactions and everyday conversations with your child. Discussions about church work are an excellent starting point that can help inspire and guide them toward a church work vocation.

You don't have to schedule a time to start a conversation about a young person's future. Moments like telling your child that you think they should consider serving as a church worker — even from early childhood — can help them think and pray about their vocation. Listen for natural opportunities to steer the conversation toward vocation. A conversation could start as simply as, "Have you ever considered becoming a pastor?" or "You are great with kids — I think you would be a great teacher at one of our LCMS schools." SAS has conversation guides and other resources to help you talk to children about the path to serving Christ through a sacred and joyful church work vocation which can be found at [lcms.org/sas-resources](https://lcms.org/sas-resources).

It is important to emphasize that hearing God's Word produces saving faith in Jesus Christ and fervent love toward our neighbor, which is living out our baptismal life (ROM. 6:5-11). As conversations with your children continue and their faith is nourished and strengthened, keep them connected to the Word and their Baptism. Show them how to see their life in Christ in their daily life and vocations. Also, help them understand that their faith affects every aspect of their life — including informing them of their vocational path, whatever godly vocation they choose.

**GET ADDITIONAL IDEAS ABOUT CONVERSATION STARTERS** with the **Conversation Guides for ages 12–14 and for ages 14–18+.**

Visit [lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve](https://lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve) to learn more about SAS, view the *Conversation Guide for Parents*, and find many other resources about church work vocations and how we can encourage our own children, grandchildren, and the youth in our congregation to serve the Lord full-time in His church. For questions or comments, contact [SetApart2Serve@lcms.org](mailto:SetApart2Serve@lcms.org) or call 888-THE LCMS.



## RESOURCE 4

# THE REALITY OF RECRUITMENT

### — Need by the Numbers —

**ONLY HALF OF CURRENT LCMS CHURCH WORKERS** talk to youth about considering a church work vocation. Along with parents, these church workers are the ones best suited to speaking to youth about this sacred and joyful vocation. Pastors, church workers and laity need to be more intentional about forming, identifying and encouraging youth to become church workers. In fact, more youth consider church work when church workers and parents talk about it.

There is currently a church worker shortage in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Requests for candidates far exceed the number of candidates placed.

- In 2023, there were **534 requests** for new commissioned church workers at the Concordia universities (this does not include pastors). However, only **148 placements could be made**.
- In Spring 2024, **51 pastoral call requests went unfilled** due to a lack of seminary candidates.
- In Sept. 2024, LCMS district presidents reported **530 pastoral vacancies** throughout the LCMS.

# 91%

**OF CURRENT CHURCH WORKERS** report being most influenced by attending weekly worship services as a child.

### — TOP SEVEN INFLUENCERS ON YOUTH TO CONSIDER CHURCH WORK —



1  
Personal encouragement from pastors



2  
Commissioned church workers\*



3  
Parents/families



4  
Lutheran school teachers



5  
Youth group leaders



6  
Laity



7  
Peers

\* Director of Christian education, deaconess, Lutheran school teacher, director of parish music, and others — see *“The 8 LCMS Church Work Vocations”* booklet for more information.

## RESOURCE 5

# THE GREAT NEED

## for Church Workers

**Jesus said, “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”**

(MATT. 9:37–38)

**AS PARENTS**, you play a vital role in nurturing your children’s faith and ensuring they hear the Word of God for eternal salvation in Jesus Christ. As you teach them in the faith, pray for your children, read God’s Word to and with them at home, walk beside them in their questions and struggles, share your own faith story with them, and allow space for all questions. If you don’t know the answer to their question(s), explore the answer with them, ask your pastor, or ask a person who works in that subject.

Engage in intentional conversations about church work vocations to help them explore potential roles within the church and understand the importance of serving others, especially with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Do not force the conversation; instead, pray for opportunities to talk about God’s Word and church work vocations, and know God will produce fruit from your conversations. Remember, even small moments of sharing your faith will have a significant impact. God promises that His Word never returns empty (ISAIAH 55:11). These conversations may be uncomfortable at first, but be bold and have courage. Eventually, they will become a part of the fabric of your family, and this is good. Your children love you and will respect your guidance and prayers.

It is also important to model appreciation for church workers by thanking God for His servants in your congregation and by reminding your child that God works through these servants to bring His Word into your life. Include pastors, Lutheran school teachers and other church workers in your family prayers and conversations. If you have a particular concern or conflict with a church worker, please refrain from sharing it with your children. Rather, go to the church worker in person, with the purpose of reconciling your differences in the grace and forgiveness of Jesus Christ.

Also, teach your children to value and respect work — especially church work. Church work, and all vocations for that matter, require a good work ethic as we love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength, and love our neighbor as ourselves (MARK 12:30–31). Model a positive attitude about your own vocation and demonstrate that you value all godly work and vocations, including church work vocations. Show your children the importance of serving the church by your own immersion in the Word and your involvement in your local congregation. Remind your children that God has given us work and that He provides for His people through godly vocations.

Visit [lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve](https://lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve) to learn more about SAS, view the [Conversation Guide for Parents](#), and find many other resources about church work vocations and how we can encourage our children and friends to serve the Lord full time in His church. For questions or comments, contact [SetApart2Serve@lcms.org](mailto:SetApart2Serve@lcms.org) or call 888-THE LCMS.

## Prayer for Parental Guidance

**DEAR FATHER IN HEAVEN,** You love all Your dear children, even as You took on our flesh and blood to forgive our sins and to give us life and eternal salvation. My children are precious gifts from You for which I am so thankful. You have placed them in my care to provide for them and to protect them from all harm and danger. Most of all, You have called me to raise them in the one true faith, teaching them Your Word at home, and having them hear Your Word and receive Your Sacraments at church, that they may trust in You throughout this life and have life eternal when they pass this veil of tears. Forgive my failings in this task. Thank You for Your rich mercy and grace. Give me strength and courage to do Your will. Keep my children in saving faith, that on the Last Day, together we will be with You in heaven. In the precious name of Jesus. **AMEN.**

## Prayer with our Children

**O DEAREST JESUS,** You desire that all people know You as the Savior of the world in whom we have forgiveness of sin and eternal life. Be with our family as we joyfully share this Good News with one another within this house, with our extended family, and with our friends and neighbors. We pray for all pastors and church workers, who preach, teach and share the Good News of Jesus Christ in their full-time vocations. Give guidance and wisdom to the children in this house as we pray and talk about the fruitful work they will do in their adult life. Amongst many good and godly vocations in which they can serve You and their neighbor, put into their hearts and minds the prayerful consideration of serving You in a lifelong church work vocation. If this is the course they choose, keep their trust in You to provide all they need in this journey. In Your dear name we pray. **AMEN.**

## Scripture to Contemplate

- **“FATHERS,** do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (EPH. 6:4).
- **“ONLY TAKE CARE,** and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children’s children” (DEUT. 4:9).
- **“HEAR, O ISRAEL:** The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” (DEUT. 6:4–9).
- **ST. PAUL TO PASTOR TIMOTHY:** “I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now I am sure, dwells in you as well” (2 TIM. 1:5) *and* “But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 TIM. 3:14–15).