

SET APART TO SERVE

LCMS CHURCH WORK RECRUITMENT

Conversation Guide for Ages 14–18+

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AN INFLUENTIAL ADULT



You may wonder what role you have in guiding a teen to the important vocation of church work. Who am I to the teens in my congregation? Why would they care what I think?

LCMS pastors and other church workers report that words of encouragement from influential adults in their lives greatly influenced them on their journeys to their vocations.

God may work through your words of encouragement to influence a teen to consider a church work vocation.

Many teens begin to think seriously about church work vocations during high school, after completing confirmation instruction.

This is a key time for you to encourage them to think about the ways they can serve God and their neighbor through a church work vocation.

WHERE DO I BEGIN?

All it takes is a few moments to encourage a teen that a full-time church work vocation is a great way to serve joyfully God and His people. Bringing up opportunities to serve full-time in church work vocations through a conversation that starts as simply as, “Have you ever considered becoming a pastor?” or, “You should consider becoming a Lutheran teacher,” could change the direction of a teen’s life.

You have an opportunity to encourage and influence teens in your congregation to consider a church work vocation. This guide will help you talk to teens about the path to serving Christ through a church work vocation.



INITIATING CONVERSATIONS

1 Help them to understand that their faith informs and affects their vocational path.

During their teen years, young people consider their sense of place in the world. Reminding them of their baptismal identity can help solidify their foundation in Christ, shape their lifelong identity and lead them to consider a church work vocation.

- “These are hard years. Never doubt that you belong to Jesus. He loves you, forgives your sins and is with you.”
- “Remember that the things you have learned about God’s love are relevant and important for your daily life moving forward.”

Set Apart to Serve (SAS), a major initiative of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), seeks to create an intentional culture of church worker formation and recruitment in every LCMS congregation, school and entity. *SAS* supports adults as they encourage youth to live a life in the Word of God and to consider serving in a full-time church work vocation. Visit lcms.org/sas to learn more. Contact us at SetApart2Serve@lcms.org with any questions or comments.

- “Your identity as a child of God shines through your life. God works through people like you to bless His church and to spread the Gospel. I hope you are considering working full-time in the church.”

2 Ask about their school, camp and youth event experiences.

Peer relationships become more important during the high school years. Teens often influence each other’s views of the future and of the world at these critical times.

It’s a great age to check in with them and see how they and their friends are processing their faith and exploring thoughts about vocation.

- “What did you hear in today’s sermon?” “What topics intrigue you from (camp/ Sunday school/youth groups or events)?” “Do you ever consider how your identity in Christ affects your vocation?”
- “How would you share the Gospel with someone you know?”
- “What role will your faith play in your life as an adult?”

3 Demonstrate curiosity about the vocational paths they are considering.

More than 85% of high school freshmen report that they feel confident about their vocation plans. Teens continually face vocation discussions and decisions as they select coursework, seek jobs and internships, and plan for college or trade school.

- “How does your faith affect your thoughts about your vocation?”
- “Do you pray about how to serve God and His people? I’d encourage you to do that.”
- “Have you considered visiting a Concordia university?”
- “Can I pray with you and for you about your future vocation?”

4 Emphasize serving Christ and living in light of their Baptism.

Teens struggle to figure out how to live according to their faith. It’s valuable to help them think about God’s gracious design for His people and His church.

- “As you remember your Baptism daily, how does that focus your thoughts about your vocation?”
- “At church we learn that we are to love our neighbor with the love of Christ. How does that help you think about your vocation?”
- “I’ve noticed that you seem to enjoy _____ (serving the congregation, singing, working with children or the elderly, etc.). Are you planning to continue that into adulthood? You know, many people work full-time serving God’s people in just that way.”
- “I encourage you to consider serving the church by _____ (related area, such as teaching, administration, music). I’ve heard that our Concordia universities have great programs in that area of study. You could become a _____. Have you toured/looked at a Concordia university yet?”

5 Encourage them to develop relationships with full-time church workers.

- “_____ serves the church as a _____. I could help you get some time with him/her for a conversation — maybe you could shadow him/her for a day to see what his/her vocation is like?”
- “Have you ever thought about an internship at a congregation? Would you like my help seeing if that’s a possibility?”

6 Whatever makes sense to you!

This training guide is intended to help start a conversation. These suggestions cannot specifically address every situation. If you find a better way to start these discussions, try that! Come back to this guide for help if you run into a roadblock.

The most important thing you can do is talk to and encourage the youth in your congregation. Talk about church work vocations with at least one teen in your congregation, school or family. Visit the “Professional church work vocations within the LCMS” section of lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve for more information.

WAYS TO TRANSITION TO VOCATION

Sometimes it might feel awkward to bring up a church work vocation or transition a conversation to that topic. Below are some example phrases that can help you make this conversational transition:

- 1 “Have you ever considered church work/ [specific church work vocation]?”
- 2 “Have you ever considered becoming a pastor/teacher/chaplain/deaconess?”
- 3 “I think you would be a great [specific church work vocation].”
- 4 “It’s great to see/hear you speak about your faith. Did you know that the Concordia universities have pre-seminary programs/programs to train church workers? There are scholarships available for church work students.”
- 5 “Have you ever talked with [name of church worker] about why he/she decided to become a [specific church work vocation]?”

SUGGESTIONS FOR OVERCOMING OBJECTIONS

Here are some suggestions to get conversations moving in the right direction.

1 “I need an internship/work study/volunteer experience for school.”

Today, teens are expected to follow a path that may look different from the one you took at that age. Jobs and the job market have shifted dramatically over the past two decades.

As academic and extracurricular expectations increase, fewer teens work starter jobs like fast food or retail. However, many young people seek work experiences like work-study, job shadowing and internships.

- Ask the teen to share their thoughts and ideas:
 - “Do you know what it’s like to work for the church?”
 - What are your concerns about church work?”
 - Would you like to talk to a pastor/ church worker about church work?”
- Listen with patience as they work out their thoughts. Try to listen and ask questions that help them think about the opportunity.
 - “You said you didn’t like the idea of _____. Tell me more about that.”
 - “What I’m hearing you say is that you think _____. Do I have that right?”
 - “If we found a way to overcome your concern about _____ ... would that change how you feel?”

- Express curiosity about their ideas about work. Avoid stating too strongly that you think they should pursue a particular kind of work.
- If they haven’t come to a clear decision, set up time to talk about it again.
 - “How about we both promise to pray about this for a while? Let’s talk about this after church in a couple of weeks.”

2 “I heard it’s hard.”

The life of a church worker is one of sacrifice, of taking up your cross and following Jesus. Church work is also sacred and joyful. Teens usually don’t know what church workers do. Most of what they know is from casual/ occasional observations or from statements made by other people. Be honest about what it means to be a church worker.

- Expose your young person to the realities of work.
 - “What’s your biggest concern about church work? What sounds good about it?”
- Share how God both calls us to our vocations and provides for us through our vocations.
- Explain that every vocation involves hard work and the joy of serving. Our faith in Christ plays the most important role in our vocations and influences our daily decisions in serving God and others.

- Encourage your young person to consider what is sacred and joyful about church work, as well as the challenges church work brings.
- “What are the reasons you would want to work at church?”

3 “I’m not sure I’m good enough for that.”

Teens often struggle with reconciling their own sinfulness with believing that God works through people like them.

- Emphasize that God has forgiven them in Christ and made them His children in Baptism.
- Remind teens that God’s grace to us through Christ forgives even their most concerning sins.
- Talk about how God has sustained your faith through His Word and Sacraments.
- Encourage them to practice confession and absolution, and to ask for help when they are struggling — especially if they are struggling with something they think would “disqualify” them from church work.
- Remind them of the struggles God shares with us about our spiritual ancestors in the Bible.
 - “Even David, a man after God’s own heart, struggled with temptations and failings.”
 - “You know, even Jesus’ disciples were sinful. But Jesus called them to bear witness not to their own strength, but to the Good News of Jesus’ death and resurrection. The inspired words of those holy apostles shape our faith today.”
 - “Jesus chose to use the greedy (tax collectors), the humble (fishermen), the unknown and those whom no one thought was worthy as His servants in this world.”

4 “I can be a good Lutheran accountant, actor, engineer, etc. instead.”

Teens may look for validation of their career interests outside of church work.

- Your faith will continue to influence how you serve God and His people in all that you do. I would like you to have the chance to learn more about the fulfilling opportunities for full-time church work, too.

5 “It doesn’t fit my goals for my career.”

A talented teen may have concrete ideas about what they want to do and where they want to go in life. Encourage them to see church work as a fulfilling vocation and one through which God works to bless His church.

- How does your faith affect your thoughts and desires when it comes to vocation?
- If job security comes up:
 - “Do you know there is a great need for full-time church workers? ... Every person needs to hear the Gospel. The church’s mission will continue until Christ returns, and God works through church workers to bring Christ to sinners. That work will never end.”
- “God will work through His Word that you speak to make an eternal difference in people’s lives as you serve full-time in the church.”

6 “My parents don’t want me to be a church worker.”

- “Have you asked them what their concerns are?”
 - If salary potential comes up, point out how the LCMS is working to improve the pay scale for church workers, and remind the young person that God wants us to trust in Him for our daily bread.
 - If college/graduate school debt comes up, point out that scholarships are available to help students prepare for church work vocations.
 - “Your parents may be working with old information. I can help you get accurate resources for them to consider.”
- “Your parents’ perspectives are important, but I encourage you to continue to think through your future in light of your faith in Jesus and your baptismal identity as a child of God.”
- “Let’s continue to pray for God’s will for your future. God may call you into church work, and part of preparing for that will mean preparing to address your parents’ concerns. Right now, let’s continue to consider church work along with other ways to serve God and His people.”

WHAT ELSE YOU CAN DO

1 Teach them to value and respect work — especially church work.

Attend the Divine Service weekly and serve in your local congregation. Encourage teens to attend and serve too.

2 Show appreciation for the workers in your church and chaplains in our military.

Teens see how influential adults — parents and congregation members — treat and talk about church workers. Model appreciation by thanking God for His servants in your congregation and by reminding teens that God works through these servants to bring His Word into your life.

- Celebrate Church Worker Appreciation Month in October. (Special resources like note cards, program inserts and social media shareables are [available here](#).)
- Write thank you notes to church workers and encourage the teens you connect with to do the same.
- Post supportive messages on social media with the hashtag **#LCMSThankYous**.
- Encourage teens to record video messages thanking the church workers they know. They can send the messages directly or post to social media and tag the workers.

3 Emphasize peer relationships and explore how peer experiences can shape vocation.

Attending worship and serving in the community with other Lutheran teens can have a big impact.

- Emphasize the importance of attending and participating at local, district and national youth events — the Divine Service, LCMS Youth Gatherings, Higher Things, Vocatio, Christ Academy and summer camp.
- Encourage teens to explore Christian vocation through service and outreach projects individually or with other Lutheran teens.
- Create an opportunity for teens to visit a Concordia university and interact with college and graduate students who are interested in full-time church work. Encourage teens to build relationships with these just-older peers, ask questions and learn from these students.

4 Reach out to other influential adults — pastors, church workers, family, teachers, etc.

If you sense that a teen has a genuine interest in church work, reach out to others to help reinforce the conversations you are having. Church workers report the following as being important factors to their decision to become a church worker:

- Pastor (34.3%)
- Another commissioned church worker (27.7%)
- Parents/family (25.4%)
- Lutheran school teacher (22.6%)
- Youth group leader (15%)
- Peers (12.4%)
- Attending a Youth Gathering (10.9%)

Arrange for teens to meet or video chat with local, district and national church leaders. Ask leaders to share about their journeys to full-time church work.

5 Prayer

- Pray for the teens you talk to.
- Pray with them.
- Encourage them to pray as they think about their vocation.

6 Talk to parents.

Parents can have a wide range of emotions about their children considering church work, especially if there are no other church workers in their family. Share up-to-date resources about salaries and scholarships and answer any questions the parents might have. Remind them what a great honor and privilege it is to be the parent of a child who serves God's people as a full-time church worker.

7 Share with them information about LCMS vocations.

Help the young person explore church work vocations by directing them to the [Set Apart to Serve website](#). Once there, scroll down to the "Professional church work vocations within the LCMS" section. There, they can click on any of the eight church work vocations listed to learn more and to connect with our Concordia universities and seminaries for further information specific to each vocation and each educational institution.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

› **FAQs about *Set Apart to Serve*:**

Provides an overview of church work vocations.

› **Resource hub at lcms.org/sas-resources:**

Find resources that help provide youth an understanding about church work vocations and how to approach conversations about church work.

› **Student booklets (CPH) — Grades 9-12:**

Provide students with ways to prepare for committing to a church work vocational path.

› ***Leading Lives that Matter* Bible Study:**

This study on vocation invites youth to consider their vocations in light of how we live our lives as the baptized children of God in Christ Jesus.

› ***Seeing Yourself in a Church Work Vocation* Bible Study:**

This study is intended to help participants contemplate serving the Lord and His people in a full-time church work vocation.

› **Church, district and Synod youth events:**

Visit days at the Concordia universities, NLOMA summer camps, Higher Things, Vocatio, Christ Academy, and national and district Youth Gatherings all provide great experiences which may lead youth to consider a career in church work.