

FAQs about *Set Apart to Serve*

What is *Set Apart to Serve*?

Set Apart to Serve SAS is an initiative of the LCMS to recruit church workers. Since church work is rooted in Baptism and a lifetime of hearing the Word, SAS encourages young people to consider church work vocations primarily through their continued, faithful involvement within their congregation.

What is “vocation”?

Christ died for all and calls all people to believe in Him. God calls His baptized children to love Him and to serve their neighbor. “Vocation” is the word for this call to believe and serve. Trusting that Christ calls people to church work vocations through His people, SAS encourages people to find occasions to talk to youth about opportunities to use their gifts to serve God and His church full time. SAS encourages members of LCMS congregations and church workers to have conversations with young Christians about vocation based on God’s Word, to help them understand God’s will for every Christian vocation, and to encourage them to serve God in their specific vocations.

What are the professional church work vocations within the LCMS?

Church work vocations, grounded in baptismal salvation and identity in Christ, are honored and respected, sacred and joyful vocations. The church work vocations include ordained pastors, who serve in Word and Sacrament ministry, and commissioned ministers, who assist the pastoral office in service to the Word, witnessing to Christ daily in various roles.

Pastors serve in the Office of the Holy Ministry, the one sacred office given by God for the sake of the church. They proclaim forgiveness, preach and teach God’s Word, administer God’s life-giving Sacraments and provide faithful pastoral care to His people.

Lutheran school teachers provide quality academic and Lutheran education rooted in God’s Word to the children in their care. Currently, Lutheran schools serve over 140,000 students in the Synod’s 1,914 early childhood, elementary and

high schools as they support the Office of the Holy Ministry to assist and strengthen Christian fathers and mothers in their God-given responsibility to bring up their children in the nurture and instruction of the Lord.

Directors of Christian education (DCEs) serve as lifespan (“cradle to grave”) Christian educators who typically serve within congregations and their ministries. Through their leadership and service, they teach the faith to children, youth and adults.

Directors of Christian outreach (DCOs) focus on witness and outreach. Through their expertise and guidance, they help congregations witness to those outside of the church to share the Gospel in a relational and evangelical way so that people may have saving faith through Jesus Christ.

Directors of family life ministries (DFLMs) nurture the church’s families and family life according to the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. Trained in family life studies, including the biblical theology of marriage, sexuality, ethics and parenting, they work within congregations to strengthen and equip Christian homes to love and serve God and their neighbor.

Directors of parish music (DPMs) teach, foster and edify the church’s worship with their biblical and confessional musical leadership and direction. They assist with worship planning, provide musical education, and direct choirs, ensembles and musicians for services in God’s house.

Directors of church ministries (DCMs) serve congregations and support their pastors by leading various ministries in a congregation, such as Bible Studies and community outreach. Many function as the Youth Director at their congregation.

Deaconesses are women who share the Gospel and serve God’s people through works of mercy, spiritual care and teaching the Christian faith. They serve in congregations, on the national and international mission field, and in a variety of other settings and service organizations particularly to women, children and God’s people with special needs.

What is the path to becoming a Lutheran chaplain?

There are many paths to become a chaplain, or serve in similar roles, in the LCMS.

Some pastors, after they have finished seminary and have been ordained, become military chaplains. LCMS military chaplains serve in every branch of the military, representing the church on active duty, in the Reserves, the National Guard and Civil Air Patrol. To learn more about becoming a military chaplain, visit lcms.org/armed-forces-chaplains.

Any rostered LCMS church worker is eligible to serve as a part of LCMS Specialized Spiritual Care Ministry. Specialized Care workers serve in “specialized” settings, such as hospitals, prisons and retirement homes, extending the life of the congregation to people who cannot participate due to their circumstances. Because Specialized Care workers tend to both the faithful and the unchurched in these settings, they must have theological knowledge grounded in Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, advanced training in visitation and well-developed emotional intelligence.

To learn more about becoming a Specialized Care worker, visit lcms.org/specialized-care.

What are the paths to becoming a church worker?

[LCMS.org](https://lcms.org) has great resources and information about each vocation and the education required to pursue them.

Pastors

lcms.org/serve/set-apart-to-serve/pastors
[#seminary-education](https://lcms.org/serve/set-apart-to-serve/pastors)

Lutheran school teachers

lcms.org/serve/set-apart-to-serve/teacher

Directors of Christian education (DCEs)

lcms.org/serve/set-apart-to-serve/dce

Directors of Christian outreach (DCOs)

lcms.org/serve/set-apart-to-serve/dco

Directors of family life ministries (DFLMs)

lcms.org/serve/set-apart-to-serve/dflm

Directors of parish music (DPMs)

lcms.org/serve/set-apart-to-serve/director-of-music

Deaconesses

lcms.org/serve/set-apart-to-serve/deaconess

What are ways church workers can serve as missionaries?

There are many ways that LCMS church workers — both ordained and commissioned — can serve as missionaries. Below are examples of ordained, commissioned and lay opportunities:

ORDAINED:

Theological Educator — Teaches, mentors and trains pastors and other church workers for a partner church.

Church Planter — Plants churches alongside church partners by spreading the Gospel through faithful Word and Sacrament ministry.

COMMISSIONED:

Deaconess — Shows mercy through faithful diaconal service, using gifts such as music, teaching, etc. Supports regional missionaries through member care and women’s ministry.

Teacher — Teaches English as a second language (ESL) and other subjects of expertise at partner church schools, in preschool, primary and secondary settings.

DCE — Serves in areas of expertise such as teaching ESL or working with member care, missionary youth and community youth.

LAY:

Business Manager — Uses a business background (marketing, accounting, business administration) to assist a mission region in conducting its business.

Internet Technology — Serves a mission region’s technology needs, such as setting up and running platforms for online education.

Teacher — (See above.)

ESL Instructor — Teaches ESL courses. Both ESL-certified and non-certified laypeople can serve in this capacity.

Volunteer Coordinator — Works with short-term teams and coordinates volunteers who come to a region’s mission field. Many have a marketing background and/or a background in the regional language.

Doctor/Nurse — Provides community health education (CHE) to people in a mission region.

To learn more about becoming a missionary, visit lcms.org/service.

Why is the LCMS launching this initiative?

Christ provides workers for His church through His people. It is part of the work of the church in every generation to raise up church workers to proclaim the Gospel to the next generation. The number of LCMS pastors and church workers continues to decline, especially as many LCMS pastors approach retirement age. We need to talk intentionally to our youth about church work, encourage people to seek God's will for their vocation, and take seriously the blessed task of serving the church full time. Research shows that only half of current pastors and church workers talk to the youth in their congregations about considering a vocation in the church.

How can SAS help our congregation spark our youth's interest in church work?

Parents, ordained and commissioned church workers and all members of the congregation are important influences in leading youth toward full-time church work.

SAS is built to provide every influential adult with tools to talk to youth about church work, encourage their interest in church work, and provide them with opportunities to experience the rewards of church work. These resources help to increase fruitful engagement between the congregation's youth and their influential adults, as the youth go along their individual journeys toward full-time church work vocations.

Are SAS resources available to every LCMS congregation and school?

In 2023, SAS launched a congregation and school pilot program with the goal of field testing SAS resources and gaining feedback about them and about other ways SAS can benefit the Synod. All 35 districts, plus the National Lutheran Outdoors Ministry Association (NLOMA), are represented through pilot sites focusing on youth in three age groups from Baptism through young adulthood. These resources are available at lcms.org/sas-resources.

How can congregations address concerns about the burden of debt when pursuing church work education?

It's important to address the misperception that earning a Concordia church work degree and attending seminary results in a large amount of student debt. In fact, over the last 15 years, our institutions have significantly increased aid for those pursuing church work. We are actively talking with our Concordia University System schools about the affordability of church work programs and how to help students access the available aid. SAS also encourages church worker scholarships at the parish and district levels to help fund students' education for the sake of the church.

How can I help identify a young person who should consider a church work vocation?

From Baptism through high school and beyond, you can help identify future church workers by watching, listening, talking about and encouraging the interests and the gifts youth are developing as they grow. See SAS resource, "Recognizing Future Church Workers," or contact your SAS Pilot Program representative to ensure your young person is connected to *Set Apart to Serve* resources, your pastor and other leaders in your congregation.

How can I support the SAS initiative?

LCMS Mission Advancement is available to support your intent as a Christian steward to provide for this initiative: lcms.org/givenow/set-apart-to-serve.

How can I learn more?

Visit lcms.org/sas or contact us at SetApart2Serve@lcms.org with any questions or comments.