

SET APART ^{TO} SERVE

LCMS CHURCH WORK RECRUITMENT

REPORT TO THE SYNOD PRESIDENT

— and over 600 significant collaborators and stakeholders —

OCTOBER 2024

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NEW! Must-Read White Paper

The history of church work formation and recruitment is fascinating. Studying this history encourages us to persevere in making a long-term cultural change through SAS. The LCMS has been encouraging church work formation and recruitment since its beginning in 1847. Throughout the decades, Synod leaders and conventions have been sounding the appeal for districts, congregations, Lutheran schools, pastors, commissioned church workers, parents, and others to form and recruit more pastors and church workers. Those who have gone before us were praying for the same thing we are today — that the Lord will provide His church with laborers who will preach, teach and share the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ with our children and grandchildren, family and friends, and our neighbors near and far. Read [“Building A Culture of Church Work Formation and Recruitment.”](#)

District SAS Working Group (Committee) Pilot Program

SAS is running a pilot program with six districts who launched or are developing an SAS working group or committee: Mid-South, Minnesota South, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska and Northern Illinois.

- These working groups are testing SAS resources and collectively sharing the resources they are using. The intention is to publish a body of resources for all districts to use in developing and enhancing their own SAS district working group, which in turn will support congregations, schools and church workers in their intentional efforts to form and recruit future church workers.
- Currently, these pilot groups are reviewing and testing two resources: “Forming a District SAS Working Group” and “Forming a Congregation SAS Working Group.”
- The most recent SAS pilot meeting with these working groups was October 7.

Circuit Visitor Pilot Program

SAS is meeting with circuit visitors from the English, Florida-Georgia, Indiana, Minnesota North, Ohio and Pacific Southwest districts to pilot church work recruitment resources.

- › These circuit visitors are testing resources that may be beneficial for circuit visitors to use when visiting the pastors (including circuit winkels), church workers, congregations and schools they serve. They are sharing with the SAS team what they are doing to encourage their congregations and circuits to intentionally form and recruit church workers.
- › “Engaging Laity,” one of the resources being reviewed by these circuit visitors, concerns the laity’s role in encouraging and recruiting youth and adults for full-time church work.
- › The next meeting for the SAS circuit visitor pilot program is November 18.

Youth Pilot Re-engagement

Several of the participants from the original youth pilot program, where representatives from all 35 districts collaborated to help develop online SAS resources, are continuing to help us with developing new resources and best practices, making SAS more widely known and used throughout the Synod, and identifying circuit/district youth events where SAS can be featured.

- › The SAS team had the opportunity to meet with several students to talk about SAS and listen to their feedback on some SAS resources.
- › The feedback received from the groups of youth was invaluable, and will help the SAS team tailor future resources (videos, social media content, etc.) based on what young people prefer.

September and October SAS KFUEO Coffee Hour Programs

The KFUEO Coffee Hour program is in its third year of featuring SAS every Friday. Go to kfuo.org/tag/set-apart-to-serve to hear the latest SAS programs.

- › **September 6** – Hear Concordia University church work students Hannah Weaver, Jakob Nath and James Page talk about their church work journey and their experience of serving as SAS young adult representatives at this past summer’s Higher Things conferences.
- › **September 13** – Evan Magness, a pre-seminary student at Concordia University Chicago, River Forest, Ill., talks about his journey to becoming a pastor. Evan is joined by his parents, Phillip and Cheryl, who talk about raising their son in the Christian faith and encouraging him on his journey to pastoral ministry.
- › **September 20** – The Rev. Peter Debernly, pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Mastic Beach, N.Y., talks about his journey to pastoral ministry, who influenced him in becoming a pastor, and what gives him joy in his vocation as pastor.
- › **September 27** – The Rev. Dr. Ely Prieto, associate professor of practical theology and director of the Center for Hispanic Studies (CHS) at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (CSL), and his assistant, the Rev. Paul Flo, talk about their own journeys into pastoral and Hispanic ministry, the need that led to the creation of the CHS at CSL, and how students are equipped to serve upon completion of CHS.
- › **October 4** – The Rev. Christopher Sommer, head of campus wellness at Lutheran High School South in St. Louis (LHSS), and LHSS Kaleo Theology Academy students Ellie and Kevin talk about how the Kaleo Theology Academy forms students for future church work. Ellie and Kevin talk about why they enrolled in the Theology Academy, what they are learning through this special study and their plans after high school.

September and October SAS Speaking Engagements

Building awareness of the resources and strategies of SAS is vital to forming and recruiting church workers. One way of raising this awareness is by SAS leaders speaking at events throughout the Synod. We pray that our message gets to every LCMS congregation, school, pastor, church worker, layperson, parent and district. Speaking engagements in September and October included:

- › The LCMS Council of Presidents in St. Louis
- › ALSS Fall Heartland Conference at Concordia University Wisconsin, Mequon, Wis.
- › LCMS Rocky Mountain District All Workers Conference
- › LCMS Minnesota North and Minnesota South District Educators Conferences
- › Black Clergy Caucus Fall Conference at Grace Celebration Lutheran Church in Cordova, Tenn.

Several more speaking engagements are scheduled for 2025, including SAS presentations at these district conventions:

- › LCMS Southern Illinois District – February 21
- › LCMS Montana District – June 10–11
- › LCMS Oklahoma District – June 13

Advisory Council

The SAS advisory council represents a cross-section of LCMS stakeholders who advise SAS based on their experiences as church workers, educators, and/or influential adults in the lives of potential church worker candidates. They provide SAS with in-depth feedback, perspective and insights gained from working as and/or with church workers. The council includes:

- **Rev. Keith Boheim**, executive director, Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation
- **Dr. Bernard Bull**, president, Concordia University, Nebraska, Seward, Neb.
- **Robert Finch**, pre-seminary student at Concordia University, St. Paul, Minn.
- **Dr. Alan Freeman**, director of LCMS School Ministry
- **Rev. Jesse Kueker**, admissions officer, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis
- **David Kuschel**, assistant to the president, Concordia Plans
- **Marli Ockander**, teacher, Sioux Falls Lutheran School, Sioux Falls, S.D.
- **Erica Sorensen**, executive director, Higher Things
- **Rev. Daniel Weber**, pastor, St. Luke's Lutheran Church, Federal Way, Wash.
- **Rev. Dr. Kevin Wilson**, president, LCMS Ohio District
- **Rev. Matthew Wietfeldt**, AVP of Admission and director of Christ Academy, Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne
- **Kaye Wolff**, long-time leader in the LCMS and LWML, Southfield, Mich.

The Advisory Council recently met on October 2. During this meeting we discussed two resources: “Engaging Laity” for pastors and “How to Engage with Youth” for parents. The council shared valuable insights concerning these resources, the culture and differences in young adults from previous generations, and health of the church worker. This information will help shape these resources and the ongoing work of SAS. The next meeting will be scheduled for spring 2025.

Church Worker Appreciation Month

Worker wellness is a significant factor concerning church work recruitment. SAS is collaborating with the LCMS Church Worker Wellness alliance to show appreciation for our LCMS ordained and commissioned church workers. The alliance, led by the Office of National Mission, includes SAS, the LCMS Council of Presidents and Concordia Plan Services.

In 2024–2025, SAS encourages our congregations and schools to recognize the many ordained and commissioned workers who serve the church as we give thanks for them and the indispensable and sacrificial work that they do:

- › **Oct. 13** — Pastor Appreciation
- › **Oct. 25** — Deaconess, Director of Family Life Ministries, Director of Christian Outreach and Director of Church Ministries Appreciation
- › **April 28** — Director of Parish Music Appreciation
- › **May 5–9** — Teacher Appreciation
- › **June 26** — Director of Christian Education Appreciation

For resources to help show our gratitude and support for our church workers, go to resources.lcms.org/general/ways-to-show-your-gratitude-and-support-for-church-workers/.

New! SAS Newsletter for District Education Executives

District education executives play a significant role in interacting with our Lutheran schools and congregations. Starting this month, these education executives will receive a quarterly newsletter that will include:

- › A Scripture verse and accompanying prayer, to keep SAS founded in the Word
- › A church worker spotlight from the popular KFUEO Coffee Hour program
- › Significant statistics gained from ongoing research and surveys
- › A spotlight on one of the many SAS resources

While this newsletter will be sent to district education executives, we encourage them to share this newsletter with colleagues, congregations, schools, church workers and others.

What to Expect in the Next SAS Monthly Report

- › **Second-career journey mapping** with M.Div. students and their wives at both seminaries
- › **Second-career teacher ad campaign** in two LCMS districts

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.



THE
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