



# Routes

TO THE OFFICE OF THE  
Holy Ministry



**SET APART TO SERVE**

LCMS CHURCH WORK RECRUITMENT

# Routes

## TO THE OFFICE OF THE Holy Ministry

**This resource explains** the various routes (paths) available for men who are interested in serving God's church as pastors of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). Each route is tailored to meet the needs of various ministry situations and audiences. As men consider the pastoral ministry, it is important that they understand these routes so that they can discern which route may be best for them in order to best serve the needs of the church. This resource provides an overview of the available formation programs — all of which are grounded in Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.





## Discerning the Route to Pastoral Ministry

In the LCMS, we recognize that God uses various means and people through which He calls men to consider the holy ministry. Whether you are a young man seeking a vocation in pastoral ministry or considering a second career as a pastor later in life, this calling is sacred, honorable and joyful, guided by the Word of Christ and lived out in service to His people. The LCMS offers several routes, each designed for specific situations, to prepare men for pastoral ministry. Each route has unique purposes, strengths and opportunities. As you contemplate the Holy Ministry, talk to your pastor, district president and seminary admissions officer.

**The Office of the Holy Ministry** has been instituted by Christ Himself as a gift to His church (**JOHN 20:19–23; EPH. 4:11–16**). Through the Christian congregation, as the holder of all churchly authority, God calls qualified men to fill this divinely established office and sends them as His ministers to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to administer the Sacraments publicly in the stead of Christ and by His command, with accountability both to God and to the church (*LSB Agenda*, 155).



## Well-Formed Pastors for the Sake of the Gospel

St. Paul states that pastors are stewards of the mysteries of God (1 COR. 4:1). They are charged with the responsibility to preach God's efficacious Word (that is, God's Word accomplishes what it promises to do). Pastors are also charged to rightly administer Christ's Sacraments to God's people for their life and salvation. This is a holy responsibility: God holds pastors accountable to faithfully speak and apply His holy Word (HEB. 13:17).

**To become a pastor in the LCMS**, a man must be certified by one of the two LCMS seminaries, be called by a congregation/entity of the Synod and be ordained as an LCMS pastor. The two LCMS seminaries are:

- **Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (CSL)** | Website: [csl.edu](http://csl.edu) | Admissions Office: [admit@csl.edu](mailto:admit@csl.edu)
- **Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind. (CTSFW)** | Website: [ctsfw.edu](http://ctsfw.edu) | Admissions Office: [admission@ctsfw.edu](mailto:admission@ctsfw.edu)

*“The saying is trustworthy: if anyone aspires to the office of overseer [pastor], he desires a noble task.”*

1 Timothy 3:1

## Routes to the Office of the Holy Ministry in the LCMS

This resource serves to inform God’s people about the various routes to the pastoral ministry in the LCMS. While some of these routes to the pastoral ministry were created for specific situations of particular need, the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) is the Synod’s standard and “most complete means of preparing a man for the general responsibilities of the pastoral office” (2016 Res. 6-03).

In 2023, the Synod in convention passed Resolution 6-03A, which states: “The residential Master of Divinity (M.Div.) route at our Synod seminaries continues to be positioned and understood as the Synod’s strongly preferred route to ordination, supplying Synod congregations with well-formed, highly educated pastors who as members of the Synod (minister of religion—ordained, Bylaw 2.6.1) are prepared to preach, teach, and care for souls over a lifetime of faithful ministry in any and every context into which the Lord calls them into service.”

The M.Div., along with the various routes created for specific situations of particular need, are often categorized in the LCMS as **residential** and **non-residential** routes, respectively. Each route consists of different requirements and outcomes. Upon certification, call and ordination, all routes lead to roster status as Minister of Religion—Ordained in the LCMS.

### Residential Routes

To be enrolled in one of the residential routes means to relocate to one of the two LCMS seminaries (CSL or CTSFW) for in-person, incarnational study and formation. These routes include:

- Master of Divinity (M.Div.) — typically completed in four years;
- Residential Alternate Route (RAR) — typically completed in three years; and
- Specific Ministry Pastor to General Pastor Certificate (GPC) — The GPC can be completed in two years through residential study and is designed only for current SMPs.

Residential, in-person formation is sometimes called “incarnational” (meaning “in the flesh”) formation, because life is *lived together* at the seminary, and formation extends beyond the classroom. In this setting, men are formed to be servants of Christ through:

- Hearing the Word of Christ in daily chapel with fellow seminarians;
- The deep study of Christ’s Word (English, Hebrew, Greek) in the classroom with large faculties representing specialties in various theological disciplines;

- Ongoing conversations and the building of lifelong relationships with students and professors (from all over the world) in the dining hall, recreation, dorm/married housing, informal gatherings and the like; and
- The growing and sharpening of theology and pastoral skills in conversations with professors and students, through field education in a local congregation during the years of on-campus study, through a year-long vicarage (internship) in a congregation, and through practicums.

These elements together form an ingrained, distinctive way of thinking and living — a *habitus* — that lays the groundwork for lifelong pastoral service in Christ’s church (see 2023 Synod convention address, “Our Residential Seminaries: Deep Pastoral Formation and Worldwide Impact,” by the Rev. Dr. Thomas J. Egger).

## Non-Residential Routes

Non-residential routes are mostly online-based learning with limited in-person intensive courses on the seminary campuses. These routes allow the pastoral student to learn within his specific ministry context. These routes include:

- Specific Ministry Pastor to General Pastor Certificate (GPC) (GPC can be completed in four years through non-residential study and is designed only for current SMPs.)
- Center for Hispanic Studies (CHS)
- Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT)
- Cross-cultural Ministry Center (CMC)
- Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP)
- Specific Ministry Pastor Español/English (SMP-EsE)

Non-residential routes exist in the LCMS to accommodate the needs of ministries and congregations in particular situations for men serving in a specific ministry context, within a culture-crossing context, for the planting of a congregation, for specific ethnic ministry, and/or for first-generation ethnic ministry.

Congregations may call a pastor from a non-residential route in situations where there are specific ethnic needs, where they cannot afford a full-time pastor, or where calling a full-time pastor is not possible (e.g., size of congregation, remote setting, language).



## Key Terms to Know

**Field Education:** Students in residential routes are assigned to a fieldwork congregation. Field education gives seminarians experience in congregational life, worship, preaching, education, evangelism, administration, youth work and pastoral care skills through the modeling of the fieldwork pastor. Students learn through observation, service and mentorship under an experienced fieldwork pastor.

**Vicarage:** The LCMS requires a year-long (12 month) vicarage (internship) for all seminary students, regardless of the route. A vicar gains supervised, practical, real-world experience in a parish or related setting. Vicarage helps the seminarian to continue to develop, under supervision, the way of life, attitudes and skills essential to the Lutheran ministry, while also putting those skills into immediate use in service to the church.

**LCMS Roster Status:** An LCMS general pastor is given full rights and privileges to preach, teach, administer the Sacraments and provide pastoral care. He can serve as a sole pastor, serve in any ministry context as he is able, supervise vicars, and is eligible to serve as a convention delegate. A general pastor can hold an elected or appointed office on the district or national level, serve as a circuit visitor, and receive and accept a call to another congregation/context.

A specific ministry pastor (SMP) is not rostered as an LCMS general pastor; he is rostered as a specific ministry pastor (see SMP route overview). Like a general pastor, a specific ministry pastor is also given full rights and privileges to preach, teach, administer the Sacraments and provide pastoral care. However, it is important to note that he is limited to his specific ministry context. This means that he does not have the right or privilege to take a call out of his specific ministry context.

## RESIDENTIAL

### Master of Divinity (M.Div.)

For men preparing to serve in the Office of the Holy Ministry in the LCMS, the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) is the most theologically robust route. The Synod strongly recommends that this route be pursued.

Seminarians study Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions and doctrine, church history and pastoral theology, learning to apply the wisdom of God’s Word to the lives of those under a pastor’s care. Through rigorous study of these disciplines, this route fosters a lifelong ministry and builds confidence in the pastoral office.

| LCMS Seminary Where Offered                 | CSL and CTSFW  |
|---|--|
| <b>Age Requirement</b>                      | No age requirement   |
| <b>Education Pre-requisite</b>              | Bachelor’s degree (ordinarily from an accredited college or university)  |
| <b>Length of Study</b>                      | Four years (including vicarage)  |
| <b>Earned Credit Hours</b>                  | CSL: 98 semester hours; CTSFW: 139 quarter hours   |
| <b>Field Education</b>                      | During first, second and fourth year (fourth year optional at CTSFW)   |
| <b>Vicarage</b>                             | One year full-time prior to the final year of coursework   |
| <b>Seminary Relocation Requirement</b>      | Yes, including family (if applicable)  |
| <b>On-Campus Housing</b>                    | CSL: single and married; CTSFW: single only  |
| <b>Relocation Assistance</b>                | Relocation services are available at both seminaries to assist students in finding housing, preferably at below-market rates |
| <b>Biblical Languages Required</b>          | Hebrew and Greek   |
| <b>Financial Assistance Offered</b>         | Yes, full tuition provided*  |
| <b>Completion of Degree or Certificates</b> | Master’s degree  |
| <b>LCMS Roster Status</b>                   | General Pastor   |
| <b>Continuing Education</b>                 | Encouraged and expected, beginning with PALS†  |

Due to its commitment to residential pastoral formation, fostering a bold biblical confession and a robust, lifelong ministry, the LCMS does not offer an online M.Div. degree.

Earning a Master of Divinity through in-person, residential education and formation is not just academic — it is incarnational, relational and communal. Being physically present on campus allows seminarians to be shaped by daily chapel with the whole seminary community, close mentorship of professors and peers, and life in a community of faith and formation. This immersive environment fosters theological depth, pastoral wisdom, familiarity with the broader life of our church body nationally and internationally, and the relational skills that will prove fruitful for a lifelong, faithful ministry.

\* Full tuition is provided by scholarships, generous donors, and the congregations and districts connected to the student. Speak with an admissions counselor about the assistance the seminaries offer students and their families in relocation, ascertaining affordable housing and with other living costs.

† Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support (PALS) is an LCMS program that encourages and supports pastors and their wives and families as they transition from the seminary through the first three years of his pastoral ministry. PALS groups meet six days per year for worship, studying a topic together, discussing and processing challenges and joys of the ministry, and fellowship.

## RESIDENTIAL

### Residential Alternate Route (RAR)

The residential alternate route closely parallels the M.Div. route. However, this route is for men who have extensive experience in a previous career and in congregational leadership that will allow them to move through the formation process in less time than an M.Div. The residential alternate route provides a comprehensive theological education (with extensive grounding in both theology and practice), and instruction in Greek, one of the original languages of the Holy Scriptures (Hebrew is not required in this route).

This route is often called the “second career” route. The applicant needs:

- At least 10 years of significant experience directly related to Word and Sacrament ministry (elder, lector, evangelism calls, Bible class teacher, etc.) in an LCMS setting.
- A man may also be considered a good candidate for the residential alternate route if he is a graduate of an LCMS college or university, or is on the Synod roster of commissioned ministers, with at least eight years of experience as a commissioned minister.

| LCMS Seminary Where Offered                 | CSL and CTSFW  |
|---|--|
| <b>Age Requirement</b>                      | CSL: Ordinarily at least 35 years of age; CTSFW: 35 years of age   |
| <b>Education Pre-requisite</b>              | Ability to work at master’s level; two years of college minimum; ordinarily possesses a bachelor’s degree                    |
| <b>Length of Study</b>                      | Three years (including vicarage)   |
| <b>Earned Credit Hours</b>                  | CSL: 74 semester credits; CTSFW: 93 quarter hours  |
| <b>Field Education</b>                      | During first and second year   |
| <b>Vicarage (Internship)</b>                | One year full-time after all coursework has been completed (year three)  |
| <b>Seminary Relocation Requirement</b>      | Yes, including family (if applicable)  |
| <b>On-Campus Housing</b>                    | CSL: single and married; CTSFW: single only  |
| <b>Relocation Assistance</b>                | Relocation services are available at both seminaries to assist students in finding housing, preferably at below-market rates |
| <b>Biblical Languages Required</b>          | Greek  |
| <b>Financial Assistance Offered</b>         | Yes, full tuition provided*  |
| <b>Completion of Degree or Certificates</b> | Certificate or Master of Arts degree   |
| <b>LCMS Roster Status</b>                   | General Pastor   |
| <b>Continuing Education</b>                 | Encouraged and expected, beginning with PALS†  |

\* Full tuition is provided by scholarships, generous donors, and the congregations and districts connected to the student. Speak with an admissions counselor about the assistance the seminaries offer students and their families in relocation, ascertaining affordable housing and with other living costs.

†Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support (PALS) is an LCMS program that encourages and supports pastors and their wives and families as they transition from the seminary through the first three years of his pastoral ministry. PALS groups meet six days per year for worship, studying a topic together, discussing and processing challenges and joys of the ministry, and fellowship.

## RESIDENTIAL OR NON-RESIDENTIAL

### Specific Ministry Pastor to General Pastor Certificate (GPC)

Specific ministry pastors who desire to be general pastors in the LCMS are strongly encouraged to pursue a Master of Divinity. However, the GPC is also designed for pastors who have completed the SMP program and want to continue their study to become a general pastor in the LCMS. This track builds upon the academic foundation established through the 16 courses of the SMP program with additional course work, resulting in a program of studies that is equivalent to the RAR certificate. This includes learning Greek for use in New Testament studies. Because students on this track are already ordained, they are not required to complete resident field education or a vicarage.

| LCMS Seminary Where Offered                 | CSL and CTSFW   |
|---|---|
| <b>Age Requirement</b>                      | No age requirement  |
| <b>Education Pre-requisite</b>              | Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) certificate; ordinarily must possess a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university. |
| <b>Length of Study</b>                      | Residential: two years; Non-Residential: four years   |
| <b>Earned Credit Hours</b>                  | 60.5 semester credits   |
| <b>Vicarage (Internship)</b>                | Fulfilled in the SMP  |
| <b>Relocation to Seminary Requirement</b>   | Yes, if residential; No, if non-residential   |
| <b>On-Campus Housing</b>                    | CSL: single and married; CTSFW: single only   |
| <b>Relocation Assistance</b>                | Relocation services are available at both seminaries to assist students in finding housing, preferably at below-market rates      |
| <b>Biblical Languages Required</b>          | Greek   |
| <b>Financial Assistance Offered</b>         | Yes, 50% tuition grant offered. The district, local congregation and student may share other costs.                               |
| <b>Completion of Degree or Certificates</b> | Certificate or Master of Arts degree  |
| <b>LCMS Roster Status</b>                   | General Pastor  |
| <b>Continuing Education</b>                 | Encouraged and expected, beginning with PALS*   |

\*Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support (PALS) is an LCMS program that encourages and supports pastors and their wives and families as they transition from the seminary through the first three years of his pastoral ministry. PALS groups meet six days per year for worship, studying a topic together, discussing and processing challenges and joys of the ministry, and fellowship.

## NON-RESIDENTIAL Center for Hispanic Studies (CHS)

The Center for Hispanic Studies is designed to provide pastoral formation for men in Spanish-speaking communities whose first or primary language is Spanish and who are serving in Hispanic ministry and missions in the U.S.

Candidates for this program are actively involved as a communicant member in an LCMS congregation for at least two years prior to enrollment, are usually already involved in some kind of active ministry of the congregation, and are often involved in church planting. Men completing this certificate program are called where the Spanish language is needed for Hispanic mission and ministry in the U.S.

All programs are available to individuals who are legal residents or have legal authorization to work in the country.

| LCMS Seminary Where Offered                 | CSL only   |
|---|--|
| <b>Age Requirement</b>                      | Ordinarily not less than 30 years of age   |
| <b>Education Pre-requisite</b>              | Ability to work at college level; needs basic proficiency in the content of the Old and New Testament and Christian doctrine |
| <b>Length of Study</b>                      | Four years with concurrent vicarage during studies   |
| <b>Earned Credit Hours</b>                  | 18 courses; 36 semester credits  |
| <b>Vicarage (Internship)</b>                | Concurrent with studies  |
| <b>Seminary Relocation Requirement</b>      | No, courses are online   |
| <b>On-Campus Housing</b>                    | N/A  |
| <b>Biblical Languages Required</b>          | No; Scripture studied in Spanish   |
| <b>Financial Assistance Offered</b>         | One-third of the tuition is provided by CSL. The district, local congregation, and student may share other costs.            |
| <b>Completion of Degree or Certificates</b> | Certificate, with Master of Arts degree option for students who already have a Bachelor of Arts equivalent.                  |
| <b>LCMS Roster Status</b>                   | General Pastor   |
| <b>Continuing Education</b>                 | Encouraged and expected, beginning with PALS*  |

\*Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support (PALS) is an LCMS program that encourages and supports pastors and their wives and families as they transition from the seminary through the first three years of his pastoral ministry. PALS groups meet six days per year for worship, studying a topic together, discussing and processing challenges and joys of the ministry, and fellowship.

## NON-RESIDENTIAL

### Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT)

EIIT is designed to prepare first generation, non-Anglo pastors to serve in culture-specific ministries in communities where cultural and linguistic barriers may make it difficult for pastors to be trained in residential, masters-level, English-speaking seminary settings.

EIIT is a specialized program that leads to ordination for men who want to serve as pastors in immigrant and ethnic minority communities in North America. This program also provides preparation for students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

| LCMS Seminary Where Offered                 | CSL only   |
|---|--|
| <b>Age Requirement</b>                      | Ordinarily not less than 30 years of age   |
| <b>Education Pre-requisite</b>              | Ability to work at college level; needs basic proficiency in the content of the Old and New Testament and Christian doctrine |
| <b>Length of Study</b>                      | Four years with concurrent vicarage during studies   |
| <b>Earned Credit Hours</b>                  | 24 courses   |
| <b>Vicarage (Internship)</b>                | Concurrent with studies  |
| <b>Seminary Relocation Requirement</b>      | No, courses are online   |
| <b>On-Campus Housing</b>                    | N/A  |
| <b>Biblical Languages Required</b>          | N/A  |
| <b>Financial Assistance Offered</b>         | One-third of the tuition is provided by CSL. The district, local congregation, and student may share other costs.            |
| <b>Completion of Degree or Certificates</b> | Certificate  |
| <b>LCMS Roster Status</b>                   | General Pastor in first-generation immigrant ministry  |
| <b>Continuing Education</b>                 | Encouraged and expected, beginning with PALS*  |

\*Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support (PALS) is an LCMS program that encourages and supports pastors and their wives and families as they transition from the seminary through the first three years of his pastoral ministry. PALS groups meet six days per year for worship, studying a topic together, discussing and processing challenges and joys of the ministry, and fellowship.

## NON-RESIDENTIAL

### Cross-cultural Ministry Center (CMC)

The Cross-cultural Ministry Center prepares men for the pastoral ministry in specific ethnic and multicultural contexts. This program offers a comprehensive theological education with an emphasis on cross-cultural mission planting. This joint program of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis and Concordia University Irvine (CUI), Irvine, Calif., is taught at CUI by faculty from both institutions in an online format with three-week in-person summer sessions on the campuses of both schools.

| LCMS Seminary Where Offered          | CSL, in partnership with CUI (program takes place at CUI)   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Age Requirement                      | No age requirement  |
| Education Pre-requisite              | A bachelor's degree (liberal arts preferred; must simultaneously earn M.A. in theology and culture at CUI)                                      |
| Length of Study                      | Four years with concurrent vicarage during studies  |
| Earned Credit Hours                  | 89 semester credits   |
| Vicarage (Internship)                | Concurrent with studies   |
| Seminary Relocation Requirement      | No; a minimum of eight courses residential intensives, remaining courses are synchronous video conferences                                      |
| On-Campus Housing                    | N/A   |
| Biblical Languages Required          | Greek, plus six credits in a modern foreign language. Courses are taught in English.  |
| Financial Assistance Offered         | No scholarships from CSL; CUI provides one-third tuition grant to all students and an additional one-third grant to about half of the students. |
| Completion of Degree or Certificates | Certificate from CSL; Master of Arts degree in Theology and Culture from CUI  |
| LCMS Roster Status                   | General Pastor  |
| Continuing Education                 | Encouraged and expected, beginning with PALS*   |

\*Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support (PALS) is an LCMS program that encourages and supports pastors and their wives and families as they transition from the seminary through the first three years of his pastoral ministry. PALS groups meet six days per year for worship, studying a topic together, discussing and processing challenges and joys of the ministry, and fellowship.

## NON-RESIDENTIAL

### Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP)

The SMP program was established by the LCMS to provide pastoral training in context for a specific situation of particular need. Those contexts typically involve congregations or mission settings that cannot financially support a full-time general pastor.

SMP is not a distance-learning alternative to residential formation. A man does not choose to become a specific ministry pastor on his own. The conversation, invitation, encouragement and support come from the congregation, district or ministry context. Specific ministry pastors are thoughtfully identified and assessed by the congregation in careful consultation with the district president.

Students receive their training in the congregation or ministry context where they will continue to serve following the completion of the program. SMP applicants need to work with seminary admissions teams from the beginning of the process. Doing so will ensure SMP is the right fit for them. Together, they can fully explore and understand the residential routes available. A conversation with admissions and a campus visit are both strongly encouraged.

| LCMS Seminary Where Offered                 | CSL and CTSFW  |
|---|--|
| <b>Age Requirement</b>                      | Better suited for men over the age of 40; also described as “mature in the faith.”   |
| <b>Education Pre-requisite</b>              | Ability to work at a master’s level  |
| <b>Length of Study</b>                      | Four years with concurrent vicarage during studies   |
| <b>Earned Credit Hours</b>                  | CSL: 32 semester credits; CTSFW: 51 quarter credits  |
| <b>Vicarage</b>                             | Concurrent with first two years of study   |
| <b>Seminary Relocation Requirement</b>      | No; the program includes several residential seminars or on-campus intensives.   |
| <b>On-Campus Housing</b>                    | N/A  |
| <b>Biblical Languages Required</b>          | N/A  |
| <b>Financial Assistance Offered</b>         | No; it is suggested that the district, congregation/context and student each contribute one-third of tuition costs.                                  |
| <b>Completion of Degree or Certificates</b> | Certificate (courses can be applied to an M.A. or M.Div. degree)   |
| <b>LCMS Roster Status</b>                   | Specific Ministry Pastor ( <i>see below</i> )  |
| <b>Supervision</b>                          | Upon completion of the program, a specific ministry pastor continues to be supervised throughout his years of ministry by a general ministry pastor. |
| <b>Continuing Education</b>                 | Encouraged and expected, beginning with PALS*  |

An SMP student/vicar is ordained after his second year of study and graduates after his fourth year of study.

**LCMS Roster Status:** A specific ministry pastor (SMP) is not an LCMS general pastor. Specific ministry pastors always serve under a supervising pastor, from the start of their formation in the SMP program throughout the remainder of their ministry as a specific ministry pastor. Specific ministry pastors cannot typically

be called to another congregation (except in rare circumstances). If they are called to another congregation, within the same ministry context, the district president(s) involved must approve it.

A specific ministry pastor is not eligible to

- Serve as a voting delegate to a national convention;
- Hold any elected or appointed office for district or national Synod;
- Supervise vicars; or
- Serve as circuit visitor.

\*Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support (PALS) is an LCMS program that encourages and supports pastors and their wives and families as they transition from the seminary through the first three years of his pastoral ministry. PALS groups meet six days per year for worship, studying a topic together, discussing and processing challenges and joys of the ministry, and fellowship.



## NON-RESIDENTIAL

### Specific Ministry Pastor Español/English (SMP-EsE)

SMP-EsE is a Spanish-language program that follows the basic structure, guidelines and restrictions of the regular SMP program (see previous section), but is focused on preparing pastors of Hispanic/Latino descent for service in a bilingual Español/English context.

The SMP-EsE program is offered only at CTSFW.

## Colloquy

### Colloquy for Pastors in the LCMS

Pastoral Colloquy is the process by which men who meet specific criteria are admitted into the ministerium of the LCMS. A properly qualified man may seek this admission through the colloquy application process, which culminates in an in-person discussion or interview with the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry.

The first step in the colloquy process is requesting an in-person interview with the district president of the LCMS district in which the pastoral candidate holds congregational membership.

To be eligible to apply for colloquy, applicants must meet the criteria for one of the following colloquy categories before proceeding with the application:

- **Category 1:** Active pastors from other Christian church bodies:
  - This is for a man who has completed preparation for the pastoral ministry in a non-LCMS institution and is currently serving in a non-LCMS church body at the time of application.
- **Category 2:** Men who prepared for pastoral ministry but, at the time of application, are not in active service as pastors:
  - This is for a man who has completed preparation for the pastoral ministry in a non-LCMS institution but is NOT currently serving as a pastor in his former non-LCMS church body and is a communicant member of an LCMS congregation.

To learn more, see the Colloquy Policy Manual at [files.lcms.org/file/preview/pastoral-colloquy-policy-manual](https://files.lcms.org/file/preview/pastoral-colloquy-policy-manual).

**PLEASE NOTE:** “The LCMS laymen and commissioned ministers who complete a program of study leading to ordination or its equivalent at a non-LCMS seminary are not eligible for colloquy on that basis” (LCMS Bylaw 3.10.2.4).

## The Blessed Sacrifice of Residential Formation

The Office of the Holy Ministry, instituted by Christ Himself, is a sacred, honorable and joyful vocation.

There can be anxiety at the thought of moving yourself and your family to the seminary. But leaving home is an important aspect of the journey of preparing for the holy ministry. We draw on the example of Matthew who left his tax collector's booth and Peter who left his fishing nets and father to follow Jesus, among others.

In Luke 9:57–62, Jesus calls to a man and says, “Follow me.” But the man said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” Jesus said, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” Another man answered, “I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.” Jesus said, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

Making the move to the seminary is a prayerful decision. If you are married, it is crucial to make this decision with honest and prayerful conversation with your wife, and in many cases, with your children or extended family. Your family should also accompany you to the seminary when you enroll in an M.Div. or RAR program. This is a time of formation not only for the seminarian, but also for his wife and family.

It is important to speak with a seminary admissions counselor who can provide support and guidance to you and your family as you navigate your decision. A campus visit is strongly encouraged so you can meet other families who have successfully transitioned to campus.

Thousands of pastors from past generations made this same decision when the Lord called, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” With prophets, apostles and pastors before us, we answer with Isaiah, “Here I am! Send me” (**ISAIAH 6:8**). And as you go, the Lord promises not to forsake you (**HEB. 13:5**), and He promises to provide for all your needs throughout your life (**PHIL. 4:19**).

*“Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you ... Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; If you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.’”*

**John 20:21–23**

## The World-Class LCMS Seminaries

### Concordia Seminary, St. Louis Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Both LCMS seminaries were recently granted full ten-year reaffirmation of accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) and the Association of Theological Schools (ATS). Our LCMS seminaries are regarded as world-class theological schools.

Only you can make the decision where to attend, and either seminary is an excellent choice. To find out which seminary is right for you, it is strongly recommended that you and your family visit both seminaries to learn more about each campus to make the best decision for you and your family. Contact information for admissions officers at each seminary can be found below.

If you are interested in studying to be a pastor, please visit the seminaries' websites and/or contact the admissions teams:

- Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (CSL) | Website: [csl.edu](http://csl.edu) | Admissions Office: [admit@csl.edu](mailto:admit@csl.edu)
- Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind. (CTSFW) | Website: [ctsfw.edu](http://ctsfw.edu) | Admissions Office: [admission@ctsfw.edu](mailto:admission@ctsfw.edu)

*“And I will give you shepherds [pastors] after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.”*

Jeremiah 3:15





**THIS RESOURCE IS PROVIDED BY**  
***Set Apart to Serve (SAS)***

*Set Apart to Serve (SAS)* is building a culture of church work formation and recruitment in every LCMS family, congregation, school, circuit, district, Concordia university, seminary and entity.

Full-time church work vocations in the LCMS are:

- **Ordained pastors:** The divinely established office for the preaching of the Word, administering Christ's Sacraments, and providing faithful pastoral care to God's people through Word and Sacrament.
- **Commissioned workers:** The offices established in love by the church to support the Office of the Holy Ministry.
  - Lutheran school teachers
  - Deaconesses
  - Directors of Christian education
  - Directors of parish music
  - Directors of Christian outreach
  - Directors of church ministries
  - Directors of family life ministry

## Primary Goals of SAS

- Immediately increase fruitful engagement (1) between youth and influential adults about pursuing full-time church work vocations, and (2) between adults and influential persons about pursuing full-time church work vocations as a second career.
- Significantly increase the number of individuals enrolled in church worker formation and education tracks at our LCMS Concordia universities and seminaries so that LCMS congregations and schools are adequately served with LCMS-certified workers for generations to come.

To learn more about SAS and discover the many church work formation and recruitment resources, go to [lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve](https://lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve).





## Prayer

Dear heavenly Father, You called Isaiah before angels and Your full glory. You called Your apostles from fishing boats and tax tables. You called St. Paul in Your blinding presence. You called thousands of pastors through generations past and present to preach Your Word and administer Your life-giving Sacraments. As I contemplate pursuing the holy ministry, give me wisdom, guidance, patience and trust in You. Give me faith to move forward with good courage, not knowing where this decision will lead me but knowing Your hand is leading me and Your love supporting me. Keep my eyes fixed on the cross of Christ, knowing that in every circumstance and decision in life, You are with me, now and forever. Amen.







THE  
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