



PALS Policy Manual

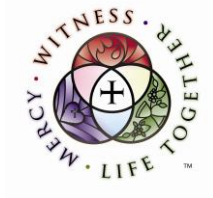
Mission Statements

LCMS Mission Statement

In grateful response to God's grace and empowered by the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacraments, the mission of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is vigorously to make known the love of Christ by Word and deed within our churches, communities, and the world.

Witness, Mercy, Life Together

These phrases illustrate how the church lives and works together to proclaim the Gospel and to provide for our brothers and sisters in Christ in our congregations, communities and throughout the world. In all we do, Christ is at the center, leading us, sustaining us, keeping us focused on our mission. This will never change.



Use of this Manual

This manual contains the policies that govern and coordinate the operation of the Post Seminary Applied Learning and Support (PALS) program.

The policies in this manual are to be understood within the context of other documents:

1. The Handbook of the LCMS.
2. Any relevant policies enacted by the synod Board of Directors.

1. Purposes and Constituencies

1.1 PALS Mission Statement

The goal of the Post Seminary Applied Learning and Support (PALS) initiative is that newly-placed pastors faithfully, competently, and joyfully apply and further develop their knowledge, skills, and person in relation to those they serve in the specific context of their ministries, and that pastors' wives are aided and supported as both make the transition from life in the seminary to life in the parish.



1.2 Learning Context

1. In order to accomplish the mission of the program, ministerial self-understanding and identity is developed and skills of ministry are honed through support and encouragement given and received in a learning community of collegial pastors.
2. Opportunities are provided for the wives of the newly-placed pastors to meet together to explore and discuss the impact this change has had and continues to have on their lives, and for the couples to share family transitional concerns and opportunities.

1.3 Desired Outcomes

1. Pastors and parishes who value continuous learning.
2. Pastors and their wives who make a successful transition from the seminary to parish ministry.
3. Pastors and their wives who do not experience the sense of isolation that often accompanies the transition away from the seminary.
4. Pastors who continue to develop the skills to give positive and healthy leadership to the congregation and whose spiritual, personal and professional formation is enhanced.
5. Congregations who more readily accept and value their new pastors.
6. Congregations and pastors who find the ministry more joyful and successful.
7. More positive congregation-pastor relationships resulting in longer first call ministries.

1.4 Outcomes to be Avoided

1. Perceiving the program as monitoring new pastors.
2. Perceiving the program as a mentoring program.

3. Perceiving the program as a barrier or hurdle to beginning pastoral ministry.
4. Perceiving the program as correcting or completing seminary education.
5. Imposing requirements of time and financial commitment that are not justified by the value of the program.
6. Imposing unreasonable or unbearable burdens upon the partners.
7. Using the program to further a private ideological or political agenda.

2. Governance and Administration

2.1 Participants and roles

This is a program of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

1. Newly-placed pastors meet periodically in small groups and participate in learning activities. Their wives engage in activities as circumstances permit.
2. Congregations of newly-placed pastors provide encouragement for their pastors (and spouses where applicable) to participate in PALS activities and provide resources for their participation.
3. Facilitators develop learning communities of collegial pastors and provide guidance as the new pastors begin the work of pastoral ministry. Facilitators encourage and initiate steps to form support and learning communities for pastors' wives.
4. District officials provide ongoing promotion, input, and support.
5. Seminaries encourage students to participate after placement, and structured evaluations of PALS provide feedback to their curricula.
6. The PALS Steering Committee provides administrative advice to the staff managing the program.
7. LCMS staff revises the PALS program (as needed) and evaluates the PALS outcomes.

2.2 PALS Steering Committee

The PALS Steering Committee is appointed to provide administrative advice and assistance to the PALS staff by:

1. Monitoring the overall status and well-being of the program;
2. Suggesting and providing reactions to possible changes in the program;

3. Suggesting and providing reactions to possible changes to the PALS Policy Manual; and
4. Providing advocacy for the program to various publics.

For facilitating pastors and spouses and for participating pastors and spouses, Steering Committee membership may extend through, but not beyond, one year following active participation in a PALS group.

2.3 Actions reserved to the PALS office

Subject to the oversight of the Chief Mission Officer of the Synod, only the PALS office may:

1. Approve the overall program budget.
2. Approve changes to the policies in this document, except for minor editorial corrections.
3. Approve the PALS groupings and the assignment of facilitators as recommended by staff.
4. Hire staff (staff supervision is through the PALS Executive Director).
5. Review evaluative feedback and stipulate program improvements.

2.4 Policy Based Approvals

The PALS staff will organize and manage this program within the bounds of prudence, ethics, and LCMS doctrine and practice. The PALS staff has standing approval to do the following:

1. Expend budgeted funds.
2. Apply PALS policies and develop operational details, including minor modifications in the program, to facilitate maximum benefit under unusual circumstances.
3. Annually develop a recommended configuration of study groups and facilitators.
4. Hire authors and consultants and supervise the development of quality materials.
5. Operate training programs as needed.
6. Devise and collect evaluation instruments.

2.5 Reports

The PALS staff reports the activity of PALS to the President of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, through the Synod's Chief Mission Officer (CMO). The nature and

content of this reporting shall comply with that which is requested by both the President and the CMO.

3. Annual formation of PALS groups

3.1 General plan

Group meetings will begin by the October following placement. The groups will ordinarily meet six days per year. In many cases, these meetings will be noon to noon with overnight lodging. Due to geographical locations some groups' meetings will be set up differently so as not to impose a burden on participants.

Pastors and their wives stay in the group for three years. Each year the new first year pastors are added to an existing group and those in the program for three years are cycled out.

3.2 January through March

1. PALS staff asks district presidents to recommend names of facilitators to replace those facilitators who are retiring or to fill any potential vacancies.
2. District presidents introduce the program to congregations preparing calls for seminary candidates and secure their participation.

3.3 April through June

1. When the candidates receive their placements, the PALS staff plots locations on a map in order to identify locations for the study clusters and the pastors and wives associated with each in ways that minimize travel.
2. PALS staff identifies appropriate facilitators.
3. Candidates are informed of their assignments to a study cluster in their region and are encouraged to participate.
4. PALS sponsors orientation meetings at the seminaries, at which time the PALS program is presented.
5. Calling congregations are reminded of the PALS project through communication from PALS.

3.4 July through September

1. Assignment of facilitators and newly placed pastors is completed.
2. PALS staff organizes and provides facilitator-training workshops.

3. At new worker orientations and other appropriate events the district presidents encourage participation.
4. Facilitators begin to secure participation commitments.
5. Facilitators plan an event for new pastors and their wives to bring them together for orientation and networking.
6. Facilitators complete logistics and meeting preparations for the initial PALS group meeting, to be held by October or as soon as feasible.
7. Facilitators report to the PALS staff on group membership prior to October 1 of each year or as soon thereafter as possible.
8. CEUs (Continuing Education Units) are awarded to participating pastors for the previous PALS year.

3.5 October through December

1. The first formal group meeting(s) are conducted.

4. Finances

4.1 PALS Responsibility

PALS will pay for the expense of the facilitators'/facilitator wives' training and the stipends for the facilitators/facilitator wives. PALS will also supply PALS-produced materials for the meetings and reimburse, within reason, stipends for guest speakers, babysitters for participant children, and the expenses to purchase materials produced outside of the PALS program. Facilitators contemplating expenses for an upcoming conference which they feel might be excessive should contact the PALS office.

4.2 District Responsibility

Districts will pay an agreed upon amount per PALS registrant per year. The districts will be billed on or around March 15 according to the number of participants registered to date in the current PALS year. After the conclusion of the PALS year (June 30), districts will receive a final billing dated on or around August 15, which will include only those participating pastors who were not included in the March billing. (Spring graduates will be exempted from the August billing immediately following graduation.)

4.3 Congregational Responsibility

Congregations will reimburse the cost of all travel and lodging for the pastors and their wives.

4.4 Pastors' Responsibility

Pastors will pay an annual \$25 registration fee.

5. Partner Participation

5.1 District President Participation

1. District Presidents promote this program to calling congregations and in new worker orientation meetings.
2. District Presidents provide the names of potential facilitators when requested by PALS staff.
3. District Presidents participate in periodic evaluation of the program by providing feedback and suggestions for improvement.
4. The Executive Director of Pastoral Education will annually present to and receive feedback from the Council of Presidents. The PALS staff will also prepare an annual report for each of the district presidents at the end of each PALS year.

5.2 Congregational Participation

1. Participating congregations arrange for time away from parish duties, not to be treated as vacation time and not as a replacement for formal continuing education classes for their pastors and pastors' families.
2. Participating congregations cooperate and participate in the relevant learning exercises.

5.3 Facilitator Participation

1. PALS staff requests from district presidents the names of potential facilitators as new facilitators are needed and makes new facilitator selections from the names supplied by district presidents.
2. Ordinarily, all facilitators will become familiar with the responsibilities and procedures by attending the annual facilitator training conference which is organized and implemented by PALS.
3. Additional facilitators may be trained to replace those who may become unavailable.
4. Supervision and support of facilitators is provided by the PALS staff.
5. In terms of finances, each facilitating pastor is paid \$250 up-front when we receive back a signed contract. In addition, he is paid \$55/pastor (including himself) for each meeting he holds.

6. During the development activity prior to formal startup of a group, each facilitator receives reimbursement of reasonable eligible expenses including recruitment meals, and ordination service travel expenses.
7. Facilitators should be actively serving a parish in a called position. Should a facilitator retire from parish ministry, he will be eligible to renew his position as a facilitator as deemed appropriate by the Executive Director of Pastoral Education and facilitator's district president. Facilitators who do not continue past retirement will be eligible to continue serving the PALS program as a Facilitator Emeritus. The Facilitator Emeritus will help the new facilitator get started and make the transition as smooth as possible. The Facilitator Emeritus will also advocate for the PALS program in the district where he resides.

5.4 Newly-Placed Pastors' Participation

1. Each new pastor participates for three consecutive years.
2. CEU awards of 1.0 unit per session (as indicated in 6.2) are made annually. Each participant receives these CEUs based on records of participation in the year's sessions.
3. Ordinarily each Fall the pastors who entered ministry during the calendar year join a study group within reasonable driving distance and remain with the same group throughout the three year program.
4. Pastors placed in the Summer, Fall, and Winter will be invited to join a nearby group immediately. The PALS Office issues the invitation, copied to the Facilitator and the District President.
5. Under certain conditions, often associated with geographical placement, a group may add persons during the course of the ongoing life of the group. For instance, a group might begin with three members in its first year, and then add two more recently placed pastors the following year, then add three more the next year. The group would thus have eight members in its third year and would be made up of newly placed pastors in the first, second, third year of this first call.
6. In some instances, a member who otherwise would not have been considered eligible to join the program may be included if the PALS staff and the facilitator deem it to be in the best interest of the group to include him. If a facilitator requests adding an individual on this basis it will be his responsibility to contact that pastor's congregation and present the PALS program and congregational responsibilities and expenses if that has not already been done by the District President.
7. During the initial two years of the program, pastors who received their initial placement within the previous two years may be invited by PALS to join a group of newly-placed pastors.

8. Participants who move to another region of the country may be added to a local PALS group, upon recommendation of the local facilitator.
9. New pastors who do not begin PALS during their first or second year of ministry may join later only upon a positive decision of the PALS group and the approval of the PALS staff.
10. Participants who drop out of the program are eligible to rejoin and participate only during their first three full calendar years of pastoral ministry, and prior approval of the PALS group. Ordinarily, no participants may continue past their third full year of ministry.
11. Facilitators are expected to use professional and pastoral judgment regarding the continued participation of pastors who are disruptive, divisive, or who promote commercial or ideological interests to the detriment of the group. If a facilitator is unable to resolve a situation through private conversation, he and the PALS staff shall plan a course of remediation.

5.5 Wives' Participation

1. A support group concept will be developed for wives during this three-year period.
2. Each facilitator may recruit a wives' facilitator accountable to him.
3. Learning activities and small group meetings are planned for wives locally, under the responsibility of the facilitators. These may or may not be attached to the PALS meetings.
4. Each wives' group facilitator will be paid \$55 per wife in attendance for each wives' event. Each wives' facilitator shall also count as a participant for purposes of remuneration.
5. Reimbursement for babysitting will be provided (ordinarily up to \$80) for the period of time during which a formal discussion topic is held (up to four hours per meeting).

6. PALS Activities

6.1 Required Activities

Each pastors' group session must include the following activities for a total of about 10 hours during a typical noon-to-noon meeting:

1. worship, biblical study, and devotions
2. sharing about personal and professional life
3. sharing about pastoral practice issues (casuistry)
4. topical study
5. meals together
6. free time for fellowship

6.1a Wives' Group Activities

Each wives' group session must include the following activities to qualify as a PALS group meeting. These activities could be done either with their pastor husbands or separately.

1. Time for spiritual enrichment and growth (worship, biblical study, and/or devotions)
2. Casuistry/sharing of life in the parish
3. Topical study
4. Meals together
5. Free time for fellowship

6.2 CEU Activities

When the required activities (listed above) are conducted in a manner that approximates the suggested schedule (below), 1.0 CEU is offered per session. Wives who serve the synod as commissioned workers may pursue CEUs for themselves when appropriate through their individual CEU granting authorities.

6.3 Recommended Schedule

A suggested schedule for a 24-hour group session

Noon	lunch
1:00 p.m.	worship and Bible study (usually led by participant)
2:30 p.m.	break
3:00 p.m.	personal sharing ("how's it going" to build group)
4:00 p.m.	pastoral practice (sharing pastoral activity of participants)
5:30 p.m.	prayer
6:00 p.m.	dinner
7:30 p.m.	pastoral practice and fellowship
9:00 p.m.	Evening Prayer
8:00 a.m.	breakfast
8:30 a.m.	Morning Prayer
9:00 a.m.	topic
10:30 a.m.	break
10:45 a.m.	topic continued; prep for upcoming lesson topic
11:45 a.m.	closing devotion
noon	lunch and leave

6.4 Topic study

1. Each year of study includes six modules of instruction/reflection.

2. There are three main categories of modules: Preaching/Teaching, Pastoral Care, and Administration/Leadership. Groups should choose at least one topic from each of these categories each year.
3. There are two course offerings intended to be done early in the first year of participation as they focus specifically on the transition from seminary to parish. These are “Transition from Seminary to Parish” and “Getting to Know Your New Congregation”.
4. The PALS group meets the equivalent of six full days each year to discuss the study materials and any exercises that they completed in advance of the meeting, and to reflect upon their current pastoral practice. The scheduling of the six meeting days is to be arranged by the facilitator.
5. Collateral learning activities, such as observation and reporting support the modules and the general program goals. Those contemplating inviting an outside speaker to present to the group should contact the PALS office for prior approval.

6.5 Module Production

1. Each module is assigned to a content expert.
2. The author of each topic shall be active in that field.
3. The modules employ various media to support various needs and objectives, including books, workbooks, DVDs, and flash drives.
4. Each module is supported by a printed study guide for each participant.

7. Assessment Procedures

The purpose of assessment procedures is to improve the attainment of PALS objectives by improving the services provided to pastors, congregations, and districts.

7.1 Meeting evaluations

At the conclusion of each meeting the newly-placed pastors and wives shall complete a brief evaluation of the meeting. The reports shall be sent to the PALS staff.

7.2 Annual assessment activities

1. Regarding Administrative Services:
 - Policies (policy statements)
 - Processes (logistics).
2. Regarding Personal Growth Services:

- Instructional Topics (topic content and lesson design)
 - Instructional Support (leadership of facilitators, quality of materials, etc.).
3. Procedure for the assessments:
 - Annually a survey of services shall be made by the participating pastors and wives and by the facilitators to PALS staff.
 - The PALS staff shall prepare a summary evaluation for the Steering Committee and other interested parties per the PALS Annual Report and inform the seminaries of any information particularly pertinent to them.
 4. PALS assures that needed programmatic improvements are implemented.

7.3 Assessment of the Newly-Placed Pastors

1. No assessment of a participating pastor or their spouse is made by the PALS program.
2. Because the relationship of the participants to their facilitator is collegial and pastoral, there is no formal report generated. Facilitators use their pastoral and professional judgment regarding any needed conferences or interventions.

7.4 Seminary feedback

1. The PALS office annually transmits to the two seminaries the pastors' observations about seminary training and updates the seminary faculties concerning PALS changes.
2. The seminary faculties also will share feedback concerning their perspectives and observations regarding the PALS program.

Questions or Comments: PALS@lcms.org

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5/28/2019