

SET APART TO SERVE

LCMS CHURCH WORK RECRUITMENT



Report to the Synod President

and over 600 significant collaborators and stakeholders

The Office of LCMS Pastoral Education – Rev. Dr. James A. Baneck

June/July 2024

Key points for this month:

1. Building a Culture
2. *SAS* and Mission Advancement
3. A Summer of Connecting with Youth
4. Several *SAS* Pilot Projects
5. Ongoing Research
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Building a Culture

Since at least 1920 (when Synod began holding convention proceedings in English), the LCMS has built a culture of forming and recruiting church workers in our LCMS congregations and schools. The topic of formation and encouraging people to pursue church work vocations shows up in practically every convention held in the last century.

Since the 67th Regular Convention of the LCMS in 2019, the focus of *Set Apart to Serve (SAS)* has been to:

- Encourage **primary influencers** to form, identify and encourage youth to consider full-time church work. These primary influencers are pastors, teachers, commissioned church workers, parents and laity.
- Encourage **district presidents** to establish a district church worker recruitment committee to provide resources and encouragement to church workers, congregations and schools to intentionally identify and recruit boys and girls for full-time church work.
- Encourage **circuit visitors** to help church workers, congregations and schools to intentionally recruit boys and girls for full-time church work.
- Encourage **seminaries** and **Concordia universities** to have an aggressive church work recruitment plan and to execute it throughout the Synod.
- Encourage **Synod** (everyone involved in the LCMS) to provide human and financial resources to produce recruitment strategies, resources and expertise to church workers, congregations and schools.

Several efforts for Synodwide church work recruitment were begun during the last century. Building on the work of previous saints, *Set Apart to Serve (SAS)* is now poised, with the collaboration of every major

entity in Synod, to aggressively lead this charge to extend for generations to come. **Everyone** has a role to play, and **no one** can sit out.

SAS is preparing a white paper that chronicles the church work recruitment effort in Synod throughout the last century and casts a vision for years to come. “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Matt. 9:37–38).

SAS and Mission Advancement

SAS is no small endeavor and requires funding to secure manpower, resources, marketing and communications expertise, collaboration, research, travel and more. In its initial stages, *SAS* was generously funded by the Schwan Foundation and the LCMS Board of Directors. In recent years, *SAS* has been working with LCMS Mission Advancement to obtain continued funding to sustain this initiative. Donors with a passion for church work recruitment have begun to generously give to *SAS*. Yet, there continues to be a great need for ongoing funding to sustain this initiative’s long-term success toward building a culture of church work formation and recruitment in every LCMS congregation, home, school and entity. If you or someone you know has a passion for church work recruitment, please go to lcms.org/givenow/set-apart-to-serve, call 888-930-4438, or email Mission.Advancement@lcms.org.

A Summer of Connecting with Youth and Those Who Influence Them

The primary focus of *SAS* is to provide resources for pastors, commissioned church workers, parents, laity, youth, and district and circuit personnel to form and recruit LCMS church workers. Much of the initial formation and recruitment happens at the local level of our LCMS congregations, schools and entities. However, as these young people reach young adulthood, major gatherings of youth and those who influence them are critical for reaching youth directly and building a community of like-minded young people.

This summer, *SAS* has connected with:

- **Lutheran Women’s Missionary League’s (LWML) Missouri District:** LWML actively participates in the *SAS* initiative through prayers and financial support, and serve as influential advocates of forming and recruiting youth for full-time church work. *SAS* had great conversations with the LWML Missouri District on June 7–8 as our partnership continues.
- **Higher Things (HT)** at Concordia Wisconsin (June 25–28), University of the Ozarks in Arkansas (July 16–19), and Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Oregon (July 23–26): This year, we worked with HT to enlist the services of *SAS* Youth Adult Representatives. These representatives are Concordia university students currently in a church work program. They led breakout sessions, interacted with youth throughout the conference and had great conversations with youth about full-time church work at the *SAS* display table.
- **Youth National and YouthLead** (July 21–24), and preparations for the 2025 Youth Gathering: *SAS* presented at a breakout session with the youth attending YouthLead, as well as at an all-participant plenary. One participant shared, “I heard about *SAS*, but was a little skeptical. Now that I know more about it, I think it’s great. We all have to get involved!”

Several SAS Pilot Programs

Pilot programs help *SAS* test and refine its messages, strategies and resources. There are several pilot programs currently in progress.

- **Circuit Visitors Pilot Program:** This program is developing messaging and resources for circuit visitors to use as they share *SAS* with circuit pastors, church workers, congregations and schools. Participating districts include the LCMS English District, the LCMS Florida-Georgia District, the

LCMS Indiana District, the LCMS Minnesota North District, the LCMS Ohio District and the Pacific Southwest District. The next meeting is August 5.

- **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 the development of new resources, best practices, making *SAS* more widely known and used throughout the Synod, and identifying circuit/district youth events where *SAS* can be featured. The next meeting is August 5.
- **District Working Groups:** *SAS* is working with the LCMS Mid-South District, the LCMS Minnesota South District, the LCMS Missouri District, the LCMS Montana District, the LCMS Nebraska District and the LCMS Northern Illinois District to develop a template for a district *SAS* committee/focus to share with congregations across all 35 districts.
- **Second-Career Teacher Ads:** *SAS* is partnering with the LCMS Minnesota South District and the LCMS South Wisconsin District to develop and run ads to recruit second-career Lutheran school teachers.

Ongoing Research

SAS is very thankful to everyone who completes our ongoing surveys, which enables *SAS* to continue to build a Synodwide culture of church work formation and recruitment for generations to come. We are currently running three surveys per year in order to continue developing excellent resources and to build out a reporting dashboard. The survey audiences include congregations and youth in the spring and influential adults in the fall.

Results from the congregations survey indicate the following:

- Awareness of *SAS* is growing throughout Synod, especially among church workers, but also significantly among lay people.
- Many people feel more prepared to talk to others about church work vocations, and the results show that conversations continue to increase over time.
- Only a third of lay people can recall hearing from their church that they have an important role in encouraging future church workers, and when lay people do not hear this, they are even less likely to talk to others about church work vocations.
- There was a significant number of respondents (particularly from lay adults) saying they do not interact or have close relationships with the young people in their congregations. While they brought this up in the context of not talking about church work, it indicates a broader need for emphasizing inter-generational fellowship within congregations.

SAS collaborates with PALS

Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support (PALS) is a Synodwide program run out of the Office of Pastoral Education under the leadership of the Rev. Jonathan Manor. The program, which has been in operation since 1989, helps pastors and their wives in their transition from seminary through the first three years of the pastor's ministry. PALS groups are facilitated by veteran pastors and their wives who are chosen by the district president. PALS groups meet six days a year for worship, study, casuistry and fellowship. The PALS facilitators met for their annual training conference in St. Louis on June 25–26. I personally updated the facilitators on *SAS*, emphasizing that they were influencers in their own congregation in the formation and recruitment of future church workers. I also encouraged them to be *SAS* advocates with their PALS pastors and wives, encouraging *them* to be influencers in their congregations and schools. *SAS* conversations continued with the facilitators at the evening meal.

SAS on KFUEO Coffee Hour Program

Go to kfuo.org/tag/set-apart-to-serve to hear these great *SAS* programs:

- June 7 – Ross and Jenni George talk about moving to Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., to pursue pastoral ministry as a second career.
- June 14 – Elizabeth Crawford pursues Lutheran teacher education at Concordia University, Nebraska, Seward, Neb.
- June 21 – Erin Rodgers shares her joy of serving as a Lutheran elementary school teacher.
- June 28 – Joe Cox shares his joy of serving as a Lutheran high school teacher.
- July 5 – Anna Bloomfield shares her joy of serving as a Lutheran Visual Arts high school teacher.
- July 12 – Debbie Armbruster, retired Lutheran teacher, shares her joys of building relationships with students, families and colleagues.
- July 19 – Jacob Roggow, director of parish music, shares about his vocation and how he takes care of his mental and physical health as a church worker.

Second-Career Journey Mapping

The goal of the second-career journey mapping sessions is to identify the barriers that someone considering a second career in church work might encounter, and find ways to help them view second-career church work as a real opportunity. Ultimately, these journey maps will help more people pursue a change in vocation and become second-career pastors and Lutheran school teachers. Journey mapping sessions are completed or scheduled.

- Second-career pastoral formation: May 14
- Public-to-private teacher formation | Part 1: July 22
- Public-to-private teacher formation | Part 2: August 6
- Pastoral formation of current second-career seminarians and their wives | Meetings will occur in-person at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis – TBD
- Colloquy process – TBD

When the journey mapping sessions are completed, *SAS* will create messaging and solutions and update existing messaging/materials to outline the misconceptions/misunderstandings and barriers that may prevent a person from starting on a second-career pastoral journey, teach at an LCMS school or go through the colloquy process.

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