

1 **What a Way Case Document**

2 **Thesis:** The LCMS must undertake fervent efforts to identify, inform, and encourage appropriate
3 candidates to serve as ordained and commissioned ministers of religion, and must implement strategies
4 through which ordained and commissioned ministers might be more effectively retained in their service.
5 This is especially true in the non-white ethnic groups whose collective population in the United States is
6 projected to grow dramatically by 2050.

7 **I. The Mission of God**

8 The mission of God begins with a gracious, compassionate God Who desires that none be lost, but that
9 all would come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved (1 Tim. 2:3-4, Ezekiel 18:23; 33:11). God’s
10 unmerited love has always moved Him to take the initiative with fallen humanity, culminating in the
11 sending of His Son, Jesus Christ, Who came to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10). In
12 Christ, God was finding and bringing back (reconciling) to Himself a lost world (2 Cor. 5:18-19).

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14 God’s loving initiative operates on a personal level, as the Holy Spirit works through the means of grace
15 and “calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth.”ⁱ This finding of sheep
16 that were lost is the cause for much rejoicing in heaven (Luke 15:10).

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18 Once found, it is the desire of God that His sheep be fed (John 21:17). He desires that His followers crave
19 and be fed the pure spiritual milk so that they may grow up in their salvation (I Peter 2:1-3).

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21 Focusing God’s efforts within The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) to seek, save, and feed, the
22 following sections outline the projected need and the projected supply of both ordained and
23 commissioned ministers of religion. It was constructed by an ad hoc Church Worker Data Gathering
24 Committee (CWDGC). What follows is the CWDGC’s attempt to provide a short, concise, easily-
25 understood statement of the future need and supply of church workers, utilizing the best available data.
26 In so doing, the CWDGC does not mean to imply that only rostered church workers are involved in God’s
27 work of seeking, saving, and feeding. Indeed, all of God’s people are blessed with gifts to be used in His
28 service (Rom. 12:1-3).

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30 **II. Ministers of Religion Ordained**

31 a. Projected need

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33 Recent actuarial data indicate that 300-350 seminary graduates would be needed annually in order to
34 replace the number of pastors who are leaving the clergy roster annually due to retirement, death, or
35 other personal reasons.ⁱⁱ Merely maintaining the status quo does not describe a church that desires to
36 grow in its mission outreach to those who are lost and in its feeding of increasing numbers of those who
37 are incorporated into God’s flock. Such a church desires to do much more than merely maintain the
38 status quo. Even those congregations categorized as “non-calling vacancies” will continue to need
39 pastors who can provide Word and sacrament ministry, perhaps in a worker-priest format.

40
41 b. Projected supply

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43 Recent graduating classes of pastors have been smaller in number. Down from approximately 210 in
44 2004-05, projections for 2010 are approximately 180ⁱⁱⁱ, merely half of the 300-350 graduates needed to
45 replace those who leave the clergy roster on an annual basis.

1
2 Many signs point to a greatly diminished supply of pastors in the future. The number of pre-seminary
3 students enrolled in the Concordia University System (CUS) of colleges and universities has declined
4 dramatically in recent years. In 2009, only 245 students were classified as “pre-seminary” versus 426 in
5 2005.^{iv} In recent years, students who are graduates of pre-seminary programs at the CUS schools have
6 comprised more than 50% of the students enrolled in residential seminary programs forming men for
7 pastoral ministry,^v painting an ominous picture for the future enrollment levels of the residential
8 pastoral formation programs at the two LCMS seminaries. While new programs, such as the Specific
9 Ministry Pastor program will provide additional pastors, current projections are for approximately 50
10 graduates each year, all of whom will need supervision by a general pastor.

11
12 Looking back further, the population of high school aged students in the LCMS has declined to an
13 estimate of 87,817 in 2008 from 109,450 in 2003.^{vi} Still further down in the supply chain of potential
14 pastors, one finds a similar decline in the number of elementary school aged children, which number
15 356,551 in 2008, versus 444,498 in 2003.^{vii} Thus, all measures point to a diminished pool of students in
16 the LCMS from which God could summon future pastors.

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18 It stands to reason that each pastor who is retained in his service is one less pastor who needs to be
19 replaced. Better and more effective means to retain pastors on the LCMS clergy roster are worthy of our
20 Synod’s best efforts. While some loss in numbers each year cannot be avoided, it would seem that the
21 average number of more than 100 pastors who leave the clergy roster each year for reasons other than
22 death or retirement could be reduced by more effective efforts to retain active clergy.

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25 **III. Ministers of Religion Commissioned**

26 a. Projected need

27 While the economic downturn of 2008-2010 has produced serious challenges for many churches and
28 schools seeking to support commissioned ministers of religion, a long-term view is needed. If the LCMS
29 is to be actively about the work of seeking the lost and feeding the Lord’s flock, it will involve increasing
30 numbers of ministers of religion commissioned.

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32 In terms of those already serving as ministers of religion-commissioned, the challenge of merely
33 replacing, not increasing, the number of current workers appears daunting. The current force of
34 commissioned ministers, numbering 7,941 is projected to shrink to approximately 6,461 by 2019.^{viii} In
35 addition, of the 7,941 ministers of religion-commissioned serving at this time, 3,543 are 50 years old or
36 older.^{ix} They will retire during the next two decades and will need to be replaced just in order to
37 maintain current service levels. Of the more than 18,000 teachers active in LCMS schools (pre-school
38 through high school), approximately 6,900 are LCMS-rostered teachers. The concern for providing a
39 future supply of teachers should not only include the 6,900 rostered teachers, but should include the
40 entire group of 18,000 currently serving.

41
42 b. Projected supply

43 The same shrinking pool of elementary and high school aged children in the LCMS noted above as having
44 a potentially profound impact on the number of candidates for ordained ministry in the future, will have
45 the same effect on the potential pool of commissioned ministers available for service in the future. In a
46 manner similar to the decline in the number of pre-seminary students enrolled in the CUS schools, the

1 number of CUS students enrolled in programs leading to service in all church work vocations (ordained
2 and commissioned) has declined steadily to a total of 1,900 in 2009, down from 2,613 in 2005.^x

3 4 **IV. Conclusion (recommendations)**

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6 All of the data describe the same scenario: The number of LCMS ministers of religion ordained and
7 commissioned will be dramatically less in the decades to come if current trends continue and no
8 intervening action is taken.

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10 It should also be noted that these data merely speak about maintaining current levels and avenues of
11 service by ministers of religion ordained and commissioned. They do not describe a church that is
12 increasing in its outreach efforts, requiring significantly more ministers of religion ordained and
13 commissioned in order to seek the lost and lead the sheep of God's flock to growth and maturity in the
14 faith.

15
16 The data also fail to recognize the changing nature of the population in the United States, projected to
17 be comprised of no majority group by 2050. The following paragraph summarizes the dramatic
18 population changes projected to take place in the United States by 2050:

19 By 2050 Hispanics, African Americans, Asian/Pacific Islanders, and American Indian/Alaska
20 Natives, now roughly one-third of the U.S. population, will account for 54 percent of the
21 population (U.S. Census Bureau 2008). The non-Hispanic, single-race white population is
22 expected to drop from 66 percent of the total population in 2008 to 46 percent in 2050. In the
23 meantime, the Hispanic population is anticipated to nearly triple, from 46.7 million to 132.8
24 million (15 percent to 30 percent) during the 2008-2050 period. In 2050 it is projected that one-
25 third of U.S. residents will be Hispanic (U.S. Census Bureau 2008).^{xi}

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27 Not only will more workers be needed by 2050 as the population in the United States increases to an
28 estimated 438 million people,^{xii} but exponentially more workers from ethnic groups not currently
29 populated with large numbers in the LCMS will be needed. Many more Hispanics, African Americans,
30 Asian/Pacific Islanders, and American Indian/Alaska Natives will be needed as ordained and
31 commissioned ministers in the LCMS for outreach to these people groups in the United States.

32 All of these data lead to the conclusion that the LCMS must undertake fervent efforts to identify, inform,
33 and encourage appropriate candidates to serve as ordained and commissioned ministers of religion, and
34 must implement strategies through which ordained and commissioned ministers might be more
35 effectively retained in their service. This is especially true in the non-white ethnic groups whose
36 collective population is projected to grow dramatically by 2050.

ⁱ Martin Luther. *Luther's Small Catechism*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986), 15.

ⁱⁱ Towers-Perrin Study commissioned by Concordia Plan Services.

ⁱⁱⁱ Placement data from the LCMS Board for Pastoral Education and the LCMS Board of Assignments.

^{iv} LCMS Board for University Education reports.

^v *LCMS Board for Pastoral Education Entering Class Profile, 2005-2009*.

^{vi} LCMS Research Services. LCMS International Center. St. Louis, MO.

^{vii} Ibid.

^{viii} Using the number of active ministers of religion-commissioned reported by LCMS Rosters and Statistics (7,941) and the percentage of decline (ca. 18.66%) projected by Concordia Plan Services.

^{ix} Using the number of active ministers of religion-commissioned reported by LCMS Rosters and Statistics (7,941) and the percentage of those calculated to be 50 years-old or older (ca. 45%) by Concordia Plan Services.

^x LCMS Board for University Education reports.

^{xi} Grant Makers in Health, "We the People: Key Demographic Trends in the United States." March 2009. [online] http://www.gih.org/usr_doc/2009_Annual_Meeting_We_the_People_Key_Demographic_Trends_in_the_US.pdf (accessed 01-26-2010). A March 11, 2010 article in *USA Today* adds: "...there are now more Hispanic women of prime childbearing age who tend to have more children than women of other races. More white women are waiting until they are older to have children, but it is not yet known whether that will have a noticeable effect on the current trend of increasing minority newborns....Whites currently make up two-thirds of the total U.S. population, and recent census estimates suggest the number of minorities may not overtake the number of whites until 2050. Right now, roughly 1 in 10 of the nation's 3,142 counties already have minority populations greater than 50%. But 1 in 4 communities have more minority children than white children or are nearing that point, according to the study, which Johnson co-published. That is because Hispanic women on average have three children, while other women on average have two. The numbers are 2.99 children for Hispanics, 1.87 for whites, 2.13 for blacks and 2.04 for Asians in the U.S. And the number of white women of prime childbearing age is on the decline, dropping 19% from 1990. The 2008 census estimates used local records of births and deaths, tax records of people moving within the U.S., and census statistics on immigrants. The figures for "white" refer to those whites who are not of Hispanic ethnicity. Broken down by race, about 52% of babies born in 2008 were white. That's compared to about 25% who were Hispanic, 15% black and 4% Asian. Another 4% were identified by their parents as multiracial" [online] http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/demographics/2010-03-10-minority-births_N.htm?csp=34&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+usatoday-NewsTopStories+%28News+-+Top+Stories%29&utm_content=Google+Reader (accessed 03-11-2010).

^{xii} Ibid.