

**Report of the SMP Committee  
to  
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod  
October 2009**

**Introduction**

The 2007 Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) passed Resolution 5-01B, “To Establish Specific Ministry Pastor Program,” by a vote of 908 in favor to 287 opposed (76% in favor). The resolution stipulated: “That the Specific Ministry Pastor [SMP] Program be adopted in principle and the seminaries, Board for Pastoral Education, and Council of Presidents be authorized to implement It.” The Convention adopted the SMP program in principle because the specifics of the program, including admission policies and procedures, courses, and many other details were non-existent at the time the Convention met. These items would be developed during the months following the Convention with a goal of having the first SMP students enrolled in the fall of 2008.

Perhaps in part due to the absence of the items noted above at the time the resolution was considered, Res. 5-01B also contained a reporting mandate: “That the Specific Ministry Pastor Committee submit a progress report to the Synod at least nine months prior to the 2010 convention.” This mandate was added to the original resolution through an amendment offered from the floor of the Convention. It is in compliance with this reporting mandate, contained in Res. 5-01B, that the SMP Committee is pleased to provide this report to the Synod.

**SMP Committee Meetings**

Following the 2007 LCMS Convention, the SMP Committee met five times : September 12 and December 12 of 2007, February 15, 2008, and February 20 and September 18-19 of 2009. The Committee is comprised of the following members:

**SMP Committee in September 2007:**

- 1) Dr. L. Dean Hempelmann, LCMS Board for Pastoral Education (chair)
- 2) Dr. Andrew Bartelt, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis
- 3) Dr. Lawrence Rast, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne
- 4) Dr. Douglas Rutt, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne
- 5) Dr. David Wollenburg, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis
- 6) Dr. Robert Newton, President, California-Nevada-Hawaii District
- 7) Dr. Warren Schumacher, President, Northwest District
- 8) Dr. Gerhard Michael, President, Florida-Georgia District
- 9) Dr. Samuel Nafzger, LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations
- 10) Rev. Roosevelt Gray, Mission Director, Urban/Cross Cultural and Campus Ministries, Michigan District
- 11) Rev. John Messmann, Pastor, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Fort Worth, TX

### **SMP Committee in September 2009:**

- 1) Dr. Glen Thomas, LCMS Board for Pastoral Education, chair, replaced Dr. L. Dean Hempelmann in November 2007.
- 2) Dr. Andrew Bartelt, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis
- 3) Rev. Anthony Cook, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, added September 2009
- 4) Dr. Lawrence Rast, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne
- 5) Dr. Douglas Rutt, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne
- 6) Dr. David Wollenburg, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis
- 7) Dr. Robert Newton, President, California-Nevada-Hawaii District
- 8) Rev. David Maier, President, Michigan District, replaced Dr. Warren Schumacher in September 2009.
- 9) Rev. Daniel Gilbert, president, Northern Illinois District, replaced Dr. Gerhard Michael in September 2009.
- 10) Dr. Samuel Nafzger, LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations
- 11) Rev. Roosevelt Gray, Mission Director, Urban/Cross Cultural and Campus Ministries, Michigan District
- 12) Rev. John Messmann, Pastor, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Fort Worth, TX

Following the adoption of the SMP program in principle at the 2007 LCMS Convention, the SMP Committee's immediate attention was dedicated to developing common policies, procedures, and documents. The documents were crafted by sub-groups of the SMP Committee and agreed-upon by all parties. They include *Admission Criteria*, *Admission Sequence*, *Application for Admission*, *Pastor Supervisor Responsibilities*, *Covenant Agreement*, and *Congregational Instructions for Vicarage Application*. They were posted on the [BPE Web site](#) and upon the Web sites of the two seminaries. The final document developed, the *Application for Admission*, was posted on March 31, 2008.

In terms of developing the courses themselves, there were initial discussions in the SMP Committee exploring the possibility of having identical SMP courses at both seminaries. In the end, it was determined that while both seminaries would operate with total transparency in course development, even allowing one another to access electronic course development files on one another's servers, creating identical courses jointly would actually be more labor-intensive than each seminary developing its own courses. This, together with the looming time constraints inherent in wanting to have the first cohorts of students enrolled in fall quarter, 2008, led to each seminary developing its own courses, but doing so in what might be called a loose collaboration with one another.

In the months during which meetings of the SMP Committee were not taking place, the SMP Working Groups from the two seminaries were engaged in monthly teleconferences convened by the SMP Committee chairman. Many issues, both theoretical and practical, were discussed during these teleconferences. These teleconferences also served to keep lines of communication between the two seminaries open during critical times of SMP program development.

## **Curricula Developed**

As noted above, each seminary developed its own courses for the SMP program. Yet, these courses were designed to facilitate the development of previously-defined educational outcomes in SMP students. The outcomes were developed on both seminary campuses in consultation and collaboration with the church at large. Three “Listening Posts” (LPs) were held on the Concordia Seminary, St. Louis campus, the third one also involving representatives from Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. These LPs convened parish pastors and church leaders to discuss the desired outcomes they felt most appropriate to be encouraged in seminary formation. Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, also utilized a meeting with LCMS district presidents in order to discuss desired outcomes in seminary graduates. Both seminaries have observed that the process of developing SMP educational outcomes has benefited residential education in causing similar insightful thinking to inform the outcomes of ministerial formation in general on the seminary campuses, whether distance-education or residential in nature.

### **SMP Curricula:**

#### **Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne**

##### **Primary Assumptions:**

1. SMP consists of two phases, two years occurring before ordination and two years after ordination.
2. The courses are structured to transfer into our M.Div program if the student should desire to do so
3. Courses are ten weeks long with a two week break in between.
4. Four course sessions will be held per year of study, with one course being a residential intensive. The first residential seminar will be an extended seminar lasting two weeks or seven full days at the CTS campus.
5. The focus of the program is Christological, pastoral, and missional.
6. The student will emerge with a sensitivity to the cultural context in which they minister.
7. The program will at all points immerse the students in the world of Scripture, including both isagogical material but emphasizing the text itself.
8. The curriculum is integrated, each course being designed by a cross-departmental team of faculty members
9. There will be sufficient doctrinal input by the end of course #8 so that the student will be able to take his ordination vows in clear conscience.

##### **Observations about the Curriculum**

1. The curriculum includes five Biblical courses, grounding the student in the Biblical narrative, especially the life of Christ:
  - a. Two courses in the Gospels, focusing on life in Christ

- b. Two courses in the Old Testament, focusing on Christology in the OT and its missiological implications
  - c. One course in Paul's epistles, focusing on Paul's Christology and Missiology
- 2. The curriculum includes five systematic courses:
  - a. Two courses in Lutheran Confessions, focusing on the Lutheran dogmatic tradition
  - b. A course on Baptism and another on the Lord's Supper, focusing on how theology and missiology are realized in the pastoral acts
  - c. A course on the Holy Trinity, focusing on Christ, sent by the Father, who justifies the sinner and who is incorporated into the body of Christ by the Spirit for mission
- 3. The curriculum includes five pastoral courses:
  - a. Three courses that involve the student in the pastoral acts of leading worship, preaching, and teaching
  - b. Two courses that focus on the integration of pastoral theology and missions
- 4. The curriculum includes one historical course on the Church and how its history has shaped the Lutheran Church from a missiological perspective

### **Pre-ordination Courses**

#### **1. Confessing Christ in Today's World**

As the first course in the SMP curriculum, the student learns how the pastor brings people into communion with Jesus Christ. The mission of the Triune God, how God transmitted his mission to humanity in many diverse ways, is a persistent theme in the Old and New Testaments. This course will lay out biblical and theological principles for pursuing the task of bringing the Gospel to the world in varying contexts, especially emerging mission challenges and opportunities for parishes and their pastors.

Exploring the work of pastors through the centuries as stewards of the mysteries of God and physicians of the soul, the student learns how the center of the mission of the Church is Christ with his gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation, and how Christ cares for souls through the pastor in teaching the faith, pastoral counsel, individual confession and absolution, prayer and blessing for the unique circumstances of contemporary Christians.

#### **2. Pastoral and Missional Theology in Luke and Acts**

The Church is founded on Jesus Christ, so the study of the centrality of Jesus Christ in the revelation of God in the Gospel of Luke and the significance of the mission of the apostles in the Book of Acts is a foundational course for the entire theological curriculum of SMP. Significant teachings from Luke-Acts such as the Nature of the Scriptures, Interpretation of the Old Testament, the Identity of Christ, the Kingdom of God, the Trinity and Baptism, the Apostolic Mission and Ministry, the Return of Christ, the Lord's Supper, Jesus' Death as Atonement and the Resurrection will be examined.

This course will closely examine the teaching and preaching of Jesus in the Gospel, the sermons of the apostles in Acts, the sacramental theology in Luke-Acts, and the missional and diakonal ministry of the early Christians. Since Luke is the only Gospel with a companion work describing the life of the Church, themes unique to Luke will be emphasized. A number of pastoral models

from Luke-Acts will be analyzed in view of pastoral care today. Faithful interpretation of the Gospel of Luke for preaching and teaching will be modeled in lectures and mentored in exegetical groups.

**3. The Lutheran Confessions: Introduction and Overview\***

The study of the *Book of Concord* will examine the Augsburg Confession and its Apology, the Small and Large Catechisms, the Smalcald Articles, the Treatise, and the Formula of Concord. Emphasis will be on the basic teachings and issues which define the theology of the Lutheran Church in its historic context and in today's world.

*\*Students will read the entire Book of Concord during the first two years.*

**4. Preaching the Faith**

The identity of the pastor is defined by his proclamation of Word of God, the living voice of Jesus. This course engages the student in the basic principles of sermon construction and writing. Special attention is given to missional sermons from the Gospels in the context of the lectionary and liturgy of the day.

**5. Heaven on Earth: The Worship of Lutherans Today**

The pastor serves his people with the gifts that come from Christ's presence. This course introduces the student to the theology and practice of Lutheran liturgy. This course will acquaint the student with the biblical and confessional foundations of the Lutheran liturgy, the structure and components of the Divine Service and the daily office in Lutheran Service Book, and provide him with opportunity to develop skills as a servant of the liturgy. Time will be spent in helping the student plan creative worship with special attention to the central motifs of the Christian calendar and the Church's hymnody. Attention will be given to the history and theology of the Church year and Christian hymnody from biblical times, as well as the great treasury of contemporary hymnody.

**6. The Books of Moses – The Beginning and the New Beginning**

After an introduction to the first five books of the Old Testament, major portions of Genesis will be studied because of its foundational role in all theology and the mission of the Church. Creation, Marriage, the Fall into Sin, the Promise of Salvation, the Presence of the Son with the Patriarchs, and other biblical themes in Genesis will be examined. Commentaries, sermons, liturgies and hymnody from the history of the Church that deals with Genesis will also be considered.

Portions of Exodus through Deuteronomy will be studied because of their foundational role for the history of Israel and all theology. The Exodus, the Law, the Presence of the Son, the Tabernacle, Worship, Sacrifices, Purity, Forgiveness and other biblical themes in Exodus-Deuteronomy will be examined. Commentaries, sermons, liturgies and hymnody from the history of the Church that addresses Exodus through Deuteronomy will also be considered. Integration of the narratives of Genesis through Deuteronomy and teachings in the missional life of the Church today will be accented.

## **7. Baptism: Life in Christ**

Baptism is the constituting sacrament of the Church's life that joins us to Christ and his endless life as well as to Christians of every time and place. Using the Scriptures, historic baptismal liturgies, sermons and teachings on baptism, this course uses the Church's own ways of speaking and ways of baptismal administration as paradigms for theological thinking and pastoral practice. This course will examine the radical and essential nature and role of baptism in the mission of the Church. The course encourages thoughtful and vigorous Christ-centered missions built on an integrated and lively implementation of thorough teaching of the faith that leads to or flows from Baptism in the Lutheran expression of the catechumenate.

## **8. Teaching the Faith**

The pastor hands down the faith to people of all ages and circumstances through his teaching. This course will examine the biblical and confessional foundations for teaching the faith in the Lutheran congregation and seek to assist students in acquiring skills and developing practices that are consistent with these foundations. Special attention will be given to the content and pattern of teaching reflected in the catechism of Martin Luther.

### **Post-ordination courses**

#### **1. The Holy Trinity: The Mission of God in Today's World**

This course centers in the work of the Holy Trinity in creation, redemption, and sanctification. It will include a study of Creation and anthropology, the nature of theology, the Word of God as a Trinitarian event centering in Christ, the person of Christ as the incarnate God-Man, His offices and states, the salvation accomplished by Him and its distribution to man in justification, His resurrection and His return as foundation for eschatology, the Church as the body of Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit through the ministry of Word and Sacraments. The student will be able to articulate the relationships with the persons of the Trinity, the two natures of Christ, and the Spirit as the Spirit of Christ.

#### **2. The Person of Jesus in John's Gospel**

As a continuation of the focus on the centrality of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ begun in Gospel of Luke and Book of Acts, major portions of the Gospel of John and the First Epistle of John will be studied. Special attention will be given to teaching that is unique to John and from the Synoptic Gospels, such as the Pre-existence and Incarnation of the Son, Christ as the Lamb of God, the Father-Son Relationship, the Divine Name of Jesus, the "I Am" Sayings, the Holy Spirit/Paraclete, the Sacraments and the Office of the Keys. This will serve as the capstone course in the formation of faithful preaching and teaching of the Gospels for the life of the Church.

#### **3. The Lutheran Confessions in Today's World**

Teaching the Lutheran Confessions today requires an emphasis on the rich heritage of mature Lutheran theology in its historical context and its application to our contemporary world. This course will show the connection between the Confessions and catechesis, providing an appreciation of Luther's contribution to the *Book of Concord*. It will also examine a selection of

themes in the Lutheran Confessions such as predestination, Christology, justification by faith, Church and ministry, infant baptism, the Lord's Supper, and Church and state.

**4. The Epistles of Paul – Planting the Gentile Mission**

After an introduction to the life of the Apostle Paul, major portions of the Galatians and Romans will be studied. Important central teachings from Paul's other Epistles will also be examined, such as the Person and Work of Christ, Justification by Faith, the Church, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the End Times, and Pastoral Ministry. The importance of the Apostle Paul's teaching for the life and mission of the Church will be highlighted, especially the issues involved with the planting of the Gentile mission throughout the Roman world.

**5. Ministry and Mission in Today's Pluralistic Context**

This course is designed to help the students understand and address the challenges of ministering in a context of religious and world-view pluralism. It deals with the roots of the current multiplicity of religious views and world religions becoming increasingly predominant in the western world; the implications of ethnic, cultural and linguistic plurality; and the rise of universalism in the post-modern mind. The student will learn ways of presenting and defending the faith "with gentleness and reverence" (1 Peter 3:15).

**6. The Prophets – Christ and His Mission Foretold**

After an introduction to Old Testament prophetic literature, portions of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel will be studied with attention to how these prophets bear witness of the Messiah and His kingdom. The relationship of this prophetic literature to Christ and the Church as expressed in the New Testament will be highlighted. Commentaries, sermons, liturgies and hymnody from the history of the Church that engage these prophets will also be considered. Integration of prophetic literature into the life and mission of the Church today will be accented.

**7. The Lord's Supper: Life in Christ Nourished and Sustained**

As the sacrament through which the life of the Church is sustained, the Lord's Supper centers on Christ's presence among his people with the gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation. Using the Scriptures, liturgies and sermons from the Church's history, this course uses the Church's own ways of speaking and administering the sacrament of the altar as paradigms for theological thinking and pastoral practice.

**8. The Church in Missiological Perspective**

Beginning with a description of the Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, especially from the perspective of trends and challenges for world-wide missions, this course looks for historical connections with contemporary Christianity from the Reformation to the present day. Students will learn about the Reformation origins of major Protestant denominations as well as of modern Roman Catholicism, but also will consider the impact on the mission of the Church from broad historical developments like pietism, liberalism, and ecumenism. Special attention will be paid to the modern missions movement that has seen the planting of Christianity around the globe and what this has meant for the Church in America as well as abroad.

**Pre-ordination residential seminars:**

1. Confessing Christ in Today's World; Bibliography and Technology
2. Heaven on Earth: The Worship of Lutherans Today

**Pre-ordination field seminars (possibly conducted in cooperation with CSL):**

1. Practical seminar related to the ministry and mission of the participants
  2. Practical seminar related to the ministry and mission of the participants
- \*See list of modules for suggestions

**Post-ordination residential seminars:**

1. The Holy Trinity: The Mission of God in Today's World
2. Ministry and Mission in Today's Pluralistic Context

**Post-ordination field seminars (possibly conducted in cooperation with CSL):**

1. Practical seminar related to the ministry and mission of the participants
  2. Practical seminar related to the ministry and mission of the participants
- \*See list of modules for suggestions

**Concordia Seminary, St. Louis**

The SMP program curriculum developed by Concordia Seminary, St. Louis is the result of many hours of consultation with the church at large (the field) and discussions within the faculty. The curriculum development team led by Dr. Charles Arand began by identifying some broad design principles to be followed as each course is written. The faculty also developed a comprehensive listing of 15 desired Pastoral Formation Outcomes which guide the development of each course.

**The Narrative that sets forth the vision:**

The SMP Curriculum (17 courses/four years) begins and ends with courses dealing with the pastoral ministry as a ministry of speaking the Gospel ("Intro to Pastoral Ministry" and "Pastor as Theologian and Leader"). In between these bookends the courses are organized around a narrative that integrates and binds the curriculum together. The pastor speaks the Gospel of Jesus Christ within the context of the grand narrative of God's activity in human history.

**Pre-Ordination.**

Given that a pastor is called by the church (1) to speak the Gospel we have to ask (2) what is the master story of the gospel that the Christian church has proclaimed everywhere and at all times; and (3) what are the key episodes and themes of that story? (4) What distinctions and themes do Lutherans find vital for the telling of Jesus' story to others so that it is in fact the Gospel? (5) Having explored the story, we now explore the questions, "How does the story of the gospel become my story?" and (6) "How do we encounter this story in worship? " (7) With the gospel having become ours, "How do we bring this story to others through preaching?" and, (8) "how do we teach the story of the Gospel to those who have little acquaintance with Christianity?" Finally, (9) how do we confess the Gospel before the world until Christ returns?

*[Certification, Call, and Ordination may now take place in the SMP program.]*

## **Post-Ordination**

Here we return to the master story of the Gospel but consider its instantiation in the particularities of the biblical texts and history. Thus we begin by (10) exploring the role and use of the Scriptures for speaking the Gospel. Then we explore how the Gospel narrative is told and lived out in (11) the Old Testament and (12) the New Testament as well as (13) how the Reformation recovered the Scriptural Gospel for a new generation. Then we turn to the questions about how we include others in that story today through (14) the task of preaching and (15) by means of the church as the means and goal of the *missio dei* within (16) the midst of the world. SMP curriculum concludes where it began, with the (17) pastor as theologian and leader. This course also provides the transition to the second part of the curriculum leading to a Certificate/M.Div.

### **SMP Program Curriculum**

#### **1. Introduction to Pastoral Ministry**

An introduction to the theology and practice of the pastoral ministry as a ministry in which the pastor is called to speak the Gospel. This course will explore issues related to the foundation of the pastoral office, the nature of the pastoral ministry, and the pastor's relationship to the priesthood of the baptized.

#### **2. Story line of the Creedal Story**

In speaking the gospel, the pastor confesses the work of Jesus Christ as central to God's involvement with the world (from creation to consummation). This course will explore how in worship and in the world, the master narrative of the Gospel re-stories our individual and corporate lives and shapes how we live.

#### **3. Highlights of the Creedal Story**

The gospel as summarized in the creed has a number of theological subplots that interlock with one another and whose meanings (doctrines) are indispensable for the master story. This course will explore how the Scriptures teach and how the church confesses the doctrinal truths that form the Creedal Story.

#### **4. Lutheran Insights into the Creedal Story**

The grand narrative of the Gospel has focused thus far upon the presence and work of God within created history. It will now highlight the anthropological dimensions of that story and will explore how the Reformation brought those dimensions out by making distinctions between law and gospel, the two kinds of righteousness, the two kingdoms, etc. in order to confess the Gospel in its day.

#### **5. Incorporation into the Creedal Story**

God's dramatic involvement within the world from creation to consummation centered in Christ also involves us. In a certain sense, the master story of the gospel re-stories our lives by incorporating us into the mission and work of Jesus Christ. This course will explore how God's story of redemption becomes our story through the visible and spoken words of baptism, absolution and the Lord's Supper.

#### **6. Proclaiming the Creedal Story**

People who have become part of God's story of redemption are called upon to tell that story to others as they have opportunity. Pastors are called to proclaim that word publicly on behalf of the congregation. This course will explore how the pastor moves from the study and interpretation of the word of God (1/3) to the construction of sermons and the proclamation of the Gospel (2/3).

#### **7. Teaching the Creedal Story**

Because the story of God's dramatic redemption of the world takes a minute to hear but requires a lifetime to live pastors are called not only to proclaim the gospel but also to lead people into an ever deepening understanding and appreciation of that inexhaustible story. This course will explore the nature and task of teaching the faith from cradle to grave. Special emphasis will be given to the task of catechesis and the teaching of Luther's Catechisms.

#### **8. Re-enacting the Creedal Story**

The story we proclaim and teach becomes "incarnated" through its reenactment in the church year and the liturgy. Together pastor and people re-live the story as God comes to them corporately in worship the means of grace. This course will explore the theology and practice of worship in the context of the local congregation.

#### **9. Confessions as a Roadmap to the Creedal Story**

The task of telling and confessing the dramatic story of God mission within the world continues until Christ returns. The pastor confesses that story against all errors that seek to distort it. This course will explore how the confessions of the church, the roadmap to the heart of Scripture, inform the pastoral task of dealing with errors that distort the master story of the Gospel.

*(This course will be offered during the Fall Quarter of the school year as the students transition to call and ordination. It will be a residential seminar focused on preparation for certification and ordination.)*

#### **10. Biblical Foundations the Creedal Story**

The master story of the Gospel is instantiated within the Biblical accounts and told by them in various ways. As one who proclaims the Gospel, the pastor uses these Biblical accounts as the source and norm for preaching and teaching. This course will explore the nature of the Scriptures, how the canon was collected, and the purpose and use of the Scriptures within the Christian life.

#### **11. The Biblical Story from Creation to Christ**

God's dramatic involvement in the world begins with the mission of God in creation and the commission that He gave to his human creatures to care for it. Because they failed God re-enters his creation to redeem and restore it. This course will explore the theology of the gospel story as told in the Old Testament.

#### **12. The Biblical Story from Christ to the New Creation**

God's mission to save the world culminates in the incarnation, death, and resurrection of his Son. With the creation of the New Israel on Pentecost the church took the story of the Gospel to the far reaches of their world. This course will explore the theology of the New Testament with special emphasis on the themes that emerge as the New Testament writers tell the master story.

#### **13. Proclaiming the Biblical Story**

With a more thorough grounding in the nature of the Scriptures as well as the theology of the Old and New Testaments, the pastor recognizes a number of interpretative questions and challenges to the proclamation of the richness of the biblical Gospel. This course will deal in more depth than course #6 did with the issue of hermeneutics (2/3) as it applies to preaching the text (1/3).

#### **14. The Reformation's Recovery of the Biblical Gospel**

The Reformation was a recovery of the Biblical story that resulted in a concomitant preaching revival. This course will demonstrate how the creedal and biblical narrative was at times hidden or lost in the centuries preceding the Reformation, how it was recovered by Martin Luther and the Reformation, and how it is proclaimed today.

#### **15. Centering the Church in the Promises of the Biblical Story**

Within the grand narrative of the Gospel the church appears as both the means and the goal of the mission of God. It is the means by which the mission of God is furthered in the world today and the goal of the mission of God in the new creation. This course will explore the theology of the church and the priesthood of all believers in the Scriptures and in the Lutheran tradition.

#### **16. Applying the Biblical Story to the Contemporary Culture**

The church has taken the master narrative of the Gospel into other cultures and it has found it necessary to translate that story. In the living out that story it has found ways that are faithful to the Scriptures which take into account the challenges of culture. This course will examine how Americans hear and filter the Biblical Gospel. It will also explore ways in which the church can tell the story in today's cultural context.

#### **17. Pastor as Theologian and Leader of the New Creation**

This initial portion of the curriculum ends where it began—with the pastor who is called to tell the master story of the Gospel. Here we begin to look at how the pastor exercises leadership in the church as a theologian of the church. This course will explore the ongoing challenges of theology within the church today and will introduce the student to the distinctive methodologies of the various theological (exegetic, historic and systematic) disciplines

#### **First-year Enrollment**

The fall of 2008 witnessed the on-campus orientation for the first cohorts of SMP students at both seminaries. Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, began with 29 new SMP students and Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, began with 25 new SMP students. The data below provide more information concerning the first 54 students to begin course work in the SMP program.

#### **SMP Program Data – 2008-09 Academic Year**

##### **Final Report for BPE**

#### **Admission Data:**

<b>Number of Students Applied:</b>	67
<b>Number of Students Admitted:</b>	63

**Number of Students Declined Admission:** 4  
**Number of Students Withdrawn:** 9  
**Number of Students Enrolled:** 54

**Enrolled Student Data:**

**LCMS Districts of Origin (listed in descending order, from most-to-least students enrolled, please indicate the number of students from districts with more than one student enrolled, e.g., Rocky Mountain (3), Southern Illinois (2), etc.):**

District	Students
Michigan	7
Northern Illinois	6
Pacific Southwest	5
Rocky Mountain	5
English	4
Texas	4
Indiana	3
Ohio	3
Southeastern	2
Atlantic	2
Minnesota South	2
Missouri	2
Northwest	2
South Wisconsin	2
North Wisconsin	1
Southern	1
Eastern	1

Florida/Georgia	1
Iowa West	1

**Age:**

	Concordia Seminary	Concordia Theological Seminary
<b>Oldest student's age</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Youngest student's age</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Average Age:</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>48</b>

**Number who are:**

<b>21-30 years-old:</b>	2
<b>31-40 years-old:</b>	14
<b>41-50 years-old:</b>	17
<b>51-60 years-old:</b>	18
<b>Over 60 years-old:</b>	3

**Marital Status:**

<b>Number who are married (never divorced):</b>	43
<b>Number who are divorced/remarried:</b>	9
<b>Number who are divorced/single:</b>	0
<b>Number who are single (never married):</b>	2

**Educational Background:**

**Number who have:**

<b>A terminal degree (e.g., PhD):</b>	3
<b>A masters degree:</b>	13
<b>A baccalaureate degree:</b>	23
<b>An associates degree:</b>	2

Some college credit, but no degree: 8

No college credit: 5

Number who are graduates of a CUS school: 17

Type of specific ministry they wish to serve in (please list the description and the number in each category, e.g., Staff Pastor (4), Church Planter (3), etc.):

Ministry Situation	Number of Students
Staff	28*
Mission	3
Vacancy	3
Lay Minister	2
Specialized	2
Church Planter	2
DCE	1
Prison Ministry	1
Replace Pastor	1
Multi-Site	1

- A number of "staff pastors" are involved in church planting mission development.

Previous/Current Occupation (please list the former and/or current occupations of the students in descending order (greatest-to-least frequency), placing a number behind any occupation that is represented by more than one student (e.g., DCE (4), Teacher (3), etc.). In cases of worker/priests, please list the other occupation in this category):

Occupation	Number of Students
Teacher	5
Church Staff DCE	5
Church Staff Lay Minister	4

Church Staff Director	4
Engineer	3
Information Technology	3
Sales	3
Police Officer	2
Church Staff Executive Director	2
Church Staff Lay Minister	2
Finance	2
Church Staff Division Leader	1
College Staff	1
Counselor	1
Director Special Ed Ministry	1
Divisional VP	1
Lawyer	1
Musician	1
Service Technician	1
Social Security	1
Technician	1
Thrivent	1
Advertising	1
Auditor	1
Church Staff Administrator	1
Church Staff Youth Director	1
Communications Group Manager	1
Missionary	1

Professor	1
Tax Advisor	1

**Number who intend to serve as:**

**Full-time SMPs:** 10 (Concordia Theological Seminary Only)  
**Part-time (worker-priest) SMPs:** 15 (Concordia Theological Seminary Only)

Concordia Seminary was unable to answer Full/Part Time SMP question since it was not asked of the students. Concordia Theological Seminary based its answers on vicarage information submitted.

**First-Year Attrition**

Attrition rates are typically higher in distance-education programs than they are in traditional, residential programs. In September 2009, one year into the program, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, reports that 22 of the first 25 students to enroll in the Fall of 2008 remain enrolled. Two never started course work and one discontinued study because the congregation had promised to pay for the course work, but later could not and eliminated the ministry positive.

In September 2009, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis reports that 23 of its first 29 SMP students remain enrolled. Three withdrew at various points because of changing personal and ministry situations. The other three failed a course due to time requirements. At least one will rejoin this year's cohort to continue his studies.

The combined data indicate that 45 of the first 54 students enrolled remain enrolled, with one of those who discontinued study planning to resume study this fall.

**First-year Evaluation**

With one year of SMP course work completed, the SMP Committee is facilitating a survey of the first SMP students and supervising pastors in order to gain their feedback. This survey was disseminated on September 8, 2009. The survey results from the first-year SMP students and supervising pastors can be viewed in a separate PDF document by clicking on [this link](#).

**ATS Initial Approval for M.Div. Credit**

In February 2009, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis and Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne received preliminary approval from the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) for a comprehensive distance education program that may now offer courses for academic credit, applicable toward the Master of Divinity degree. This will enable students in the new Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program the opportunity to receive such credit, and it also attests to the academic credibility of the educational models that are being used. This approval attests to the excellent reputation both LCMS seminaries have within the ATS-member schools and to the high caliber of their distance education offerings.

**Remaining Issues**

The SMP Committee continues to meet, as do the working groups of both LCMS seminaries to discuss on-going issues which need to be resolved. Some of these issues were anticipated and others have emerged as the program has proceeded. The SMP Committee continues to desire dialogue with the Synod to assure that the SMP program is meeting the needs of the church and doing so in a way that is consistent with the theological understanding of the Body of Christ and the Office of the Holy Ministry. Discussions continue concerning seminars for SMP students, both on-campus and off-campus, the understanding of *specific* as it relates to both the context and the authority of the SMP, the cost of the program, the schedule of course offerings, and issues related to the mobility of SMPs.

## **Conclusion**

As the SMP program has crossed the significant milestone of having its first cohort of students complete the first year of course work, there is much about which The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod can rejoice. A program which was approved only in principle in July 2007, was designed and implemented by September of 2008. As the surveys indicate, those most closely involved with the program have rendered a very positive evaluation of it. The Lord of the Church has blessed the initial design and implementation of the program and it appears to be meeting the needs for which it was created. At the same time, the SMP program will continue to improve with each passing year as additional experience is gained by the seminaries administering the program. In approximately one year, the first SMP students will be ordained into the office of the pastoral ministry. The SMP Committee joins the Synod in praying God's abundant blessings upon these students and those whom they will serve!

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Glen D. Thomas  
Executive Director  
LCMS Board for Pastoral Education  
1333 South Kirkwood Road  
St. Louis, MO 63122-7295  
800-248-1930, ext. 1258  
314-996-1258 (Ph.)  
314-996-1120 (Fax)  
[Glen.Thomas@LCMS.org](mailto:Glen.Thomas@LCMS.org)