



PALS is an acronym for Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support, a collaborative effort of our Synod and Districts that regularly brings together groups of recent graduates of our seminaries throughout the first three years of their ministries. In these meetings, the new pastors worship, study and discuss new ministry experiences in the company of an experienced pastor.

Why Should We Have PALS?

Our Synod is blessed with excellent seminaries where the foundation for pastoral ministry is properly laid. It is there that our pastors became theologians. In the tradition of Luther, however, our Synod also recognizes that learning for a pastor no less than others is a life-long endeavor and that the early years of ministry is a critical time in that learning process.

The PALS initiative supports this learning, facilitating the transition of new pastors and wives from seminary life to parish ministry. PALS offers opportunities to new pastors to apply their seminary education and to hone ministry skills further.

“Perhaps most important, PALS provides a healthy and safe place for pastors and their spouses to seek support and assistance in navigating the sometimes choppy waters of parish life.”

• Rev. Terry Beltz, Facilitating Pastor, 2011

Taking advantage of these opportunities benefits family, parish, district, Synod, and above all, the effective proclamation of the Gospel

What Does PALS Hope to Accomplish?

- To help pastors and wives make a successful transition from seminary life to parish ministry.
- To foster and enhance pastors’ and wives’ personal, spiritual and vocational formation.
- To eliminate the sense of isolation that pastors and wives often experience in the transition from seminary life to parish ministry.



“PALS has allowed me to be open and be myself ... I have appreciated the opportunity to meet with other pastoral families and to refresh myself for the ministry.”

• Pastor’s Wife

How Are Wives Involved?

PALS recognizes the support of the pastor’s wife as vitally important for both the family and the congregation. PALS is often particularly helpful to the wives for whom this transition can be most challenging. Wives are involved in some shared activities with their husbands and, when desired, in separate learning activities as a wives’ group. To accommodate families with young children, babysitting is provided.

How Are PALS Groups Organized?

After a seminary candidate receives his call, he is assigned to a PALS group in the district of his calling congregation. The facilitating pastor for this PALS group then invites the pastor and his wife (if applicable) to participate in this PALS group.

PALS group meetings begin in the fall of the year, meeting the equivalent of six full days each year. While in many cases these meetings run from noon to noon at a mutually convenient location, other arrangements may be made when warranted by other circumstances, such as distance and schedule.

Who Are the Facilitating Pastors?

These experienced pastors, called “Facilitators,” are chosen by the PALS office from a list recommended by the district presidents. Facilitators are generally from the same geographical area as their assigned groups of new pastors.



What Happens at PALS Meetings?

The PALS group meetings have four foci, directed toward the personal, spiritual and vocational development and encouragement of new pastors:

- The **group gathers around the Word** in worship, prayer and study, recognizing that pastors, no less than others, need to be nourished by the same Word that they use to nourish others in their faith.
- Time is allotted at every meeting for each pastor to **reflect** upon his ministry in his parish and to bring forward cases of casuistry. This is an opportunity to support, encourage and learn from one another. In these discussions, the facilitator is also able to offer direction and suggestions regarding resources and support.
- Time is given to the **study** of a pertinent topic that offers opportunity for growth in ministry. The PALS office develops the materials for these formal ministry-based studies.
- There is time for **personal sharing**, not only about parish activities, but also about frustrations, hopes, triumphs and trials.

The wives join their husbands for portions of the meetings but also meet separately following much the same format as the pastors.

All discussions that take place in PALS group meetings remain confidential.



“Of all the meetings that are put on my calendar, this is by far the most helpful and applicable. Thanks!”

• *Pastor*

Is There Any Recognition for Participation in the Program?

A certificate and up to 4.8 continuing education units (CEUs) are awarded at the end of each year for faithful participation in PALS meetings. As with other CEUs, these are recorded by district presidents on the Pastor's Information Form.

How Is the Program Funded?

Costs of the program are shared by all who benefit from the program. The Synod pays for the development of all the materials used in the program, as well as facilitators' training. Districts support PALS expenses through a pre-established dollar amount per registered PALS participant.

Congregations reimburse the cost of travel and lodging for pastors and wives. Pastors pay a \$25 registration fee each year and are also responsible for the cost of meals.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

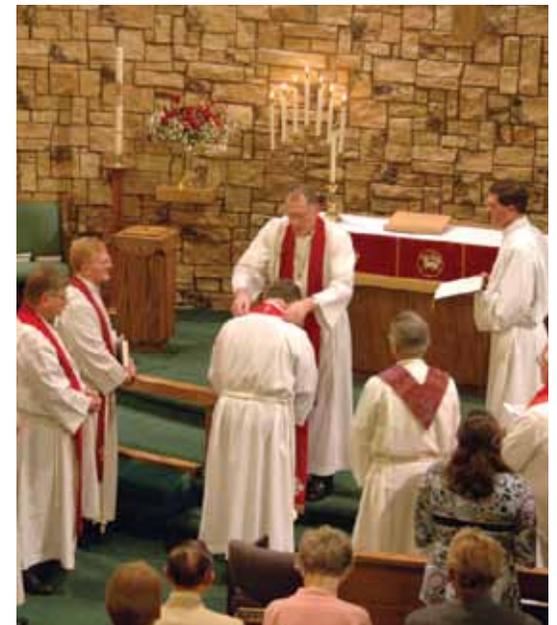
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Helping pastors and their wives in the transition from seminary to congregation.

