

***Admission Criteria
for the
Specific Ministry Pastor Program***

- A. As articulated in the background section of Resolution 5-01b of the 63rd Regular Convention of the LCMS, “The identification of an applicant will be carried out by the congregation and district where he will serve through a comprehensive screening process.”

Although the screening process will vary from district to district, it is expected that the following criteria will be foundational in all cases.

1. The applicant should be mature in faith and life.
2. Bearing in mind Paul’s exhortation that an overseer, “*must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited*” (I Timothy 3:6), it is expected that an applicant should have significant experience in the life of the church and must be a member of an LCMS congregation, with ordinarily at least two years of active membership, service, and leadership within an LCMS ministry.
3. Educational Preparation: All applicants should have adequate post-secondary course work and experience to enable successful completion of a program which will be delivered in the English language. Applicants who intend to pursue an M.Div. degree should ordinarily possess an undergraduate degree (see Seminary catalog).
4. If married the applicant should be devoted to his wife and family and supported in his vocational pursuit by his spouse, who is also an active member of an LCMS congregation. (I Timothy 3:4-5, “*He must manage his own family well.*”).
5. He must be committed to the Lutheran confession of the faith and willing to uphold the doctrinal position of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. St. Paul says, “*Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.*” (I Timothy 4:16)
6. The applicant is expected to meet the personal and spiritual qualifications as expressed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, “*Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. 2 Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4 He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. 5 (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. 7 He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.*”
7. In keeping with the mission the Lord has entrusted to the Church and because of the significant role a pastor plays in that mission, the applicant should also possess the following attributes:
 - A clear sense of his identity in Christ.
 - A commitment to service.
 - An ability to lead.

- An ability to listen to others.
 - A demonstrated ability to witness to others.
8. The applicant must be in, or entering, a place of service where his presence and ministry is expected and supported both during and after the completion of the program.
 9. As an applicant begins his seminary course work, he will be placed as a concurrent vicar in the location where he is serving. The SMP vicar will:
 - a. Serve an LCMS entity that is eligible to receive a vicarage placement and issue a call.
 - b. Have been prepared to lead worship, preach, teach, and provide basic pastoral care under supervision.
 - c. Ordinarily not be authorized to administer the Sacraments until ordination as a specific ministry pastor.
 - d. Preach sermons prepared in collaboration with, and approved by, his supervisor until ordination as a specific ministry pastor.
 10. It is the responsibility of the president of the district in which the applicant serves to assure that the applicant is prepared to assume the responsibilities of vicarage in the SMP program.

B. Applicants must demonstrate entry-level competence in the following areas: Old and New Testament content, Christian doctrine, worship, preaching, spiritual life and Christian witness, and teaching the faith. (See the document “SMP Admissions Sequence”).

1. Entry-level competence in Old and New Testament content and Christian doctrine will be demonstrated by passing entry-level competence examinations administered by the seminary.
2. Entry-level competency in worship, preaching, spiritual life and Christian witness, and teaching the faith will be demonstrated by portfolio submissions as outlined below:

The student will submit a portfolio demonstrating basic competency to serve w/in the ministry context on the basis of which he is being nominated to the SMP program. In most cases these competencies will be achieved through courses offered in District and other programs. The evaluation and attestation of these competencies will be a part of the district president’s nomination of a man to the SMP program. These competencies will include but are not limited to:

1. An understanding of the mission of the church.
 - a. A commitment to the mission of Christ to seek the lost and nurture them in the faith within the body of Christ.
 - b. A demonstration of personal faith and spiritual discipline, including the facility to articulate the faith and share it with a non-Christian.
2. An understanding of worship leadership appropriate to his ministry context.

- a. An understanding of the role of a worship leader as related to the pastoral office.
 - b. The facility to lead an order of worship from a Lutheran hymnal.
3. An understanding of the nature of the public proclamation of the Word.
 - a. The ability to evaluate sermons in light of Lutheran doctrine.
 - b. The facility to prepare and deliver a sermon under supervision.
 4. An understanding of the importance of teaching Christian faith and life within the ministry and mission of the church.
 - a. The ability to articulate the role of the pastor as teacher of the faith to those of every age and to evaluate educational materials in light of Lutheran doctrine.
 - b. The facility to teach the Word of God and its doctrine to others.

A student is not to begin course work or vicarage responsibilities until entry-level competence has been demonstrated in all seven prerequisite categories.

- C.** An applicant must be under the supervision of an ordained pastor of the LCMS who will serve as his pastor-supervisor throughout the course of study. See the document “SMP Pastor-Supervisor: Position Description.”
- D.** Following completion of the program supervision of the SMP pastor will continue through a pastoral supervisor appointed by the District President.