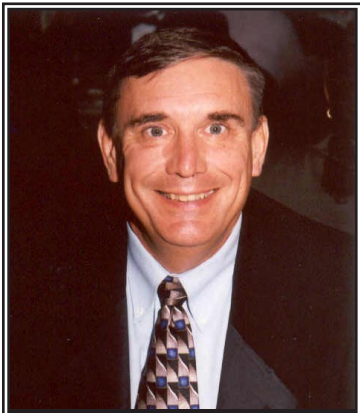


Various Routes Lead to LCMS Pastoral Ministry



HIGHER EDUCATION NETWORK

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Concordia House
of Studies

I have had people tell me that they feel God may be leading them into the pastoral ministry. The question that usually follows that remark is, "So what do I have to do to become a pastor?" It would seem that there should be an easy answer to that question, but the short answer is, "It depends." The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS) has developed several routes into the pastoral ministry.

Master of Divinity Degree

The master of divinity degree (M.Div.) program is the academic degree program in which most students who desire to be pastors, missionaries or chaplains in the LCMS enroll. While many of the students are recent college graduates, a goodly number are second-career people who have decided that God is calling



them into pastoral ministry after first having entered a different career. It is a four-year program, including a one-year vicarage (internship).

A student generally must have earned an undergraduate degree in order to begin seminary education. He must also demonstrate competency in knowledge of the Old and New Testaments, Lutheran Theology and basic biblical Greek and Hebrew. These competency areas can also be attained by completing pre-seminary courses at the seminary, or another site. The certificate (alternate route) program closely parallels the M.Div. program. Although certificate students do not receive a degree, they study alongside those in the M.Div. program, including the study of the New Testament in Greek.

Center for Hispanic Studies

The LCMS is also taking steps to train workers for the rich opportunities in multicultural ministry. One of these programs is the Center for Hispanic Studies, which offers theological education and leadership in the Lutheran tradition for U.S. Hispanic/Latino communities.

In the area of ministerial formation, the Center provides a linguistically and culturally contextual route to certification for ordination of qualified men in Hispanic contexts and a comparable alternate route for deaconess certification. Instruction is carried out in Spanish and considers the rich diversity of Hispanic cultural contexts in its theological and pastoral reflection.

The Center delivers instruction through theological education by extension, part-time residential opportunities and computer-based systems.

Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology

Another innovative program is the Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT). This specialized program leading to ordination is for men currently engaged in pastoral missionary contexts in ethnic immigrant and urban cultures.

Students are preferably first-generation immigrants leading immigrant based churches. The

program consists of distance education, contextual mentoring and regular on-campus (Seminary) modules. This year marks the second class of EIIT students receiving calls.

Specific Ministry Pastor Program

The newest category for entrance into the pastoral ministry is the Specific Ministry Pastor Program (SMP). It was established by the LCMS in 2007 and is designed to meet the need of pastors for mission and ministry in the Church where a pastor with a seminary degree might not be available. These men are identified by the ministry and mission opportunity (a congregation, mission plant, etc.) where they will serve in consultation with their district president.

The SMP program is a "ministry driven" program in that a man who meets the scriptural qualifications for ministry is identified by the congregation itself and/or the circuit and/or district in which the ministry is located. The local congregation and the district president must nominate the men for this program. After they have completed the prerequisite preparation for the program determined by their district, they will apply through their district office.

Once admitted to the SMP program, which will be offered under the auspices of the seminaries of the LCMS, students serve as "vicars" in the location where they will eventually serve as a Specific Ministry Pastor. They will take no less than two years of classes prior to ordination and then a minimum of another two years following ordination. They are supervised by local pastors and coursework is completed via the Internet.



Ministry Challenges

All of these routes to the pastoral ministry are needed if we are going to meet the ministry challenges that stand before us. As the populations of Florida and Georgia continue to grow, the numbers in our churches lag behind population growth. People are coming to this country from around the world, and they are coming without knowledge of their Lord and Savior. There are countries that are currently closed to the Gospel, but God is bringing these people to our neighborhoods, where we can share that Gospel. We need to

Keep your eyes open for that person who has a kind heart, who looks you in the eye, who is using his talents in a God-pleasing way. Then, if you really believe that God might have gifted this person to be a pastor, tell them! Tell them what you see in them, and God will do his work of calling! Encourage them to pray about it, encourage them to talk about their gifts with their pastor, with their parents or family or spouse. And continue to pray!

The Concordia House of Studies is a tool that is available right here in the Florida-Georgia



rise to the challenge and prepare leaders for that ministry.

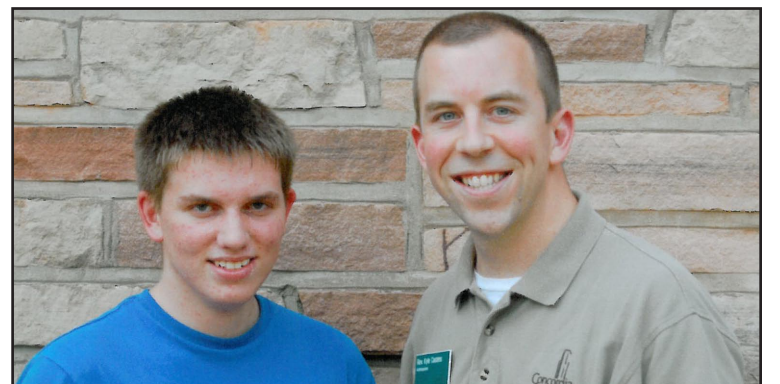
In addition to the needs for growth in ministry, we must also replace those who will soon be retiring. You may not think about it if you're blessed to have a pastor, but a huge shortage of pastors is coming.

"Projections show the Synod will need 300 to 350 new full-time pastors annually just to replace the men who retire or leave active parish ministry. In comparison, approximately 250 seminarians were placed [in 2007] and 240 pastor graduates are expected in 2008." (Reporter, Dec. 2007, p. 1)

All of us have a role to play in responding to the ministry needs of our day. Start by praying for God's guidance as you look about your congregation for those who might be gifted for a full time ministry. As you pray, think about the qualities you see in this person that cause you to think they might be called by God.

District. Traditional college students can take the pre-seminary courses needed to prepare them for the seminary at either our Orlando site or in weekend format classes offered around the District. Congregations and students interested in the SMP program can also take the courses necessary to prepare them for the Seminary curriculum. We also provide courses to help ethnic and immigrant students be better prepared for their specialized programs.

The need is indeed great; the opportunity God has presented us is one we can't pass by. If you believe God is calling you to serve as a pastor, or if you would like more information about how CHS can assist you in your educational plans, please feel free to contact Dr. Wilke. You can contact him in Orlando locally at 407-857-5556, ext 5, toll free at 877-457-5556, ext. 5, or via e-mail at wwilke@flga-lcms.org. □



AMONG THE 21 youth attending the 2007 Exploring Church Careers Event (ECCE) late last year at Concordia Seminary-St. Louis was Brian McPherson of Faith Lutheran-North Palm Beach, FL. He is pictured here (left) at that event with Rev. Kyle Castens, Director of Ministerial Recruitment for the Seminary. McPherson was also one of the 22 young men attending the Exploring the Pastoral Ministry (EPM) event that followed ECCE. The ECCE was made possible by a \$150,000 grant the Seminary received from Lilly Endowment, Inc., to assist in the process of identifying, informing and encouraging high school youth toward service in church work careers. □

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