



## Specific Ministry Pastor Proposal Executive Summary

### **Recommendation:**

upon the recommendation of Pastor Grayson Albers and the Pastoral Search Committee, the Board of Directors and the Board of Elders propose to raise up and support from within the congregation two Specific Ministry Pastors to support the pastoral needs of Immanuel Lutheran Ministries (ILM).

The Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program, sanctioned by the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, is an alternate route to ordination for qualified men in unique ministry contexts. SMP candidates complete two years of study while serving as a vicar at the congregation. At the end of two years the candidates are ordained as specific ministry pastors. *(An additional two years of education is required for the candidates to be classified as general pastors.)*

The two candidates being proposed for the SMP program at ILM, along with the specific roles of service beyond general pastoral duties, would be, as follows:

1. Darrell Becker, whose role would be Associate Pastor, with a focus on church administration
2. Matt Johnson, whose role would be Discipleship Pastor, teaching, assisting with small groups, with a focus on discipleship in the home.

### **Pertinent Details**

- Pastor Albers will serve as supervisor and mentor for the SMP candidates.
- Pastor Larry Krueger will assist Pastor Albers with preaching assistance during the two-year vicarage period.
- SMP vicars can begin serving in pastoral roles while being trained and educated.
- SMP vicars can begin to fill pastoral staffing needs immediately, an advantage over the traditional call process, especially given the shortage of LCMS pastors.
- SMP education costs and vicarage stipends will entail the financial commitment of the congregation
- SMP candidates will maintain their current jobs while completing the program.





## Specific Ministry Pastor Proposal - Expanded

**Rationale:** Immanuel Lutheran Ministries, having two campuses with a baptized membership of 1308, and three worship services each weekend, needs pastoral assistance to meet the needs for the proclamation of the Word, administration of the Sacraments, and the care of the flock. Further, the Senior Pastor needs additional administrative support to meet the needs of a growing ministry. He needs someone to whom he can delegate specific administrative and management tasks so that he has time for senior leadership work as well as other pastoral care. The intention of the Board of Directors and the Board of Elders is to provide for these needs by adding pastoral assistance to the ministry upon the recommendation of the Pastoral Search Committee.

**Current Situation:** Upon the retirement of Pastor Dana Wilhelmsen and the departure of Pastor Luke Madsen, ILM has engaged a planning process to include development of new mission, vision, and values statements. With that process underway, and general outlines complete, it's time to staff the ministry to carry out the mission Christ has given to us in this ministry location. Rather than proceed immediately to a call process, Pastor Grayson Albers was given responsibility by the Board of Directors to lead an ad hoc committee whose purpose was to explore all options before us for pastoral service, including the possibility of using the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program.

**SMP Explained:** The Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program, sanctioned by the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, is an alternate route to ordination for qualified men in unique ministry contexts. The SMP candidate must complete a sequence of coursework, both online and in intensive weeks at seminary, leading to ordination after two years, and completion of the program after four years. The SMP remains under the supervision of a regularly trained pastor indefinitely unless additional coursework is completed. While the Synod affirms that traditional, in-residence training at the seminary is the preferred route to becoming a pastor, the shortage of pastors has led to the development of alternate routes to ordination. During the first two years of the program, the SMP candidate serves as vicar to his congregation. After that, he is eligible for ordination and to receive a call to the ministry where he has been serving.

### **SMP Candidate for ILM—Darrell Becker**

After 29 years as a member of ILM, including 10 years as an elder, four years as president, and various roles in leadership and service including Bible class teacher, small group leader, Call Committee member, and liturgist, Darrell Becker is now willing to officially enter the ministry as an ordained pastor by way of the SMP program. Darrell's nearly 30 years of experience as a teacher and school district administrator have prepared him to serve in a ministry role focused on preaching and teaching. He also brings extensive knowledge of administration, planning, budgeting, and communications that will contribute to the mission and vision of ILM. His role would be Associate Pastor, with a focus on church administration.

### **SMP Candidate for ILM—Matt Johnson**

After 14 years as a member of ILM, including 8 years as an elder, and serving in various roles in leadership and service including Bible class teacher, a sent "Sermon Reader" at First Lutheran Church in Rosebud, liturgist, and sound technician, Matt Johnson is now willing to officially enter the ministry as an ordained pastor by way of the SMP program. Matt has experience in the IT and supply chain departments in project management and systems support with Baylor Scott and White and brings a Discipleship heart to ILM. His role and Specific Ministry would be that as a Discipleship Pastor, teaching, assisting with small groups, with a focus on discipleship in the home.

### **ILM Expectations of SMP Candidates:**

#### **During the Vicarage:**

While serving as a Vicar, SMP Candidates will be expected to:

1. Complete all coursework as required by the seminary.
2. Carry out all duties assigned by the Senior Pastor, to include preaching, teaching, assisting in worship, pastoral care and visitation, and other duties as assigned when able.

#### **Upon Ordination:**

1. Continue SMP years 3 and 4 coursework as required by the seminary leading to completion of the program.
2. Continue all duties begun as a Vicar: preaching, teaching, assisting in worship, pastoral care and visitation, and other duties as assigned by the Senior Pastor.
3. Leading worship services, to include administration of the sacraments in worship.

## **SMP's Expectations of ILM**

### **During the Vicarage:**

While serving as a Vicar, SMP's will expect ILM to:

1. Provide financial support to defray the cost of the SMP program, to include tuition and fees as well as other expenses such as books, computer hardware and software, and travel for week-long intensive courses.
2. Provide a small monthly stipend in order to compensate for any expenses occurred carrying out Vicar responsibilities. (This stipend will be determined by the Board of Directors.)
3. Provide an office space for working and meeting with members and others.
4. Provide for the purchase of vestments.

### **Upon Ordination:**

1. Issuance of an official Call by the congregation to serve as Pastor.
2. The Board of Directors will set appropriate salary (and benefits) based on experience and duties assigned.

### **Frequently Asked Questions:**

#### **Q: What is Pastor Albers' role inside of this process?**

A: The Senior Pastor will walk alongside the SMP's in their study, sitting down with them weekly, and sharing how the local church exercises that which is being taught. This program would bring strength to him, as he would also get to learn alongside of the SMP candidates. He would also receive training once a year at the seminary for one week in order to carry out his responsibility as a Pastor-Teacher.

#### **Q: How will Pastor Albers carry out both his senior pastor responsibilities and teaching/mentoring responsibilities?**

A: In order to free up time for Pastor Albers to carry out additional responsibilities, Pastor Larry Krueger, Area B Vice President of the LCMS Texas District (who has 38 years of pastoral experience and is a member of ILM), will come alongside and assist Pastor Albers in his preaching responsibilities (monthly or as arranged between Pastor Albers and Pastor Krueger).

**Q: When will SMP Candidates begin serving, and what will they do?**

**A:** Upon congregational approval and acceptance into the SMP program, SMP Candidates will be installed as Vicars, and as they go through their studies, they will begin to apply that which they have learned. Studies are mostly done on-line, with occasional week-long intensive courses at the seminary. During vicarage, SMP Candidates can assist in worship, can occasionally preach, can teach, along with other duties. A Pastor will continue to administer the Sacraments until ordination (at the conclusion of year 2 of the SMP program). The SMP candidate, according to synod guidelines, will remain under the supervision of the Senior Pastor.

**Q: Why wouldn't we just call a pastor using the traditional call process?**

**A:** The Pastoral Search Committee, under the leadership of Pastor Grayson Albers, examined a variety of options for bringing additional pastoral support to ILM. The committee understands the shortage of available pastors in the LCMS and the difficulty of finding a pastor with the qualifications and right "fit" for the needs of ILM. Given these constraints, the committee chose to think differently about church staffing, recommending internal candidates for the SMP program.

**Q: How will supporting an SMP candidate benefit the church financially?**

**A:** The cost of an SMP candidate during the first two years of the program is substantially less than the cost of a general pastor, saving the church financial resources. Further, there will be no Call Committee/Process costs and no costs associated with the relocation of a pastor and his family. Going forward, the cost to employ SMP Candidate(s) will be lower than a typical pastor, as benefits will be on an "as needed" basis.

**Q: How will it work for SMP Candidates to keep current jobs as well as serve ILM as vicars?**

**A:** This is what is called bi-vocational Ministry (or co-vocational). Both men will be earning a degree for serving in ministry while simultaneously working in another field. They will be applying what they have learned inside of the church as part of their studies. Yes, the studies are vigorous, but both men have held jobs while getting higher education degrees.

**Q: Can these candidates continue to serve in their elected positions at ILM?**

**A:** There is no rule saying they can't, but they are being brought into a new position at ILM. Both Darrell and Matt will finish out their terms in their elected positions, and then step down off their boards to focus their time as SMP students. (Please be in prayer about what God may be doing in you to serve in an elected position at ILM!)

**Q: How many SMP pastors are there in the LCMS?**

**A:** There are 373 SMP pastors in the LCMS, 50 of which are serving in the Texas District. The SMP program has been in the LCMS for approximately 14 years as a way for men to go into the office of the ministry.

**Q: What would be the next steps for ILM and our SMP candidates?**

**A:** After congregational approval, the SMP candidates must be interviewed by the Texas District. If approved by the Texas District, then they need to be approved and accepted by the Seminary. If these things do not happen, then they are not candidates for the SMP program and ILM will look to adapt accordingly.

---

**Pastoral Search Committee Members (PSC)**

If you have any questions about the process or the candidates, please feel free to reach out to a PSC member.

Robin Smith (Staff)  
Corrie Ganger (Staff)  
Avery Pavliska (Staff)  
Janet Lockwood (BOD)  
Bill Evatt (BOD)  
Dawn Reiss (BOD)  
Nick Flippin (Elder)  
Mark Anderson (Lay Leader and past Elder)  
Michael Chapman (Lay Leader)  
Karin Heifrin (Lay Leader)  
Nick Marino (Lay Leader).  
Pastor Grayson Albers (Pastor)

---

**Two Votes will be taken at the Congregational meeting on:  
June 10<sup>th</sup> @ 6:30 – Temple Campus.**

**1<sup>st</sup> Vote: To Endorse Darrell Becker as SMP Candidate for ILM.  
2<sup>nd</sup> Vote: To Endorse Matt Johnson as SMP Candidate for ILM.**