

# Guidelines for the Concordia Lay Deacon Program

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# CONCORDIA COLLEGE – NEW YORK LAY DEACON PROGRAM

## Contents

The Diaconate in the Holy Scriptures .....	2
Purpose of the Concordia Lay Deacon Program.....	2
Members of the Concordia Lay Deacon Program .....	2
The Work of Lay Deacons .....	2
Qualifications for Lay Deacons .....	3
Personal Considerations.....	3
Application and Letters of Support.....	3
Training for Lay Deacons .....	3
Service Hour Requirement.....	3
Internship Supervision .....	4
Compensation and Lay Deacons.....	4
Interview Process and Acceptance for Lay Deacons .....	5
Accountability of Lay Deacons.....	5
Recertification Requirements.....	5
Continuing Education Opportunities .....	6
Lay Deacons Transferring from One Congregation to Another .....	6
Garb for Lay Deacons .....	7
Leadership of Lay Deacons.....	7
Additional Items.....	7
Addendum I – Schedule of Courses.....	9
Cycle One.....	9
Cycle Two.....	9
Addendum III – Triennial Report.....	10
Addendum IV - Application.....	12

## The Diaconate in the Holy Scriptures

The diaconate is a group of people committed to service in and for the Church, a group which has its roots in the New Testament [see Philippians 1:1; I Timothy 3:8-13; Acts 6:1-6]. As the Church catholic has grown, so too, the diaconate has had a history of development and usage.

The diaconate has had a variety of definitions over time and has included a broad range of people, privileges, and responsibilities all dealing with sharing the Word of God and service in the Lord's kingdom.

## Purpose of the Concordia Lay Deacon Program

Concordia Lay Deacons are trained laity who are granted the opportunity to work under the Office of the Public Ministry in service to the local church, her members and to the world through works of mercy and witness as directed.

The purpose of the Concordia Lay Deacon Program is to provide some basic and uniform standards for preparation, education, and accountability; to offer opportunities for continuing education, collegiality, and support; to encourage excellence in service; and to be a forum for mutual concerns and needs.

The Concordia Lay Deacon Program is designed to serve the ECCE member districts of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. There is no official transferability from the Concordia Lay Deacon Program to any LCMS judicatory or ministerial category. Transfer of Concordia Lay Deacons within the ECCE districts of the LCMS are subject to the approval of both the transferring and receiving district and the recommendation of the pastoral supervisor of the congregation to which the Concordia Lay Deacon will be transferring.

## Members of the Concordia Lay Deacon Program

Members of the Concordia Lay Deacon Program are men and women selected and nominated by a local congregation of a member ECCE district and its pastor and approved by that District's Board of Directors to serve after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ by sharing the Word and doing acts of service.

Members of the Concordia Lay Deacon Program are those individuals who apply for membership, meet the requirements as set by these guidelines, and subscribe to these guidelines for service and supervision. The title each member has is "*Concordia Lay Deacon.*"

A Concordia Lay Deacon's focus of work is in the local congregation and in the surrounding community through those congregations.

## The Work of Concordia Lay Deacons

At the heart of the work of Concordia Lay Deacons are works of mercy and witness that support our life together. The actual tasks undertaken by members of the Concordia Lay Deacon Program will vary according to the gifts and skills of the Concordia Lay Deacon and the needs of his or her congregation in the surrounding community through those congregations. All aspects of Concordia Lay Deaconal work are under the supervision of the Supervising Pastor.

Concordia Lay Deacons may engage in various types of service, including but not limited to teaching within the congregation; catechesis of youth and adults; caregiving works of mercy like shut-in and hospital visitation, hospitality and integration of members, small group Bible study leadership, and various outreach and evangelism.

Care should be taken to prevent any confusion between a Concordia Lay Deacon and the Office of the Public Ministry.

# Qualifications for Lay Deacons

## *Personal Considerations*

A Concordia Lay Deacon shall be a confirmed member in good standing of a congregation of one of the ECCE member Districts and be involved in parish life. Members of the Concordia Lay Deacon Program shall have the support of his/her family. Members of the Concordia Lay Deacon Program shall be of sound moral character and mature faith.

## *Application and Letters of Support*

Part I of the Concordia Lay Deacon Application and a letter of support from the individual's Pastor must be completed prior to admission to the Concordia Lay Deacon Program Training Program.

To be certified as a Concordia Lay Deacon Intern, Part II of the Concordia Lay Deacon Application must be completed, a letter from the Supervising Pastor and congregational president expressing the support of the parish's governing body, and two (2) letters attesting to the moral and spiritual character of the individuals are required.

Those individuals not seeking application for the Concordia Lay Deacon Program need not fulfill the requirements of Part II of the application.

## *Training for Lay Deacons*

As a minimum, applicants for the Concordia Lay Deacon Program shall have a high school diploma or its equivalent (GED Certificate). Other educational background or experience, including academic, business, etc., will be taken into consideration in relation to the applicant's proposed areas of lay diaconal service.

The Concordia Lay Deacon shall have completed an approved two-year course of theological education of the Concordia Lay Deacon Program, which includes:

1. Christian Doctrine
2. Old Testament
3. New Testament
4. Theology and Practice of Worship
5. Christian Service and Care
6. Interpreting Scripture
7. Teaching the Faith
8. Sharing the Faith
9. Evangelism
10. History of the Church.

Addendum II contains course schedules.

## *Service Hour Requirement*

In addition to the educational component offered through the Concordia Lay Deacon Training Program, there is a Concordia Lay Deacon Internship. The purpose of the internship is to enable the Concordia Lay Deacon Intern to experience the kind of service that may be expected of him/her as a member of the Concordia Lay Deacon Program. The Concordia Lay Deacon Intern's skills, interests, and commitment are used as a measure for acceptance to become a member of the Concordia Lay Deacon Program and to help the candidate continue in training and formation under the Supervising Pastor.

The Supervising Pastor is the direct supervisor of the internship. The Supervising Pastor must certify in writing that all hours have been completed.

A total of two hundred (200) hours of practical training are required in the Concordia Lay Deacon Program. Within the two hundred hours (200), at least twenty (20) hours of experience must be completed in each of the following five areas:

- Visitation – nursing homes, hospitals, shut-ins, etc.
- Teaching – Bible studies, VBS, Sunday School, etc.
- Administration – organize a newly instituted program; be responsible for an area of service in a staff position.
- Evangelism – follow up on guests to church; teach an evangelism course.
- Liturgical Service – assist in Sunday worship, nursing home devotions, etc.

Fifty (50) hours of practical training may be accepted prior to completion of all coursework. The Supervising Pastor and Concordia Lay Deacon Intern develop a plan for the remaining one hundred fifty (150) hours of practical experience. These hours may include any one of the above five areas or any other area of parish life.

The Concordia Lay Deacon Internship service hour requirement is to be completed no sooner than six (6) months after the candidate's completion of Lay Deaconal coursework and no longer than eighteen (18) months after that date.

## Internship Supervision

Each applicant's internship supervisor will be a rostered Pastor of a member congregation of an ECCE district who is directly connected to the ministry being undertaken during the internship period. This supervisor shall:

- assist the candidate in establishing goals and expectations for the internship;
- meet with the applicant no less than twice monthly to discuss specific assignments, development, progress and concerns; and
- certify that the Concordia Lay Deacon Intern has successfully completed the required hours.

All applicants, upon completion of the internship, shall submit a written report of his/her service, describing the nature of and personal reflections on the experience. This shall be submitted to the Concordia Deacon Program's office prior to the final interview.

## Compensation and Lay Deacons

Normally, a Concordia Lay Deacon receives no compensation for service. A Concordia Lay Deacon's service is a gift to God and the Church.

It is expected that most members of the Concordia Lay Deacon Program will continue to hold regular employment and therefore would be involved in Lay Deaconal service on a part-time, non-stipendiary basis. There may be instances, however, when a Concordia Lay Deacon will serve on staff and receive compensation.

Whenever possible, congregations and other agencies in which Lay Deacons are serving shall meet expenses incurred during such service. It is further encouraged that churches offer support for continuing education. In service to congregations outside of their own, such service shall be approved by the Supervising Pastor and the Pastor of the congregation where service is to be rendered in consultation with the Praesidium of member ECCE districts to which the sending and serving congregations belong. This shall be done prior to service. Lay Deacons shall normally receive honoraria for such service.

## Interview Process and Acceptance for Lay Deacons

Upon receipt of an application, the ECCE member District Lay Deacon Coordinator shall contact the individual in order to answer any questions on the part of the candidate and the Supervising Pastor.

An interview shall take place prior to the Lay Deacon Intern's second year of study should he/she desire to be recognized as an Lay Deacon. The purpose of this interview is to best gauge the areas of strength and growth of the individual for Lay Diaconal service. It also develops a plan for the Supervising Pastor and other Lay Deacons to support the Concordia District Lay Deacon Intern.

A final interview shall be conducted once the educational and practical components have been completed. This shall be conducted through a face-to-face meeting of the Concordia District Lay Deacon Intern, Supervising Pastor, ECCE member district Lay Deacon Coordinator (or his representative), and members of the Advisory Committee. The names of those candidates who successfully pass this interview are forwarded to the Concordia Lay Deacon Program, through the Board of Directors of the ECCE Member District, for final approval. Only after said interview has been conducted may a date be set for the blessing of the Concordia Lay Deacon Intern into service.

Approved applicants shall be received into membership in the Concordia Lay Deacon Program along with their blessing for Concordia Lay Diaconal service by a liturgical rite which may consist of a service of prayer, as set forth in these guidelines.

## Accountability of Lay Deacons

The Concordia Lay Deacon is always under the supervision of an ordained Pastor, normally the Pastor of the Concordia Lay Deacon's home congregation, and serves at that Pastor's behest. The development of the goals and tasks for the Concordia Lay Deacon is a task done jointly by the Concordia Lay Deacon and the Supervising Pastor. The Concordia Lay Deacon and Pastor shall meet on a regular basis to discuss progress and assignments. The lay leadership of the congregation, when appropriate, may voice its perspective and vision for the Concordia Lay Deacon through the Pastor who is the Concordia District Lay Deacon's direct supervisor. The Pastor and Concordia Lay Deacon should work together to clarify and explain the Concordia Lay Deacon's position in the congregation. In the absence of a Supervising Pastor, the District President of the ECCE District in which the congregation being served holds membership shall appoint a supervisor.

The Concordia Lay Deacon shall not normally serve in an elected position of a parish.

Lay Deacons shall also be accountable to the President of the ECCE member District in which he or she serves. This is recognizable chiefly through the recertification process and triennial review. Such accountability and review shall include a triennial report of the Concordia Lay Deacon's work [Addendum III], filed with the congregation and the ECCE Member District Office, and the Concordia Lay Deacon Program. The report is to be completed jointly by the Supervising Pastor and Concordia Lay Deacon.

The Concordia Lay Deacon shall comply with the requirements for continuing education.

## Recertification Requirements

Concordia Lay Deacons are certified for a three-year period. They may be recertified on a three-year basis without limitation, congruent with the regular Conventions of the ECCE Member District. Recertification is undertaken after the second year through application for continued service as received through the Concordia Lay Deacon's congregation and Supervising Pastor. Such application shall include:

- attendance at a Lay Deacon retreat of an ECCE member district, unless excused by the Supervising Pastor for service or hardship reasons;

- participation in continuing education, a minimum of one completed opportunity per year (see below: *Continuing Education*), Lay Training Program courses, or other opportunities approved by the Supervising Pastor; and
- submission of a triennial report.

Lay Deacons who do not complete the steps for re-certification shall no longer be considered active. If concern relating to the service has been identified, the ECCE member District President shall contact the Concordia Lay Deacon and the Supervising Pastor to ascertain the issues and work toward a solution. If a Concordia Lay Deacon becomes inactive and does not respond to these communications, a recommendation of removal from the Concordia Lay Deacon Program shall be considered. Concordia Lay Deacons may also be removed from the Concordia Lay Deacon Program roster for three reasons: adherence to false doctrine, neglect of duties/incompetence, and/or an immoral lifestyle. Such removal will be done through the District President following the Church's usual order.

### *Continuing Education Opportunities*

Concordia Lay Deacons shall attend a minimum of one continuing education course offered through the Concordia Lay Leadership Training Program on a yearly basis. Continuing education for the Concordia Lay Deacon Program comprises the following:

- Auditing of Concordia Lay Training course.
- Seminars specific to the Concordia Lay Deacon Program as offered by Concordia – New York
- Attendance at a District Festival of Workshops or other ECCE Member District Workshop.
- Outside seminars approved by the Supervising Pastor as beneficial for the Lay Deacon's particular service. Credit will be given upon a written report by the Concordia Lay Deacon approved by the Supervising Pastor.

## Lay Deacons Transferring from One Congregation to Another

Concordia Lay Deacon transferring from one congregation to another must inform the Concordia Lay Deacon Program in a timely manner (30 days).

A Concordia Lay Deacon transferring to a congregation in a non- ECCE member District or leaving the denomination is removed from the membership list of Lay Deacons. The Concordia Lay Deacon Program bears no further ecclesiastical supervision responsibility.

As Lay Deacons are attached to the congregation with which they hold membership, when a Concordia Lay Deacon transfers to another congregation of an ECCE Member District, the Concordia Lay Deacon is placed on "transitional status" for no less than six months. "Transitional status," which is a period of supervision by the new congregational pastor, remains for a maximum of three years. Each year the status must be renewed by a simple formal request to the Concordia Lay Deacon Program. It is up to the congregation, local Pastor, and transitional status Concordia Lay Deacon to determine the role of the transferring Concordia Lay Deacon, if any.

If the congregation and Pastor desire the transitional status Concordia Lay Deacon to serve as a Concordia Lay Deacon, a letter of request by the Concordia Lay Deacon and a letter of support from the new Supervising Pastor must be submitted to the Concordia Lay Deacon Program. Upon receipt of the letter of request, a determination will be made by the Board of Directors of the ECCE Member District where service will be rendered.

In addition to these guidelines, Concordia Lay Deacons serve under parameters set by the ECCE Member District of the congregation where they will be serving. While all Concordia Lay Deacons will be trained for Word and Service in a congregation, some ECCE Member Districts may license Concordia Lay Deacons for "emergency" Sacramental ministry in accordance with LCMS guidelines. It is understood that such licensing in one ECCE member district is applicable only to the district in which the Concordia Lay

Deacon is licensed. Transfer of a Concordia Lay Deacon who has been licensed for Sacramental ministry to a congregation of another ECCE Member District terminates the “emergency” licensing for Sacramental ministry which the Concordia Lay Deacon has received.

## Garb for Lay Deacons

Liturgical attire for the Concordia Lay Deacon Program follows the local custom of the congregation where the Concordia Lay Deacon serves. To prevent confusion with the Pastoral office, Lay Deacons are not to wear clerical shirts or other clerical garb (Chasuble, pastoral stoles, etc.).

## Leadership of Lay Deacons

The Concordia Lay Deacon Program reports to the ECCE Member District Board of Directors and their respective conventions.

Each ECCE Member District, or their respective region, may have a Regional Diaconate Advisory Council consisting of the District President (or regional Vice President), Chair, and, as Associate Members, one (1) additional ordained Pastor, and two Lay Deacons who have served their congregations for a minimum of two years. The Regional Diaconate Advisory Councils are directly appointed by the District President and supervised by the Praesidium of the ECCE Member District through the Regional Vice Presidents. Associate Members serve with the approval of the Praesidium, renewable every District regular convention year.

The responsibilities of the Regional Concordia Lay Deacon Program Advisory Council may include:

- gathering District-wide, as Regional Concordia Lay Deacon Program Advisory Council on a yearly basis;
- supervising the Region’s Concordia Lay Deacon Interns in matters pertaining to fulfilling the Concordia Lay Deacon guidelines;
- conducting interviews with potential Concordia Lay Deacons and Concordia Lay Deacon Interns as prescribed in other sections of this document;
- providing Concordia Lay Deacon Interns with the guidelines and expectations of the members of the Concordia Lay Deacon Program;
- providing opportunity for monthly Bible study and fellowship; and,
- through the office of Regional Vice President, providing encouragement and counsel to Pastors and congregations concerning the role, limitation and expectations of an Concordia Lay Deacon in the parish.

## Additional Items

The Concordia Lay Deacon Program Guidelines cannot cover every issue or concern. Those issues not covered in this document will be handled in a Christ-like manner, calling upon the wisdom and guidance of the Holy Spirit for proper discernment. The Concordia Lay Deacon Program, as the supervisor of the Concordia Lay Deacon program, will serve as the final arbiter of any issues not covered by this document in consultation with the ECCE Member District Boards of Directors . All changes to this document will proceed through the ECCE Member District Boards of Directors.

**Commitment of Concordia Lay Deacon Program Applicant**

I have read and agree to follow the guidelines as presented in this document.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Concordia Lay Deacon Program Applicant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Pastor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **Addendum I – Schedule of Courses**

There are ten courses in the Concordia Lay Deaconal Study Program. Five (5) courses are taught each year of the two (2) year instructional cycle. A local LCMS Pastor or LCMS Minister of Religion Commissioned shall teach each course. Class sessions shall meet according to the mutually convenient schedule of instructor and student(s). Each course shall consist of 16 contact hours.

### *Cycle One*

- + Christian Doctrine – an overview of the beliefs of the Christian Church with a special emphasis on the Lutheran perspective as explained in the Book of Concord. (September-October)
- + Old Testament – a survey course of the Old Testament, its literature and importance in preparing for the coming of the Messiah and the covenant history between God and His people. (November-December)
- + New Testament – a survey of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, and the origins and growth of the Christian message within the Apostolic Church. (January-February)
- + Theology and Practice of Worship – an overview of the history of Christian worship and Lutheran practices, including practical experiences in assisting in a variety of worship settings ranging from traditional to contemporary and blended worship formats. (March-April)
- + Christian Service and Care – a study designed to provide the student with the knowledge, skill and desire to deal gently with those whom they are called to serve, learning to carry each other's burden and so fulfill the law of Christ [Gal. 6:1-2]. (May-June)

### *Cycle Two*

- + Interpreting Scripture– through review of resources [commentaries, historical documents and grammatical tools] teach the student to be an honest, faithful and adept interpreter of Holy Scripture and perceive Christ and His message throughout it. (September-October)
- + Teaching the Faith – examines the principles and practices of Christian education on the parish level with special attention to the Lutheran perspective, enabling the student to lead Bible classes, catechetical studies, etc. (November-December)
- + Sharing the Faith – this course focuses upon the basics of sharing the faith.: purpose, theology, preparation , and delivery. (January-February)
- + Evangelism – developing a strategy for doing evangelism based upon personal mission statements and leadership style, identifying available resources on the local level, and being able to evaluate a mission situation. (March-April)
- + History of the Church: The Apostolic Age through the Reformation – this course is designed to render an understanding of God's work through the first sixteen centuries of the Church, allowing the student to identify and describe key individuals, events and controversies, as well as their impact upon the Church and world today. (May-June)

Because of their related importance, Doctrine-New Testament-Old Testament are taken in that order, as well as Interpretation-Teaching-Sharing the Faith.

# Addendum II – Triennial Report



## Triennial Report of Concordia Lay Deacon

*From the Concordia Lay Deacon Guidelines*

This form is part of the triennial report that the certified Lay Deacon is to complete every 3 years just prior to the ECCE Member District Convention. It shall be submitted to the Supervising Pastor and the Concordia Lay Deacon Program Office

Print or use computer to enter all information.

### ***Personal Information***

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Employer (Name and Address): \_\_\_\_\_

### ***Contact Information***

Cell: \_\_\_\_\_ Home: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### ***Congregational Information***

Congregation (Name and Address): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

+++++

*Concordia Lay Deacon Work*

What continuing education have you received over the past year?

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Please circle the areas in which you frequently participate in as a Concordia Lay Deacon?

Bible Study Leader

Worship Leader

Evangelism

Social Ministry

Sick/Homebound Calls

Youth Ministry

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Continuing Education Completed:

Year 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Year 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Year 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Signed by the certified Concordia Lay Deacon and the Supervising Pastor:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lay Deacon

\_\_\_\_\_  
Supervising Pastor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*This report is to be reviewed by both the Concordia Lay Deacon and the Supervising Pastor before being submitted to the Concordia Lay Deacon Program Office*

## Addendum III - Application

### Concordia Lay Deacon Program Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod

*Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me. John 12: 26*

The Concordia Lay Deacon Program is a group of people committed to service in and for the Church, a group which has its roots in the New Testament and has a history of development and usage in the Church catholic from its beginnings to the present. Concordia Lay Deacons are trained laity that work thought under the local Pastor in service to the local church through works of mercy and witness, thus supplementing the work of the local Pastor.

What follows is a two part application for admission to the Concordia Lay Deacon Program:

Part I – Application to audit the Lay Diaconal academic courses;

Part II – Application for admission to the Concordia Lay Diaconal Program, leading to blessing as a Concordia Lay Deacon.

Please note completion of the academic program does not automatically qualify an individual for blessing as an Concordia Lay Deacon.

Completed applications should be given to the individual's local pastor, who in turn will forward them, with additional required materials, to the Concordia Lay Deacon Program Office.

May the Lord of the Church bless your study and your service in His name, and to His glory.

Sola Deo Gloria

Lay Deaconal Program  
Concordia College- New York

Application – Part I: Academic Participation

**Personal Information**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone [Home]: \_\_\_\_\_ [Cell:] \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Birth Date/Place: \_\_\_\_\_ Social Security No.: \_\_\_\_\_

Marital Status: \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Names and Ages of Children living at home:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Educational Background**

High School Attended: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Year Graduated: \_\_\_\_\_

Undergraduate Studies:

College Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Years Attended \_\_\_\_\_ Degree: Y/N Field of Study: \_\_\_\_\_

College Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Years Attended \_\_\_\_\_ Degree: Y/N Field of Study: \_\_\_\_\_

Post-Graduate Studies:

College Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Years Attended \_\_\_\_\_ Degree: Y/N Field of Study: \_\_\_\_\_

College Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Years Attended \_\_\_\_\_ Degree: Y/N Field of Study: \_\_\_\_\_

Seminars/Workshops Completed

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Sponsor: \_\_\_\_\_

Circle One: Professional/Personal Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Instructor: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Sponsor: \_\_\_\_\_

Circle One: Professional/Personal Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Instructor: \_\_\_\_\_

**Congregational History/Experience**

Baptismal Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_

Confirmation Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_

Present Membership

Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Pastor: \_\_\_\_\_ Member since: \_\_\_\_\_

If recent transfer, previous congregation [include District/Synod]: \_\_\_\_\_

With what congregational organizations are you presently involved? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do you hold any congregational office? \_\_\_\_\_

If so, which? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please describe your parish work experience during the last three years. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**By signing you agree to allow Concordia College to perform a required background check.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Applicant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Please submit this completed application to your Supervising Pastor.

Pastors: Please forward this application to your Regional Vice President, including a letter of recommendation for the applicant.

