Concordia University System

Director of Parish Music (DPM) Program Standards

Approved, 11-17-26

Prologue:

A Director of Parish Music is a Synod-certified, called, and commissioned church musician prepared to lead the musical life of a congregation of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Directors of Parish Music foster and teach the Church's worship and edify God's people through musical leadership that is faithful to Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, supporting their pastors in the planning of services, providing musical education for God's people, and directing the choirs, ensembles, and other musicians who serve in the house of the Lord. The Concordia University System Director of Parish Music Program Standards specify the instructional, formational, and experiential expectations that prepare students for commissioned ministry as Directors of Parish Music.

These standards supplement the general CUS Church Work Program Standards and ensure that Director of Parish Music candidates are equipped as faithful theologians, skilled musicians, and collaborative servants in the life of the congregation. Preparation of a Director of Parish Music includes the development of Christian character, musical craft and artistry, and a commitment to the vocation of the church musician. Programs may emphasize particular instruments, ensembles, or areas of musical concentration as determined by each institution, and institutions may structure curricula and their outcomes differently while demonstrating alignment with these standards.

Standard 1: Foundations of the Parish Music Vocation

The program develops students' understanding of the theological, historical, and vocational foundations of Lutheran church music.

Standard 2: Musicianship and Performance

The program prepares students to read, analyze, and arrange music and to perform with the vocal and instrumental proficiency (including keyboard) needed to lead a congregation's music.

Standard 3: The Lutheran Musical and Liturgical Heritage

The program teaches the musical history, hymnody, and liturgical practice of the Lutheran Church, preparing students to select music appropriate to the church year and to the congregation they serve.

Standard 4: Music as Proclamation and Formation

The program prepares students to evaluate music for its faithfulness to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, employing it to form God's people in the faith.

Standard 5: Musical Leadership and Pastoral Partnership

The program equips students to plan and lead music for services in consultation with the pastor, serving in support of the Office of the Holy Ministry.

Standard 6: Ensemble and Congregational Music Leadership

The program prepares students to rehearse, conduct, and accompany choirs, instrumental ensembles, and soloists of all ages, and to lead the singing of the whole congregation.

Standard 7: Teaching the Church's Song

The program prepares students to teach the church's song to children and adults.

Standard 8: Professional Identity and Ethical Practice

The program forms students' identity as both musician and commissioned minister of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, preparing them to administer a congregation's music program with professional and ethical integrity, to observe copyright law, and to keep growing in their craft among the wider community of church musicians.

Standard 9: Supervised Experience in Parish Music

The program provides supervised experience (e.g. fieldwork, internships) in a congregation's music ministry to integrate theological knowledge, musical skill, and vocational formation for service as a Director of Parish Music.