

New Hope Presbytery Candidate Indebtedness Policy

Persons under care who are serving a first call and applying for financial assistance under the Seminary Debt Assistance Program shall meet the following requirements;

When Presbytery is the Presbytery of Care

1. Require an inquirer to complete all financial forms included in the inquiry application and to discuss with the CPM their plans to minimize seminary debt.
2. Strongly encourage the Inquirer, during the Inquiry year, to participate in a “Fiscal Fitness” workshop being sponsored by the Board of Pensions of the PC(USA). If this workshop is not offered at the inquirer’s seminary, the Inquirer is eligible to apply to the CPM for financial assistance for travel and accommodations. Because this workshop is required of all Seminary Debt Assistance Program applicants, the CPM encourages Inquirers to attend this workshop as soon as possible to avoid delays in processing any future seminary debt assistance application the Inquirer might make.
3. The Presbytery will encourage each potential Inquirer to seek assistance in sharing the cost of their Career and Personal Counseling Service with their home congregation. Need-based grants will be available from the Presbytery based upon the CPM’s judgment.
4. On behalf of the Presbytery, the CPM will inform all Inquirers of the prospective salary that can be expected based on the current median income for the denomination reported by the Board of Pensions, and based on the minimum effective salary established by the Presbytery and will caution all Inquirers to minimize their level of indebtedness accordingly.
5. The CPM will encourage each Inquirer and Candidate towards using his or her available assets to pay for the cost of seminary tuition and room and board rather than incurring indebtedness.
6. The CPM will make available on an annual basis to each Candidate or Inquirer a list of options for pursuing grants and interest-free loans and funding that may be available through the Financial Aid for Studies Office of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and PC(USA) seminaries.

The CPM will be an advocate with the congregation, of which the Candidate or Inquirer is a member, and with other congregations of the presbytery as appropriate, in order to generate financial support for the Candidate or Inquirer in the form of grants.

When Presbytery is the Presbytery of Call

1. Any minister serving a first call following graduation from seminary, who comes with any educational indebtedness, shall be required to show evidence of having attended a financial planning workshop such as a Fiscal Fitness workshop sponsored by the Board of Pensions, or other Financial planning workshop. If the minister has not attended such a workshop, he/she shall be required to do so within twelve months of start-up, the cost of registration fee, accommodation and travel for

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- such a workshop to be considered legitimate reimbursable expense from study leave allowance.
2. The Committee on Ministry shall encourage calling congregations to utilize further educational debt reduction as a point in negotiating salary with a prospective pastor who is a recent seminary graduate.

Seminary Debt Assistance Program

Guidelines and Responsibilities

Guidelines:¹

- The Seminary Debt Assistance Program is a program of the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The funds for the program are available through the generosity of church member gifts, bequests, as well as investment earnings. The Seminary Debt Assistance Program is being coordinated with other entities of the Church and was initiated in May 2001.
- The grants will be made to Ministers of the Word and Sacrament to assist them to repay educational debt incurred while they were seeking a Master of Divinity degree.
- A limited number of grants will be awarded each year. Grants will be in the sole discretion of the Board of Pensions. The Board will consider the means available to the applicant, the nature and amount of debt and any other factors the Board deems appropriate.
- Applicants may apply for up to \$2,500 each year for a total of four (4) years. (The maximum amount given to one individual over four (4) years not to exceed \$10,000.)
- The grants will be awarded to Ministers of the Word and Sacrament who are serving churches with fewer than 150 members and a budget of less than \$250,000. The minister should be in his or her first seven years of ministry and serving a full time called position.
- All Presbyteries that participate in the program are encouraged to have a policy regarding student/clergy indebtedness.
- All applicants must attend a financial planning seminar offered by the Board of Pensions prior to application for a Seminary Debt Assistance grant.
- All Presbyteries in which a minister has received a grant are encouraged to develop a plan for continued support and guidance of

¹ Guidelines are cited here for ease of reference and are subject to change by the Board of Pensions. For current guidelines, refer to the Board of Pensions Financial Assistance Program description at <http://www.pensions.org/programs/assistance/financial.htm> (last cited 7/06/2007).

the pastor and the congregation participating in the Seminary Debt Assistance Program.

Responsibilities:

- Presbytery approves Seminary Debt Assistance Program application and submits it to the Board of Pensions for consideration.
- Presbytery approves a policy on Student/Clergy indebtedness.

<http://www.pcusa.org/ministers/com/handbook/glossary.htm>.