

**Washington Presbytery
Committee on Preparation for Ministry
Clergy/Student Indebtedness Policy
(First reading- January 18, 2014, Second reading vote – March 11, 2014)**

Policy

When the individual is under 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).
3. The CPM will encourage each potential Inquirer to seek assistance in sharing the cost of their seminary training with their home congregation.
4. 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.

When the individual is in a first call in Washington Presbytery and applying for financial assistance under the Seminary Debt Assistance Program:

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. If the minister has not attended such a workshop, he/she shall be required to do so within eighteen months of start-up.
2. The Committee on Ministry shall review and approve a minister’s application for the Seminary Debt Assistance Program.
3. 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.

Responsibilities of Washington Presbytery:

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

Seminary Debt Assistance Program

Board of Pensions PC (USA)

(This information taken directly from the Board of Pensions)

The Seminary Debt Assistance Program helps newly ordained teaching elders serving small congregations repay educational debt. This relief makes it easier for teaching elders to accept positions at small churches and effectively minister to their congregations. To qualify, you must

- be a teaching elder in your first seven years of ministry;
- be serving in a called pastoral position, full time, for a PC(USA) church that has 150 or fewer members and an annual budget of \$250,000 or less;
- attend Getting in Shape Fiscally, a one-day financial planning seminar offered by the Board of Pensions at your seminary or presbytery (see the Board University section of pensions.org for more information); and
- make application through and receive permission from your presbytery. (Note: Presbyteries that submit applications are required to have a policy on student/clergy indebtedness.)

Grants of up to \$1,500 per year, for up to four years, are awarded. Total awards may not exceed \$6,000 over four years.

The number of grants awarded each year is limited, and awards are at the discretion of the Board of Pensions. The Board considers the financial means, the nature and amount of the applicant's debt, and other factors, as appropriate. The total funds available for the program in any one year are limited.