SEMINARY INDEBTEDNESS RELIEF GRANT POLICY

Approved 7/14/2026

A. If the pastor is already ordained and enrolled in Pension and/or Medical at Board of Pensions (BOP), they may receive these grants and the coaching paid for by BOP:
    1. BOP Minister Education Debt Assistance program: Minister Educational Debt Assistance and Minister Debt Relief. Ministers who are plan members can apply for a total of up to $25,000 in debt assistance between the two programs.
    2. Part of those programs includes meeting with Ernst & Young Employee Financial Services for individual debt-specific financial planning/ coaching.

B. If the pastor is not enrolled in the BOP:
    1. Anyone (you don't have to be a plan member) can access the BOP on-demand E-Learnings. https://www.pensions.org/your-path-to-wholeness/lifelong-learning/e-learning#Access
    2. There is a personal financial planning series there (also a good one on terms of call for folks who are new!).
    3. The presbytery does not currently offer a list of financial advisors—mostly for not wanting the legal liability and challenge of vetting each advisor for the large area they cover. But we encourage folks to get one. We recommend talking to other colleagues and see whom they like and use.

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GLORIA JEAN AND INDEBTEDNESS RELIEF. [Revised April 2021.] Our home-grown seminary grant fund.

A. There are firm constraints on order: first in line are students from Huntingdon County who seek seminary scholarships. Second are other presbytery students who are seeking to become PCUSA ministers of Word and Sacrament. 3rd are lay pastors seeking further education. 4th are new pastors of Huntingdon Presbytery with seminary debt.

B. The accumulated funds may be used for debt relief. The Fund may not be used for D. Min debt. The top two priorities are included in the will of the donor. The remaining priorities are governed by the Presbytery of Huntingdon. [*See will of donor, Mrs. Ruth Hanawalt Smith, in Trustee/Restricted Funds file.]*

C. The goals were to train a new group of ministers to the PCUSA. When there were not sufficient students to use the "entire income" as per Mrs. Smith's will, seminary graduates, who had gone into debt to become ministers, appeared to be an appropriate charitable use of the Fund.

II. Application process for seminary debt reduction assistance

The process for application and distribution of funds to relieve seminary debt of teaching elder members of the presbytery shall be as follows:

A. *Eligibility and Application*: After one year of successful service in the Presbytery of Huntingdon by a pastor who has been in ordained ministry of teaching elder for less than seven years and who bears a large debt burden, the session of which the teaching elder is pastor may make a seminary debt reduction grant request to the Committee on Ministry's SubCommittee on Ministry to Ministers. The request shall include the total amount of student debt load, the name and address of the entity(ies) to which the debt is owed for seminary education, years of attendance and degree earned. The session will also include a summary statement of satisfactory ministry of the past year – accomplishments in the church, community and presbytery.

B. *Decision-making criteria*: The SubCommittee on Ministry to Ministers will interview the pastor, assess the needs, and make recommendation to the Committee on Ministry. Such a discussion should include deepening the commitment to the particular call, continuing as an active participant in the Presbytery of Huntingdon, and other matters of mutual concern to the church and pastor.

C. *Distribution of funds:* Any payments to reduce or eliminate student debt load will be paid to the creditor to which the applicant pastor owes seminary debt for the specific purpose of reducing seminary debt. Distribution of funds shall be authorized by action of the Committee on Ministry of the Presbytery of Huntingdon upon recommendation by the SubCommittee on Ministry to Ministers, and such action shall be reported to presbytery. Teaching elders should be aware that the funds so paid may be taxable income to them. Teaching elder beneficiaries of such grants are responsible for any taxes owed.

D. Sessions may reapply annually.

E. In considering seminary debt reduction grants from the net income of this Fund, the spirit of the original intent to support financially and encourage pursuit of a Master of Divinity degree will be respected. The process will be as nearly identical as possible to that outlined in the Presbytery of Huntingdon Policy for the Gloria Jean Smith Scholarship Fund grants for seminary education, with the provision that it is a grant for the relief of debt after the fact.