

**GENERAL CONVENTION OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH 2009
ARCHIVES' RESEARCH REPORT**

RESOLUTION NO.: 2009-A106
TITLE: Plan to Limit Help Ordinands Repay Accumulated Educational Debt
PROPOSER: Standing Commission on Ministry Development
COMMITTEE: Ministry

Directly Related: (attached)

2006-B006 Respond to Crisis of Educational Debt for Future Clergy
2003-A064 Convene a Partnership to Address the Issue of Seminarian Debt

Indirectly Related:

2003-A120 Convene a Strategic Planning Committee for Theological Education
1979-B127 Approve in Principle a Form of Financial Support for Seminaries
1976-A084 Commend a Plan for the Financial Support of Theological Education

In preparing this report, the Archives researched the resolutions of General Convention for the period 1976 through 2006, selecting "direct" resolutions that have a substantive bearing on the proposed legislation. Committee members who are interested in obtaining copies of "indirectly related" resolutions, legislative history before 1976, or who require other research assistance should contact the Archives at 800-525-9329 before Convention or at Convention in the General Convention Secretariat.



Resolution Number: 2006-B006
Title: Respond to Crisis of Educational Debt for Future Clergy
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention mandate that the Standing Commission on Ministry Development design strategies for raising awareness and responding to the crisis of educational debt for those preparing for ordained ministry in the Church; and be it further

Resolved, That the Standing Commission on Ministry Development in consultation with the Church Pension Fund, the Executive Council, the Office of Mission and Ministry, the diocesan Commissions on Ministries, the Office of Ministry Development, and the Society for the Increase of Ministry, shall share their results and recommendations with Proclaiming Education for All (PEALL) following each meeting of the Standing Commission on Ministry Development, annually to the House of Bishops, and to the 76th General Convention.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Columbus, 2006* (New York: General Convention, 2007), pp. 684-685.



Resolution Number: 2003-A064
Title: Convene a Partnership to Address the Issue of Seminarian Debt
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Substituted
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 74th General Convention direct the Standing Commission on Ministry Development to convene a partnership including members from the Church Pension Fund, the Episcopal Church Foundation, the Society for the Increase of the Ministry, the Episcopal Evangelical Education Society, the Council of Seminary Deans, and any other appropriate groups to address the urgent issue of seminarian debt and report back to the 75th General Convention with recommendations. This committee will include in its consideration the following points:

- **determining the feasibility of amortizing seminary loan payments over the course of a cleric's career;**
- **including seminarian debt in the pension premium of parochial/institutional clergy, distributed over the course of a cleric's career;**
- **dioceses and congregations committing a greater proportion of income to the support of people preparing for ordination and lay professions;**
- **seeking funding support for the debt reduction of newly ordained persons who serve in priority mission areas that are under-served and under-funded, including new church plants, multicultural and specialized cultural ministries and rural areas; and**
- **the development of a fund to defray the educational expenses of seminarians through partnerships.**

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Minneapolis, 2003* (New York: General Convention, 2004), p. 475f.

TOPIC/TITLE: Theological Education: Plan to Limit Help Ordinands Repay Accumulated Educational Debt

PROPOSER: Standing Commission on Ministry Development

C&C PAGE:

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- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That the 76th General Convention recognize the
- 2 crisis of educational debt for those preparing for ordained ministry in the Church; and be it further
- 3
- 4 *Resolved*, That The Society for the Increase of the Ministry be commended for developing a
- 5 three-phase, comprehensive plan to limit, manage and help ordinands successfully repay
- 6 accumulated educational debt; and be it further
- 7
- 8 *Resolved*, That the Standing Commission on Ministry Development, in consultation and
- 9 coordination with The Society for the Increase of the Ministry and the Office for Ministry
- 10 Development of the Mission Leadership Center, disseminate information about The Society for
- 11 the Increase of the Ministry's plan to limit, manage and help ordinands successfully repay
- 12 accumulated educational debt to all diocesan Bishops and diocesan Commissions on Ministry.
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EXPLANATION:

Seminarian debt is growing to epic proportions within The Episcopal Church. The effects of seminarian debt are hindering deployment and the mission capabilities of our dioceses. The SCMD believes that tools are needed to help persons in the discernment process for ordained ministry and their advisors understand the challenges of limiting, managing and repaying educational debt accumulated both before and during seminary education. The SCMD has concluded that the three-phase plan developed by the Society for the Increase of the Ministry, outlined below, is a useful tool for this purpose. The Society for the Increase of the Ministry's plan has three phases:" Phase one begins prior to seminary, at the beginning of the discernment process, when postulants and their advisors should be provided with the necessary resources to identify, confront and manage accumulated debt. For example, each diocesan Commission on Ministry should be trained in the use of the Church Pension Fund's financial planning tools for nominees, postulants and candidates for Holy Orders; each diocese should establish clear and situation-sensitive financial guidelines as to acceptable, realistic and manageable levels of debt prior to entering seminary; and each diocesan Commission on Ministry should establish a financial support team composed of financial planners, lawyers and social workers experienced in financial management counseling." Phase two occurs as a seminary is chosen and study begins. Through scholarships and other financial support provided by parishes and dioceses, the candidates for Holy Orders are to be provided with sufficient financial support to ensure that they do not add yet more debt while in seminary." Phase three occurs in the final year of theological education and upon arrival at the ordinand's first assignment. Advice and counsel on available strategies for paying down accumulated debt most efficiently and expeditiously should be provided to each ordinand. One solution is to create an expectation that parishes are to be responsible for making payments on clergy educational debts, in addition to the compensation package otherwise provided to the clergy person.