

**Inquirer – Candidate/First Call Pastor Indebtedness Policy**  
**Denver Presbytery**  
**Adopted 08/25/02**

**Rationale:** The cost of seminary education continues to escalate. While most theological institutions provide some financial aid, it is very common for seminary graduates to begin their professional vocation with a large indebtedness. Such indebtedness and the concerns that may accompany it have the potential of negatively impacting the effectiveness of the pastor-s first call and future ministry. It is Denver Presbytery's goal to not only be aware of these concerns for its inquirers/candidates and ministers but to take pro-active steps in assisting these servants of the church to deal creatively and effectively with them. In addition, eligibility criteria for the Seminary Debt Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions requires that recipient presbyteries have an Indebtedness Policy.

**For pastor/Associate Pastors Serving a First Call in Denver Presbytery**

- 1) The COM liaison shall discuss with potential candidates for call the adequacy of compensation being offered by the church, particularly in relationship to seminary indebtedness.
- 2) A minister serving a first call within Denver Presbytery shall participate in the "Fiscal Fitness" workshop sponsored by the board of Pensions (PCUSA) or other financial planning workshop within the first year of ministry or show evidence of having previously attended such a workshop. The cost shall be borne by continuing education allowance and, when necessary, supplementary funds provided by COM.
- 3) First call pastors meeting the criteria for the board of Pensions Seminary Debt Assistance Program shall apply for available grants. **Criteria:**
  - first call to church of 150 members or less
  - Church budget of less than \$100,000
  - Permission of the Presbytery
  - Graduate of PC(USA) seminary
- 4) The COM shall encourage the pastor and his or her church to develop a plan for continued support and guidance for the pastor.

**For Inquirers and Candidates of Denver presbytery**

- 1) Inquirers shall be encouraged to:  
Meet with a regional representative or other person of the Board of Pensions or other qualified financial advisor to assess net worth and to make a plan for financing the cost of seminary  
**Or**  
Participate in a "Fiscal Fitness" workshop sponsored by the Board of Pensions (PCUSA). The Committee on Preparation for Ministry will assist in finding ways to cover the cost.
- 2) Prior to moving to candidacy, inquirers shall provide the Committee on Preparation for Ministry with a plan for financing the cost of seminary.
- 3) A designee of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry shall counsel with an inquirer/candidate regarding his/her level of (anticipated) indebtedness in relationship to the prospective salary that can be expected, based on the current median income as reported annually by the Board of Pensions and Presbytery's established minimum compensation. (The Board of Pensions recommends that seminary indebtedness should not exceed 40% of churchwide median effective salary)
- 4) At the time of annual consultation, the Committee on Preparation for Ministry is encouraged to inquire as to the status of the inquirer's or candidate's level of indebtedness and shall assist the student, as appropriate, in determining ways to limit or decrease that indebtedness. Students shall be made aware of any possible grant or interest free loan programs available through the Financial Aid for Studies Office of the PC(USA) and PC(USA) seminaries.
- 5) The Committee on Preparation for Ministry shall be an advocate with the session of which the inquirer or candidate is under care in order to generate financial support for the candidate in the form of grants.