

**NEWS FROM THE SOCIETY FOR THE INCREASE OF THE MINISTRY (SIM)**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Society will administer General Convention funding for postulants**

By Jerry Hames

Until the 76<sup>th</sup> General Convention, the Episcopal Church was the only major denomination in the United States without a central funding source for the support of its seminarians. For the first time in memory, General Convention has approved a resolution (C013) providing scholarship support for Episcopal postulants and candidates for holy orders over the next triennium, 2010 to 2012. The action won the support of both bishops and deputies at its every third year meeting in Anaheim, California, in July.

"The funding vote, especially in the face of the Church's severe financial challenges to its triennium budget, is an important statement", said Thomas Moore III, Executive Director of the Society for the Increase of Ministry (SIM). "The Church has heard SIM's clarion call and intends to do its part to reverse the trend of increasing seminarian debt levels that debilitate one's ministry well beyond seminary years."

An independent, nonprofit, 501(c)3 scholarship-granting body, SIM has been true to its original purpose set forth at its founding in 1857: "The object of this corporation shall be to furnish means for the education of candidates for holy orders in the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States." SIM supports seminarians financially with scholarships, pastorally with personal visits and daily prayers, and by advocating for seminarians in the councils of the Church.

Resolution C013, passed by both houses for the original request of \$450,000, was cut to \$200,000 by the Program, Budget and Finance Committee. "The need far exceeds the convention's \$200,000 funding, but we are grateful for this historically significant resolution for the future of the Episcopal Church and, most importantly, for those students answering God's call to serve as ordained leaders of the Church," Moore said.

The Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Kaeton of the Diocese of Newark and the Very Rev. Kevin Martin of the Diocese of Dallas, both recipients of SIM scholarship grants while in seminary, spearheaded a diocese-by-diocese drive to gain support for the resolution. Kaeton said General Convention's action "addresses the 'silent epidemic' of seminary debt that has impacted so many priests in the Church, especially women and people of color."

A second resolution approved by convention also related to SIM. Resolution A106 responded to the call of the 2006 convention to study of seminarian indebtedness and to develop a comprehensive program to address the issue. This convention's Resolution

A106 approved the recommendation of the Standing Commission on Ministry Development's to adopt SIM's "Three Phase Plan to Limit, Manage and Help Ordinands Successfully Repay Accumulated Debt" as a national strategy for the Episcopal Church.

Both resolutions, C013 and A106, recognize the value of SIM's efforts—its scholarship program with a greater than 150 year history of supporting seminarians and its years of research that produced strategies to address the growing dependency on debt financing to pay for theological education.

Moore said convention's actions are a testament to the years of work by the Rev. Canon John Mitman, former executive director of SIM and now a senior consultant to SIM; the Rev. Jerry Carroon, SIM's recently-retired scholarship director; and board members and SIM alumni.

Kaeton, a deputy at General Convention, expressed enthusiasm for the budgetary support for seminarians but added, "The new funding touches only the tip of the iceberg of addressing the crisis of seminarian debt. The prayer of my heart is that the word from this convention will spread to dioceses and parishes to encourage recognition and local backing of the convention's wisdom in supporting our future ordained leaders."

SIM <[www.simministry.org](http://www.simministry.org)> is the only organization raising funds on a national basis to support Episcopal seminarians. Over its history, SIM has distributed more than \$5 million in grants to nearly 5,000 students, many of whom have become church leaders such as parish rectors, cathedral deans and bishops.

*Jerry Hames is a former editor of Episcopal Life.*