

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

### **Former SIM grant recipient, now Canon to Presiding Bishop**

By Jerry Hames



Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori  
with Rev. Canon Charles Robertson  
Photo by: the Rev. Polk VanZandt

One priest who remembers very well the support he received from the Society for the Increase of Ministry now sits in the Presiding Bishop's office at the Episcopal Church Center.

The Rev. Charles "Chuck" Robertson, PhD., canon to Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, who received a master of divinity degree (sum laude) from Virginia Theological Seminary, says he can't emphasize enough how important that support was during his formative years in seminary

Robertson, who lived in the Diocese of Central Florida, said he had been "on hold" for three or four years while he and the parish followed a lengthy discernment process to determine his call to ministry.

"I was really young. I was being asked if I would stick with my decision. Once it was clear that I was going to be going [to seminary], I applied immediately and got support from SIM throughout all three years," he said. "Suddenly, there was a group saying 'We believe in you.'"

"I can't emphasize enough how important that was for me. I received some funds from the diocese, but to get a scholarship, money, from a group that represented the larger church and to get it from folks who didn't know me, but who saw my calling as legitimate, was a real boost."

A Fellow of the Episcopal Church Foundation and former professor of ethics and communication, Robertson served congregations in both Georgia and Florida after his ordination and worked as a consultant in leadership development and conflict management for both the Church of England and the Episcopal Church. Before joining the Presiding Bishop's staff, he was canon to the bishop in the Diocese of Arizona.

Throughout his parish and diocesan ministries, Robertson said, he has always encouraged men and women to apply for assistance from SIM during their years in seminary. “The visits by the staff are wonderful, the prayers are always good, but I can’t emphasize how much the checks meant,” he said from his office in New York. “It meant the world. The grant money is important because it says “We’re willing to invest in you.”

### **SIM faces a challenge**

The Society for the Increase in Ministry faces particular challenges today. While the number of individual donors has increased by 20 percent in the past year, support from parishes has declined because of the current recession. And although SIM received two significant new gifts totaling \$27,000 during the past year, one major donor funding two annual scholarships said depressed investment income left him unable to continue his commitment.

“Seminarians need our support,” said Thomas Moore, executive director. “SIM’s grants make a difference. Consider that 27 percent of current Episcopal bishops were recipients of one or more SIM grants. Or consider that today’s scholarships will be reducing the debt burdens carried into the future ministries of parish priests, rectors, and bishops, perhaps even a future Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church.”

Moore said that although current economic times are difficult for all, they are especially painful for the church’s future leaders. “SIM’s support has helped alleviate the consequences of rising education debt levels carried by seminarians,” he said.

Robertson agrees. “It’s more important than ever, especially in this time when people are reflecting on the fears and hopes that go with money, for someone to say to a seminarian, ‘You are important enough that we will invest in you,’” he said. “In both real and symbolic terms money does carry some weight. To say we will affirm you and invest in you is a huge statement – and even more so with the economy now being what it is.”

*For more information about SIM, or to read what seminarians have to say in *The Call*, the society’s newsletter, go to the newly designed website: [www.simministry.org](http://www.simministry.org)*