

## **RESOLUTION ON SUPPORT FOR THOSE STUDYING FOR ORDAINED MINISTRY**

Submitted by The Revs-----etc.

Resolved: That the Episcopal Diocese [of Connecticut] at its Convention meeting on [October 24 and 25, 2008,] memorialize the 76<sup>th</sup> General Convention of the Episcopal Church and its Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance to provide funding in the coming triennium in the amount of \$100,000 in year one, \$150, 000 in year two and \$200,000 in year three for the purpose of providing needs-based scholarships for Episcopal Seminarians. And be it further

Resolved: That said funds be administered and distributed to needy seminarians through the existing Scholarship Program of the Society for the Increase of the Ministry (SIM), said Society having an established record of 151 years of experience in administering scholarship grants to Episcopal seminarians. And be it further

Resolved: That the General Convention direct SIM to report annually to the Executive Council on this work and its effectiveness in meeting the needs of the future ordained leaders of this Church and that the Executive Council, in turn, provide a full report to 77<sup>th</sup> General Convention.

Explanation:

This funding schedule is intended to bring the support from the General Convention budget to a level matching the annual grants committed by the Society for the Increase of the Ministry (\$225,000.00 for the academic year 2008-09).

Enrollment of full-time Master of Divinity students in the residential seminaries of the Episcopal Church has declined 25% over the last three academic years due largely to the dramatic increases in cost of seminary education, training and formation. The cost of three years of seminary can range from \$51,000 to over \$100,000, depending upon family circumstances and one 's choice of seminaries.

About half of our seminarians struggle under the burden of debt, most of which is educational debt. The average debt of those with debt in the Class of 2009 *only halfway through seminary* is \$44,772. Projecting these figures to graduation and ordination, the average indebtedness of new ordinands will approach or exceed \$60,000.

The high cost of seminary education and the threat of debilitating debt limits diversity among our seminary student bodies and limits the placement opportunities for ordinands to those congregations which pay better than others.

It was at the 62<sup>nd</sup> General Convention (1970) that the seminary deans and the Board for Theological Education first called for direct financial support from General Convention. This action later led to the passing of a resolution calling on parishes to commit 1% of their net budget income to the support of the seminaries of the Episcopal Church. In 1979 the Convention reaffirmed the principle but raised the amount to 1.50%. The 1% principle was reaffirmed at several Conventions which followed. The last reported Parochial Report figures from 1999 demonstrate that such support amounted to only .0027% (barely *one quarter of one percent*) of the called for support. Had support been sustained at 1.00% of net budget parish income, scholarship funds would have increased substantially and the cost of such education, training and formation would have been reduced very significantly and the situation with our seminaries might be quite different.

Meanwhile, the Episcopal Church remains the only major denomination in the United States that does not have a central funding source to support seminarians in their education, training and formation.

While both the General Conventions of 2006 and 2003 called upon various stake-holding agencies of the Episcopal Church to study this issue and to make recommendations, the General Convention has yet to become part of the solution by providing any funding to support seminarians in need. Since 1789 we have consistently acted as if funding of seminaries and seminarians is someone else 's problem, not our own. It is now time for the General Convention and its budget to become an active participant in the solution.