

Society for the Increase of the Ministry
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February 1, 2007

Dear Candidate,

The Society for the Increase of the Ministry is in its 150th year of providing financial and pastoral support for Episcopal seminarians. Since 1857 we have provided over \$7,000,000 in scholarship aid to over 4,800 seminarians. It is our fervent hope that at the end of this application process, we can be helpful to you as you continue your education and training for ordained leadership in ministry in the Episcopal Church.

Recognizing that fully one third of those ordained in the Episcopal Church are prepared for ordination in programs and institutions other than the eleven accredited, residential seminaries of the Episcopal Church, in 1998 SIM undertook to begin support of students following alternative paths of preparation. Hence, we welcome the possibility of providing financial and pastoral support to you in your journey.

We would ask you to help us give your application all the attention and care it deserves by taking great care in completing this application form. To be fair to all applicants, submissions lacking requested information, letters of reference, essays or resumes will not be considered. To expedite the process, we encourage you to use the attached checklist to verify that your submission is complete.

Basic Criteria

1. Grants are made to full-time MDiv. students who are postulants and candidates for holy order in the Episcopal Church in the United States of America.
2. Applicants must demonstrate financial need. The applicant's bishop or ecclesiastical authority and the financial aid officer of the applicant's seminary must attest to this need.
3. The minimum grant is \$1,500. Grants generally do not exceed \$2,500.
4. A scholarship recipient whose canonical status changes, or who withdraws from seminary, or whose financial circumstances change significantly, or who decides to take an intern year or a leave of absence, after a grant has been made, *must notify the SIM office* promptly, in writing, to determine his/her continuing support.
5. The Society's grants are made without regard to race, gender, age, nationality, or marital status of the applicant.

About your personal and financial information: The information you provide on the form is critical data for SIM as we make our scholarship decisions. Beyond the application process, while respecting every student's confidentiality, this data is also used by the Society to identify trends and emerging issues facing seminarians and seminaries. This information helps us to be better advocates for you, all seminarians and the vital enterprise of theological education in the church.

About your Plan for Ministry: Because students work out so many ways of preparing for ordination, it is important that you include a fairly detailed plan for how you will proceed toward your degree and ordination. This is a requirement the first time you apply and an update is required with each subsequent application.

About your essay: The ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing is absolutely essential to the formation of priests. Since it is impossible for SIM to conduct an interview with each postulant, we look to the essay both to demonstrate each applicant's competence in communication and to better understand them as future ordained leaders of the church. The essay should show a command of language (spelling, punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure). As to content, we seek evidence of the transforming power of God's Holy Spirit at work in the applicant's life. Such transformational power may be experienced in and through the postulant and shown forth to others *or* as received from others. It may be the account of an experience in which others are helped to find the love and presence of Christ amidst the challenging ambiguities of life.

We ask that you make the effort to write something *new* in response to the above description. Recycled sermons, essays prepared as a part of your diocesan discernment processes, CPE verbatims or the like will be inadequate to the task. Neither are we interested in statements about "why I feel called to be a priest," or other issues of vocational discernment. These are the concerns of bishops, commissions on ministry, rectors and parish discernment groups. Our interest is in what has happened in the crucible of life that has transformed your life. Please remember that an essay is required each time you make application to SIM.

About your resume: No matter what your age, your resume will help us understand you, your journey, your talents and experience. Please do not forget to include it. The resume is only required when applying for the first time (**Form D**), not with repeat applications (**Form E**).

About your letters of reference: Persons applying to us for the first time must attach to our application (**Form D**) four letters of reference, viz., one from the applicant's bishop, one from the applicant's rector, and two from lay persons. Each of the four letters should speak to the applicant's (1) financial need, (2) character, (3) church involvement and (4) vocation to the ordained ministry in the Episcopal Church. Persons applying for a second grant (**Form E**) are not required to submit further references.

Additionally:

- As our **grants are limited to postulants and candidates**, the bishop's letter must indicate clearly that the applicant is a postulant or candidate for holy orders as of the date of the application.
- Unless there is a compelling reason (clearly stated), the two lay persons should be members of the applicant's congregation.
- Lay persons submitting letters of recommendation must be persons from outside the seminary community and not a member of the applicant's household or family.
- Applications lacking one or more of these letters will not be considered.

Finally, scholarship applications must be submitted as a complete package. This is to say, we ask you to collect all the bits and pieces and send them to us rather than having reference persons write to us directly (we handle so many applications that individual elements are in danger of getting lost or misplaced). The clearer the copy you send us, the more expeditiously we can process your application. **Your application must be approved by your Bishop before submitting it to us.**

We make every effort to get back to you with a decision within 30 days of the receipt of your complete application.

Grateful for your patience and looking forward to receiving your application, I remain

Yours faithfully,

The Rev. Canon Robert G. Carroon
Director, Scholarship Programs