

September 21, 2017

Resolution USS Rostered Leaders Seminary/Educational Debt Reduction Ministry

Whereas, the synod council of the Upper Susquehanna Synod at its meeting on September 22, 2016, adopted a motion *“to give the bishop permission to create a new budget line item called ‘USS rostered leaders seminary debt reduction fund’ for the purpose of loan assistance for rostered leaders”* and

Whereas, the synod council of the Upper Susquehanna Synod wishes to establish guidelines and policy for the use and disbursement of funds received designated for the USS Rostered Leaders Seminary Debt Reduction Fund; and

Whereas, the synod council of the Upper Susquehanna Synod recognizes that rostered leaders often have debt from both undergraduate and seminary education, and that the candidacy process of the ELCA normally requires such education: therefore it is

Resolved, the synod council of the Upper Susquehanna Synod establishes a Rostered Leaders Seminary/Educational Debt Reduction Ministry (formerly Rostered Leaders Seminary Debt Reduction Fund) for the purpose of providing assistance to rostered leaders serving in the synod who carry debt from undergraduate and seminary education; and it is further

Resolved, the attached policy and guidelines will govern the collection, investment and disbursement of funds to fulfill this ministry.

Upper Susquehanna Synod Rostered Leaders Seminary/Educational Debt Reduction Ministry Guidelines

The Upper Susquehanna Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America values strong and competent rostered leadership. Such leadership is essential to building a strong healthy and vibrant church on the territory of our synod.

Many seminary graduates enter their first call with the burden of repaying large student loan debt. That debt follows them into subsequent calls. It is often difficult for our synod to retain strong and competent rostered leaders because they leave for higher paying calls in order to ease the burden of their student loan debt. It is also often difficult to attract strong and competent rostered leaders to consider a call to the Upper Susquehanna Synod because of our lower compensation guidelines.

In an effort to attract and retain these leaders, the Upper Susquehanna Synod commits to establishing a Rostered Leaders Seminary/Educational Debt Reduction Ministry. This Debt Reduction Ministry will be administered by Synod Council and operate under the following guidelines:

1. This ministry will commence on October 1, 2017.
2. This ministry will be funded by synod congregations, individuals, and designated offerings. The Synod Assembly retains the privilege of funding this ministry through the yearly budgeting process.
3. This ministry will assist leaders rostered in the Upper Susquehanna Synod in reducing their seminary/educational loan debt. Distribution will be at the discretion of the Synod Bishop, the Synod Council Executive Committee, and with fiscal management advice. Only debt incurred prior to rostering will be considered for this ministry.
4. This assistance will be offered in the form of a principal payment made directly to the holder of the loan. The synod will not write a check payable to an individual rostered leader.
5. Assistance shall not be offered in a prescribed pre-set amount. The amount of assistance per year per rostered leader shall be determined in consultation with the Synod Bishop and Executive Committee.
6. In years when need exceeds the synod's resources, preference shall be given to rostered leaders demonstrating quality leadership in congregations that possess a clear and attainable vision for building a strong and faithful church. In other words, having seminary/educational loan debt does not automatically qualify a rostered leader for assistance from this ministry.
7. Rostered leaders called to serve on the territory of the Upper Susquehanna Synod and who receive debt reduction assistance from this ministry shall commit to serve a minimum of three years in their ministry setting following the last payment made on their behalf. If a rostered leader resigns less than three years after the last payment is made on their behalf, this leader shall reimburse the synod for 50% of the total amount of that year's debt reduction provided. The Synod Bishop, at her or his sole discretion, may waive or modify this requirement.
8. Debt reduction payments may be taxable as income to the rostered leader. Any payments above \$600 will be filed with the IRS on form 1099. Taxes are the responsibility of the rostered leader.

Rostered leaders must submit an application to be considered for this ministry by December 1 of each year. Annual distribution will take place in January.

Upper Susquehanna Synod
Rostered Leaders' Seminary Debt Reduction Application

Attach additional sheets if needed

Name (as it appears with loan agency): _____

Home address: _____

Place of present call: _____

Start date of present call: _____

Total debt load from education: \$ _____

Name of institution(s) and year(s) debt incurred:

Current Monthly Payment Amount \$ _____

Balance of Loan(s): \$ _____

Name and mailing address of loan agency:

Account number on this loan: _____

Any additional account information:

Describe Mission Opportunities created by your congregation in fifty words or less:

I understand that this information may be subject to verification with the seminary or lending agency, and that it will otherwise remain confidential. I acknowledge that I am responsible for any taxes that may be due because of this grant.

I also understand that if I leave the Upper Susquehanna Synod within three years from the date of any grant under this program I will be responsible to refund 50% of the amount of the grant to the synod.

Your signature: _____ Date: _____

*Please mail completed application by December 1, to: Bishop Barbara J. Collins
Upper Susquehanna Synod, ELCA, P.O. Box 36, Lewisburg, PA 17837
or email bpcollins@uss-elca.org*