

Rostered Leaders Debt Reduction Ministry Guidelines

The West Virginia – Western Maryland Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America values strong and powerful rostered leadership. Such leadership is essential to building a strong and powerful church on the territory of our synod.

Many seminary graduates enter first calls with the burden of repaying large student loan debt. It is often difficult for our synod to retain good, strong, and powerful 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 good, strong, and powerful rostered leaders to consider a call to the West Virginia – Western Maryland Synod.

In an effort to attract and retain good, strong and powerful rostered leaders the West Virginia – Western Maryland Synod commits to establishing a Rostered Leaders Debt Reduction Ministry. This Pastoral Debt Reduction Ministry will be administered by Synod Council and operate under the following guidelines.

1. This ministry will commence on January 1, 2002.
2. This ministry will be funded by synod congregations and concerned individuals. The Synod Assembly retains the privilege of funding this ministry through the yearly budgeting process.
3. With the assistance of the Synod Bishop, this ministry will assist leaders rostered in the West Virginia – Western Maryland Synod in eliminating their student loan debt.
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 pastor shall be determined in consultation with the Synod Bishop.
6. For leaders rostered in the synod as of January 1, 2001 this ministry, in consultation with the Synod Bishop, may offer further assistance in the amount of \$ ___ multiplied by the number of years of service in the synod. [For example if the amount is \$1,000 and the pastor has served for five years in this synod that pastor could receive a \$5,000 principal payment. This will be determined based upon the amount in the fund on January 1, 2002.] Rostered Leaders in the synod after January 1, 2001 will need to complete one year of service to be eligible to receive assistance in future years as described in item #5 above.
7. 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 powerful church. In other words, having student loan debt does not automatically qualify a rostered leader for assistance from this ministry.
8. Rostered Leaders called to serve on the territory of the West Virginia – Western Maryland Synod and who receive debt reduction assistance from this ministry shall commit to serve a minimum of one year in their ministry setting following the last payment made on their behalf. If a rostered leader resigns less than one year after the last payment is made on their behalf, this leader shall reimburse the Synod for 50% of the total amount of debt reduction offered. The Synod Bishop, at his or her sole discretion, may waive this reimbursement restriction.