

# **North/West Lower Michigan Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Seminary Debt Reduction Assistance Program**

## **Applicant Information and Instructions**

The North/West Lower Michigan Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (“NWLMS” or “Synod”) has established a Seminary Debt Reduction Assistance Program for rostered ministers as outlined in the Seminary Debt Reduction Assistance Program and this information and instruction guide.

### **Eligibility**

Seminary debt reduction assistance is available to rostered ministers (1) who are in their first fifteen (15) years of ministry after becoming a rostered minister of the ELCA; (2) who have graduated from an ELCA seminary or other approved theological institution of higher education; (3) who are serving as active, called rostered ministers within the NWLMS; (4) who have outstanding seminary-related educational debt; and (5) who comply with application procedures, deadlines, and other requirements as stated within the Program guidelines and this Seminary Debt Reduction Assistance Applicant Information and Instructions.

### **Terms and Conditions**

Rostered ministers may apply for assistance on an annual basis as long as eligibility requirements are maintained. In order to be considered for debt reduction assistance, an eligible rostered minister must:

1. Complete and submit the Seminary Debt Reduction Assistance Application form each year on or before February 28<sup>th</sup>.
2. Include a brief statement summarizing your current ministry, vision for ministry, and goals for your next five (5) years in ministry (first time applicants should provide a brief description of activities while in seminary, including any work/study, clinical experience, internship information, etc.).
3. Include a brief statement explaining why you are requesting assistance based on your overall personal finances and budgeting.

4. Commit to participating in required fiscal literacy counseling and education each year of assistance receipt (for the second year of application and thereafter, you must provide (a) a summary of the prior year's counseling and education attended or completed along with highlights of significant learnings; and (b) a summary of your ongoing financial knowledge growth, stability, and continued overall personal debt reduction).
5. Commit to remaining an active, called rostered minister within the NWLMS for a minimum of three (3) years after the most recent receipt of debt reduction assistance.
6. Provide a seminary or theological institution transcript (first year applicants only), itemization of continuing education / synod activities and events attended in the last twelve months, documented attendance at Synod boundary training within the prior three years, etc.
7. Provide a letter of recommendation and support from your current congregation's church council president and treasurer and a copy of your most recent Rostered Leader Annual Report.
8. After the first year of receiving assistance and thereafter, share information with others within the Synod about the program's existence and benefits.

All applicant information is confidential. The Seminary Debt Reduction Assistance Team will review the application and will contact you to gather more specific information if necessary in support of your application. The Seminary Debt Reduction Assistance Team will consider your overall financial means, the nature and amount of debt, and other relevant factors in determining debt reduction assistance recipients.

The funds available for distribution and the recipients selected each year are determined in the sole discretion of the Seminary Debt Reduction Assistance Team, as then reviewed and approved by the Bishop and the Executive Committee of the Synod Council.

Assistance recipients will be notified if they are selected to receive assistance and the amount of payment(s) each year on or before April 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Applications are due on or before February 28<sup>th</sup>.**

(Applications submitted after this date will not be considered.)