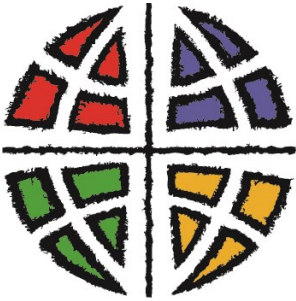




# Stewardship Perspective: Seminary Educational Debt



## The Supply of and Demand for Clergy in the ELCA

A report entitled “The Supply of and Demand for Clergy in the ELCA”, written by Adam DeHoek and Kenneth Inskeep, released by ELCA Research and Evaluation in March, 2016, indicated the following data (between 2005-2014):

- The number of clergy serving congregations has declined from 9,105 to 6,868.
- ELCA M. Div. graduates at ELCA seminaries went down from 245 to 209.
- First year enrollments in ELCA seminaries decreased from 310 to 214.

The report concludes: “...among active clergy serving congregations the most significant component of loss is the number of retirements” and “the most significant component of gain is new ordinations”.

The authors state: “The church needs more persons who will consider ordained ministry and become ordained pastors. Clearly, those concerned about the future of the church should seek out and encourage people they believe might be good pastors and open to the call. Programs to do so should be encouraged and supported by the church.”

## The Path to Ordination

In order to become a pastor in the ELCA, candidates must have earned an undergraduate degree before entering seminary. Students are not required to have an undergraduate degree (or minor) in religious or biblical studies in order to attend seminary. The seminary curriculum for a Masters of Divinity degree usually involves four years of study, including one year of internship, a quarter of Clinical Pastoral Education, and possibly some additional time in contextual education. The ELCA seminaries estimate that the average cost of a seminary education (excluding internship) costs approx. \$35,000-\$40,000 per year x three years=\$105,000-\$120,000 per student. This is over and above the expenses incurred by the student for their undergraduate education. It is not difficult to see why attempts to reduce seminary educational debt is a priority for students.

## Pedal for a Purpose

The offerings for the 2016 Pedal for a Purpose have been designated for the reduction of seminary educational debt. This year's ride, May 30-June 2, seeks to raise \$30,000 for this cause. Checks may be made payable to: “Central/Southern Illinois Synod” with a note “Pedal for a Purpose”. Checks may be sent the synod office at 524 S. Fifth St., Springfield, IL 62701-1822 or offerings may be brought to the 2016 synod assembly, which will be held in East Peoria, IL, June 2-4, 2016. Thank you for your generous support! For more information about Pedal for a Purpose, visit [www.csis-elca.org](http://www.csis-elca.org)

