

## ***MEF POLICY (Revisions adopted May 14, 2008)***

The WNY Conference, through the Board of Ordained Ministry, makes available financial aid to persons in their training for professional ministry in two forms:

1. Seminary aid, including aid for the basic seminary degree or basic theological studies for Deacons.
2. Continuing Formation aid.

### ***AID FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION***

Aid is available to seminary students on a credit hour basis, depending on the availability of funds. Funds are allocated from the Ministerial Education Fund and other funds designated for education for ministry. Aid is limited to available funds according to approved guidelines of BOM. Other financial aid to the applicant is taken into account. The intent of BOM aid is to supplement the applicant's other financial resources available for tuition, books, room and board, etc.

The general conditions for eligibility for aid are:

1. An applicant must be a certified candidate for ministry in the WNY Conference and a matriculated student in a seminary approved by the University Senate of the UMC, or accepted into the approved program of graduate theological studies for Deacons.
2. An applicant must submit documentation of his/her undergraduate degree, and of undergraduate work (one time only). Separate applications are required for each term, listing anticipated credit hours to be taken. After registration is verified with the seminary registrar, funds are sent directly to the treasurer or bursar of the seminary, or appropriate registrar ***OR the applicant if indicated in writing to the Seminary Grant Officer.*** The award of aid carries a requirement of service in the WNY Conference. For each year of full time service in the WNY Conference following graduation 20% of the funds will be forgiven.. Recipients must sign a promissory note as a condition for release of funds. Applications may be obtained from the Scholarship Officer of the BOM.

### ***Additional Theological Aid Funds***

#### ***1. Christian Student Scholarship Fund***

Available to students devoting their life to full-time Christian service. This fund is restricted and is to be given to persons from the Niagara Frontier District only. Preference will be given first to persons from the west side of the city of Buffalo, and secondly to persons in other areas of the Niagara Frontier District. This grant is not available to any person not serving in the Niagara Frontier District.

The "Blodgett Scholarship Committee" will administer these grants.

#### ***2. Carlton Sheley Scholarships***

Available to students studying for ministry. One scholarship of \$300 per year will be

awarded to a certified candidate for ordination as a deacon or elder from the Western NY Conference enrolled at an approved seminary. This grant will be awarded by the Executive Committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry. Application is made through the MEF Officer by June 1<sup>st</sup>.

### ***AID FOR CONTINUING FORMATION***

“The experience of God’s love (through Jesus Christ) gives us impetus to explore new information, to gain a better understanding, and to communicate more skillfully with the world. The image of the Church that speaks demonstrates this is that of a pilgrim who both experiences and yet continually searches for the mysteries of God. In fear and trembling we strive to learn, discover, and experience the appropriate style, information and skills for sharing the good news of God.” (GBHEM BOM HANDBOOK, 19.2)

Continuing Formation is a developed personal program for spiritual growth and to improve professional skills, including but not limited to organized educational programs, spiritual retreats, travel seminars, skill workshops, etc. In most cases, the clergy member’s continuing formation and spiritual growth program should allow for educational/formational leaves at least one week each year, and at least one month during each quadrennium. Such leaves shall not be considered as part of the minister’s vacation, and shall be planned in consultation with their charges or other agencies to which they are appointed, as well as the Bishop, District Superintendent, and Annual Conference Continuing Effectiveness Committee. A clergy member may request a leave of up to 6 months while continuing to hold a pastoral appointment for a continuing spiritual formation event/program. This request is made through the District Superintendent.

Pastors shall be asked by the District Superintendent to report annually on their programs of continuing education, formation, and spiritual growth for the past year, and plans for the year to come.

Clergy in non-parish appointments shall make such a report annually to their appropriate supervisory body.

Evaluation of effectiveness is done through the local church or other supervisory body, not BOM. (§350, UMC Discipline, 2004) Discussion of appropriate avenues for growth should take place with the SPRC. The DS may be consulted as needed.

There are two primary styles of continuing formation:

1. A supervised or leader-directed activity, which may include a structured session (seminary, laboratory, or project), a pre-session preparation (study, writing a paper) or a post-session follow-up (written paper, oral feedback, examination). This could include working with a ministry or life coach or a spiritual director. A supervised Independent Study in an area of interest is also appropriate.

2. A self-directed activity that has a clearly defined plan (preferably in writing),

including provision for evaluation and accountability. Such a plan could include a variety of learning methods; e.g. reading, lecture, workshops, action/reflection and needs to be shared with the SPRC or District Superintendent.

The content of Continuing Formation experiences is intended to be broad, so as to encourage both leader-directed and self-directed activities and experiences. The goal of Continuing Formation includes, but is not limited to theological reflection, development of self-awareness, maintaining and developing pastoral skills, personal spiritual growth, and professional development throughout one's ministry.

In addition, the Continuing Effectiveness Division may sponsor a "travel seminar" each quadrennium, as well as other events/workshops to sharpen skills and provide for spiritual and professional development.

### ***Eligibility:***

Continuing Effectiveness aid is available to: 1) Ordained Deacons and Elders and Consecrated Diaconal Ministers of the WNY Conference of the UMC who are under appointment within the boundaries of the Conference; 2) Probationary Deacons and Elders of the WNY Conference who have completed seminary and who are under appointment within the boundaries of the Conference; 3) Local Pastors of the Conference who have completed seminary or course of study and who are under appointment in the WNY Conference; 4) Ordained Deacons and Elders who are members of other annual conferences or other denominations but who are appointed to serve in the WNY Conference; 5) Retired Deacons and Elders under active appointment within the boundaries of the WNY Conference; 6) Associate Members who are under appointment within the boundaries of the WNY Conference.

### ***Continuing Formation Plan Criteria:***

A Continuing Formation experience which is eligible for aid from MEF will:

- a. Be part of a written plan which includes purpose, dates, time involved and a cost breakdown;
- b. Be reviewed in advance with the SPRC or appropriate supervisory body or person;
- c. Be related to faith development and/or professional goals identified through personal assessment;
- d. Be related to goals developed by the clergy person with the SPRC or appropriate supervisory body/person as part of the annual evaluation of ministry.

### ***Guidelines for Distribution of Funds:***

- a. The maximum amount available to an individual is up to \$300.00 annually as reimbursement for costs associated with Continuing Formation.
- b. All aid is paid directly to the applicant or local church upon presentation of proof of payment OR directly to the entity sponsoring the event.
- c. If funds are to be paid directly to the applicant or the local church, a paid receipt or other proof of payment MUST accompany the application.
- d. A completed application form must be submitted to the Continuing Effectiveness

Coordinator for approval, following the guidelines specified here and on the application.

e. While the preference is for application to be made before the event, funds may be available for events already attended provided application is made during the same calendar year as the event occurred.

e. No more than two-year's funds will be distributed for a single event. Application for each year's grant will be made separately. The first year's funds will be held in escrow with the WNY Conference unless paid directly to the event sponsor or proof of payment can be provided. The event shall be held within the current or succeeding calendar year of application.

f. Those serving less than full-time appointments will be eligible for funds on a pro-rata basis. Exceptions may be made at the discretion of the MEF officer in consultation with the District Superintendent.

g. The applicant covenants to fulfill the follow-up expectations with the local church SPRC or equivalent body for persons in special appointments- not with the Board of Ordained Ministry.

h. These guidelines are reviewed periodically and may change from time to time. Continuing Formation grants will be subject to the guidelines that are in effect at the time of application.

i. Distributed funds for events that are not attended must be returned to the MEF officer. Failure to do so will result in loss of eligibility for future aid and possible discipline for unethical conduct.

In order to make Continuing Formation experiences available to the maximum number of persons; and in light of limited funds available through the MEF, and to allow the BOM and the Continuing Effectiveness Division to become more pro-active in making Continuing Formation Experiences available to all the clergy members of the Conference, up to one third (1/3) of the total MEF receipts each year may be deposited in an escrow account of the Annual Conference, which will be used for a special Continuing Formation Experience to be sponsored by the Continuing Effectiveness Division and the Board of Ordained Ministry during each Quadrennium. The MEF Officer or Continuing Effectiveness Division must submit a proposed event to the Board of Ordained Ministry for approval.

## ***ADDITIONAL CONTINUING FORMATION AID FUNDS:***

Additional aid is available for advanced degrees and CPE from special funds. A paid receipt or other proof of registration must accompany the application. Eligible persons serving less than full time will be awarded funds on a pro-rata basis. Funds will be paid directly to applicant upon proof of payment or to the event sponsor.

### ***1. Blanch Gray Scholarships***

Amounts of grants are determined by funds available in the investment account. Grants will be paid directly to the applicant, and are available in addition to MEF Continuing Formation aid for:

a. Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)

b. Certification: funds are provided for ordained Deacons, ordained Elders and consecrated Diaconal Ministers seeking certification in the area of Youth Ministry, Christian Education, Music, and Evangelism, or other approved areas of ministry.

**2. *Liebler Scholarship***

a. Scholarships are limited to Continuing Formation events in disciplines closely related to preaching.

b. Scholarships are limited to \$500 per year.

c. Scholarship is in addition to any MEF aid given.

e. The total amount of scholarships awarded during any calendar year is not to exceed the balance of the Liebler Scholarship Earnings Fund as of December 31 of the preceding year (Balance Transfer Amount).

**3. *Linda S. Weidman Ministry Fund***

Scholarships will be given to persons, lay or ordained, to develop skills in ministry to the terminally ill residing in rural areas.