

Ministerial Training Fund Policy

Western States Conference of the Global Methodist Church

1. Purpose and Authority

The Ministerial Training Fund was established by the 2024 General Conference of the Global Methodist Church under ¶511 of the Book of Doctrines and Discipline. The purpose of the fund is to assist qualified candidates for ordained ministry with educational expenses related to their preparation for service as deacons or elders in the Global Methodist Church.

This policy establishes how the Western States Conference will administer and implement the Ministerial Training Fund within the Conference. It provides guidelines for eligibility, application, selection, reimbursement, reporting, loan forgiveness, and repayment.

The Western States Conference understands this fund as an investment in future clergy who are preparing to serve Christ, the church, and the mission field entrusted to the Global Methodist Church.

2. Nature of Assistance

Assistance from the Ministerial Training Fund shall be provided as a forgivable loan. It is not an automatic grant at the time funds are awarded.

Funds may be forgiven after ordination based on faithful service in ministry within the Global Methodist Church. The service commitment is five years following ordination.

For each full year of qualifying ministry within the Global Methodist Church after ordination, 20% of the loan shall be forgiven.

The loan shall be fully forgiven after five full years of qualifying ministry within the Global Methodist Church following ordination, provided the recipient remains in good standing and satisfies all reporting requirements.

To receive payment, the applicant must provide:

1. Official or unofficial transcript, grade report, or institutional record showing completion of the approved course or courses.
2. A final grade of C or better.
3. For pass/fail courses, a final grade of Pass.
4. Proof of payment or account statement showing the cost of the course or courses.

The Conference may pay the recipient directly or, when appropriate, may pay the educational institution directly after the required documentation has been received.

3. Eligible Educational Expenses

Eligible expenses may include:

1. Tuition for GMC approved seminary, theological, or ministry preparation coursework.
2. Required course fees.
3. Required books or materials, if specifically approved by the selection committee.

The following are not eligible:

1. Housing.
2. Meals.
3. Travel.
4. Technology purchases.
5. Student loan payments for prior education.
6. Courses unrelated to ordination preparation.

Exceptions may be considered by the selection committee when the expense is clearly connected to the applicant's preparation for ordained ministry.

4. Basic Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible, an applicant must meet all of the following requirements:

1. Be working toward ordination as a deacon or elder in the Global Methodist Church.
2. Be a Certified Candidate through the Western States Conference Board of Ministry.
3. Reside within the boundaries of the Western States Conference.
4. Be actively involved in a Western States Conference Global Methodist Church.
5. Be enrolled in, accepted into, or actively completing coursework at an approved GMC seminary or school that supports the educational requirements for ordination.
6. Be in good standing with the Western States Conference Board of Ministry.
7. Submit a complete application by the required deadline.
8. Agree to the terms of the forgivable loan agreement.

5. Priority Guidelines

Because funds are limited, meeting the basic eligibility requirements does not guarantee an award. The selection committee will prayerfully consider each eligible application using the following priority guidelines.

Primary priority: Financial need

The program is intended to help students for whom educational costs create a meaningful financial burden. Financial need does not mean the applicant must be in financial crisis. It does mean the applicant has a legitimate need for assistance and does not have sufficient personal, family, church, or institutional resources to easily cover the cost.

The committee may consider:

1. Current household income.
2. Household size.
3. Current educational expenses.
4. Existing scholarships or grants.
5. Support from a local church.
6. Family support or outside assistance.
7. Existing student debt.
8. Current employment status.
9. Whether the applicant is already serving in ministry.
10. Whether the applicant has substantial financial resources that would make assistance unnecessary.

Applicants may be asked to provide a brief financial summary. The purpose is not to embarrass the applicant or require unnecessary personal detail. The purpose is to steward Conference funds wisely and make sure assistance goes to those with genuine need.

Suggested financial review method

The application should ask applicants to identify all current sources of educational funding and to provide a short explanation of financial need.

The committee may classify financial need as:

1. High need: The applicant has limited ability to pay educational costs without assistance and has little to no outside sources of support.
2. Moderate need: The applicant has some ability to contribute but still faces a meaningful financial burden.
3. Limited need: The applicant has substantial resources, significant outside support, or the ability to pay without hardship.

Applicants with high or moderate need should generally receive priority over applicants with limited need.

An applicant should not be excluded simply because they are employed, have some savings, receive partial help from family, or receive some support from a church. However, applicants with substantial personal wealth or abundant outside funding should receive lower priority.

Secondary priorities

After financial need, the committee may also consider:

1. Clear call to ordained ministry.
2. Active participation in a Western States Conference GMC church.
3. Demonstrated commitment to Wesleyan theology and the Global Methodist Church.
4. Progress toward ordination.
5. Academic faithfulness and responsibility.
6. Willingness to serve under appointment.
7. After graduation/completion, openness to serving or starting a church in the Western States Conference, or, at a minimum, at a GMC church in another Conference.
8. Interest in serving underserved areas, planting churches, revitalizing churches, or helping expand disciple making ministry in the West.
9. Recommendations from the applicant's pastor, mentor, or Board of Ministry representative.

6. Selection Committee

With consultation from the Board of Ministry and the Cabinet, the selection committee shall be appointed by the Conference Superintendent.

The committee should include at least three members. When possible, the committee should include representation from:

1. The Board of Ministry.
2. Conference leadership.
3. Clergy or laity with experience in theological education, finance, or clergy formation.

Committee members must maintain confidentiality regarding applicant information. However, for complete transparency, award recipients' names are to be released publicly.

Any committee member with a personal, family, financial, supervisory, or church relationship that may create a conflict of interest should disclose that relationship and may be asked to abstain from discussion or voting on that applicant.

Reporting and Record Keeping

The selection committee shall be responsible for maintaining records for all Ministerial Training Fund applicants and recipients, including awards granted, documentation received, ordination status, service commitment progress, annual loan forgiveness, and any remaining loan balances.

The committee shall also be responsible for any reporting requirements established by the Global Methodist Church no later than January 31st of each year.

The committee shall approve awards by the applicable Global Methodist Church deadline and submit one report each award period to the Conference Treasurer authorizing payment of approved funds.

7. Selection Process

The selection process shall include the following steps:

1. Applicant submits a completed application including grades and proof of expense.
2. Selection committee confirms basic eligibility.
3. Committee may request additional information if needed.
4. Committee determines what amount (if any) is awarded.
5. Applicant is notified in writing.
6. Approved applicants sign the forgivable loan agreement.
7. Funds are paid to recipient.

Approval may be for a specific course, semester, academic term, or dollar amount. Approval does not guarantee future funding.

8. Award Amounts

Award amounts may vary depending on available funds, number of applicants, financial need, and eligible expenses.

The committee is required to annually award at least 90% of all funds given from the Ministerial Fund of the Global Methodist Church.

9. Conditions for Forgiveness

The loan may be forgiven if the recipient:

1. Is ordained as a deacon or elder in the Global Methodist Church.
2. Remains in good standing with the Global Methodist Church.
3. Serves faithfully in appointed or approved ministry for five years following ordination.
4. Provides any required annual reporting during the forgiveness period.

At the completion of the five-year post ordination service period, the recipient may request formal forgiveness of the loan. The Conference may then issue written confirmation that the loan has been forgiven and converted into a grant.

10. Repayment Conditions

The loan may become repayable if the recipient:

1. Withdraws from the ordination process.
2. Is removed from the ordination process.
3. Leaves the Global Methodist Church before ordination.
4. Is ordained but does not serve in appointed or approved ministry for the required five year period.
5. Falsifies application information.
6. Fails to meet the reporting requirements.

The Conference may, at its discretion, waive or reduce repayment obligations due to extraordinary circumstances, such as serious illness, disability, family crisis, military deployment, death, or other circumstances deemed appropriate by the Conference.

11. Repayment Terms

If repayment is required, only the unforgiven balance of the loan shall be subject to repayment.

The Conference Treasurer shall notify the recipient in writing of the amount owed and the reason repayment is required. Unless otherwise approved, repayment shall begin within 90 days of written notice.

The recipient may repay the balance in full or request a written payment plan. Payment plans will be approved by the Conference Treasurer in consultation with Conference Superintendent and should normally not exceed 36 months.

The Western States Conference may waive, reduce, or extend repayment terms due to extraordinary circumstances, including serious illness, disability, family crisis, military deployment, death, or other circumstances deemed appropriate by the Conference.

12. Reporting Requirements

After ordination, recipients must provide an annual ministry status report during the five year forgiveness period, including:

1. Current appointment or ministry setting.
2. Confirmation of continued good standing.
3. Brief description of ministry service.
4. Any changes in appointment, location, or denominational status.

Failure to provide required reports may delay forgiveness or trigger review of repayment obligations.

13. Policy Review

This policy should be reviewed annually by the Conference Superintendent, Board of Ministry, or designated committee to ensure that it continues to serve the mission of the Western States Conference and properly steward the funds entrusted to the Conference.