

The Society for the Increase of the Ministry, 1857-2007

By The Rev. Dr. Borden Painter, Jr.

“The more things change the more they stay the same” might well serve as the appropriate motto for the Society for the Increase of the Ministry as it marks the 150th anniversary of its founding. SIM currently has set a course for the 21st century that requires unprecedented change in its organization and structure in order to remain faithful to its original and same purpose set forth at its founding in 1857: “*The object of this corporation shall be to furnish means for the education of candidates for holy orders in the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States.*”

The need for dedicated, trained and educated ordained leaders of the Church in 2007 remains the same as in 1857, but the circumstances have changed dramatically. The United States during the term of President James Buchanan was heading for the country’s greatest crisis that would erupt into a bloody and fractious war in 1860. The frontier still beckoned settlers to fill the vast spaces that would be defended by Native Americans for several more decades. The Civil War would unleash a new wave of economic development and industrialization and the country would soon be tied together in a new way with the trans-continental railroad. Millions of immigrants would flock to our shores. A nation of 32 million has grown to the 300 million of 2006. Today we are bound together by instant communications in a nation whose economic and military power overshadows the world.

The Episcopal Church’s membership stood at about 400,000 in 1857 and would experience significant growth in numbers and geographical dispersion in the latter 19th century. Today its 2.3 million members live in 111 dioceses throughout the 50 states and overseas territories. To fulfill its mission, the Church must attract a talented and diverse corps of men and women for the ordained ministry and find the means to train and educate them. SIM is dedicated to continuing its mission “to furnish means” for preparing its clergy while mounting a new effort to work with the national Church to meet the mounting cost of educating and nurturing those called to ordained ministry.

A Fast Start

The Society for the Increase of the Ministry got its start when a group of seven clergy and one layman met in Hartford on October 2, 1857, to discuss an organization to

find suitable young men for the Episcopal ministry “and to aid them in acquiring a thorough education.” Five were rectors of area parishes: three in Hartford, one from Thompsonville, Connecticut, and another from Millville, Massachusetts. Three came from the faculty of Trinity College, including the President, David Raynes Goodwin, and the next President, Professor Samuel Eliot, the only layman in the group.

The committee wasted no time in launching the new society. By December they had written and adopted a constitution and set an annual contribution of \$3 as the price of membership. Clergy could also help by taking an annual collection for the Society in their congregations. Leadership would come from a president, vice-presidents, secretaries, a treasurer and a board of directors made up of four clergymen and three laymen. From the beginning, the organizers took great pains to make the Society national in scope. Thus a network of secretaries would represent SIM in various dioceses and any bishop willing to participate became a “Patron.” A local secretary would handle the funds, which were to be audited at the annual meeting in Hartford. Changes in the constitution required a three-fourths vote of the members present at an annual meeting.

Professor Eliot became the Society’s first President. He had six clerical secretaries and six lay vice-presidents to assist him. They came from Troy, New York; Springfield, Massachusetts; Philadelphia; Baltimore; New York City; and Proctor, Vermont. The other officers were from Hartford or close by. From the outset, SIM set the pattern of officers from the Hartford area with representatives based throughout the country. The disbursement of financial aid always went to aspirants for the clergy from all corners of the country, but the Society always faced a problem of identity by being perceived as a Connecticut or even Hartford operation rather than a society serving the national church.

The first annual meeting took place at Trinity College on June 30, 1858. Trinity’s campus at the time stood on the site of today’s state capitol, moving to its present location a mile south in the 1870s. The treasurer reported contributions to date of \$71 with gifts from both the original promoters of the Society and several dioceses: Alabama, New Hampshire, New York, and Western New York. To put that sum in perspective, the cost of tuition in most eastern colleges was about \$50 a year in the 1850s.

Several significant contributions came from vice-presidents who encouraged the Society to increase the number to 17 with due regard to wide geographical distribution.

As a result the following dioceses had vice-presidents: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Tennessee, Kentucky, Georgia, Michigan, Long Island, and North Carolina. In addition, local secretaries were appointed for Maine, Vermont, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky, Georgia, Minnesota, Alabama, North Carolina, and California. Clearly SIM made every effort to dispel the early impression that the organization was one of purely local character.

That first annual meeting in 1858 had two sessions in Hartford. The first convened in the morning at Trinity College and conducted the organizational business. In the afternoon, the second part took place at Christ Church for “the public exercises of the Society.” The president of the Society and six others delivered addresses. Dr. Samuel Farmer Jarvis read a letter from the Rev. Dr. Quintard of Tennessee, endorsed by Bishop Otey of that diocese, expressing “the interest of distant Dioceses in this movement,” exactly the sort of attention the Society hoped to get from Episcopalians throughout the land.

SIM began at a time of rapid Church expansion. There was vigorous missionary activity going on in the West and great attention paid to recruiting and training clergy for service in the mission field. Nashotah House had transformed itself from a missionary center to a theological seminary, and in 1857 James Lloyd Breck had founded the Seabury Divinity School in Faribault, Minnesota. Older church institutions also enjoyed a period of prosperity, including Trinity College in Hartford and Berkeley Divinity School in Middletown. The Virginia Theological School had received several bequests that allowed for the erection of a new building. The Episcopal Academy of Connecticut at Cheshire reopened in 1857 and was one of seven schools in the diocese with some degree of relationship to the Episcopal Church. Southern dioceses were laying plans for what would become the University of the South. The Society for the Increase of the Ministry emerged within the context of this period of the Church’s development of educational work.

Wider influences in American society influenced the formation of SIM. The Humanitarian Movement had flourished in recent decades, when Americans from all walks of life vied with one another in joining various societies for the improvement of the

human race. Historians note the religious phase of this activity as the Home Missionary Movement. Protestant churches organized denominational and inter-denominational missionary, educational, and reform societies such as the American Sunday School Union, the American Tract Society, the American Temperance Society, and the Society for the Promotion of Collegiate and Theological Education at the West. Episcopalians tended to try forming similar societies of a more defined Anglican character, but the general Protestant influence clearly influenced the formation of SIM.

The Society for the Increase of the Ministry thus clearly bore the marks of a mid-19th century voluntary society. In SIM's case, clergy dominated the leadership whereas the typical Protestant society of the day had the laity in charge. Nevertheless, as we have seen, SIM elected a layman as its first president and laymen would make up a considerable portion of the board of directors. The mix of lay and clerical leadership remains a constant in the Society to this day, but by the end of the 20th century the voluntary society model would no longer suffice if SIM were to meet the modern challenges of funding candidates for the ministry.

The Society's corresponding secretaries propagandized the new society widely and the Church press gave generous space in acquainting the Episcopal Church with the designs of SIM. In 1859 *The American Quarterly Church Review and Ecclesiastical Register* commended the work to the public and listed the Society's officers in full. The Connecticut diocesan paper, *The Calendar*, devoted two columns to the affairs of the Society in its edition of April 24, 1858. The article pointed out that the concerns of the Society were not those only of Connecticut but of the whole Church. Subsequent issues of the *Calendar* reported regularly on the activities of the Society. *The Church Almanac* for 1859 noted SIM as an institution of the diocese of Connecticut, but after 1861 regularly carried the announcement of the Society as a "General Institution."

Bishop John Williams, in his address to the Connecticut diocesan convention of 1859, spoke of an unusually large number of candidates for holy orders and praised the work of the Society in highest terms, predicting a glorious future for its work. Other bishops gave support to the cause, and there was seldom a *Report* of the annual meeting that did not excerpt appeals for SIM from one or more bishops' addresses to the diocesan conventions.

The legislature of the state of Connecticut passed the necessary legislation to incorporate the Society on June 7, 1859. The Society accepted the act of incorporation at a meeting called for that purpose at Christ Church Chapel on June 29.

The Society established a pattern of holding the annual meetings in widely scattered points to emphasize the national scope of its activities. In 1859, the second annual meeting gathered at Christ Church, Providence, with a public meeting later that year in Richmond, Virginia, during the General Convention. Subsequent meetings were in St. Paul's Church, Boston (1860), Brooklyn, New York (1861), New York City (1862), and within the next decade Cleveland, Philadelphia, and Baltimore all hosted either annual or public meetings. Then the pattern changed with Hartford becoming the regular place of meetings from 1876 on.

While the public meetings attracted sizeable audiences, it was the network of "temporary agents" appointed in 1859 that had the task of taking the appeal of the Society to parishes in Boston, Northern Massachusetts, Western Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York City, Westchester County, N.Y., Central New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Tennessee, and Georgia. The board of directors encouraged the agents to spend a month visiting parishes and while thus engaged the directors would cover their expenses and provide supply clergy in their home parishes.

These efforts yielded good results in launching the Society. The treasurer reported in 1859 that \$2,500 had been received with additional pledges of \$4,500. Individual dues of \$3 a year provided the initial funds, but soon larger sums came from parish collections. The Church of the Advent in Nashville, Tennessee, presented \$52 in 1859. Bishop Clark of Rhode Island personally visited parishes in his diocese and within a few years had raised approximately \$7,000. The bishops of Indiana, Delaware, and Connecticut made similar efforts. The students of Trinity College contributed one chapel offering each year.

Funds continued to come even during the years of the Civil War. Not surprisingly, no contributions came from Southern dioceses during the conflict, although the minutes of the Society continued to carry the names of the local secretaries of the Confederate states. It would be some years after 1865 that the impoverished Southerners resumed contributions to SIM, but in the meantime significant gifts began coming in from individuals and bequests.

The financial secretary, the Rev. F. D. Harriman, served as a full-time agent of the Society. He reported at the annual meeting of 1862 during his first six months on the job that he had visited 38 churches and the Sunday schools of two others, had preached to 13 different missionary associations, and that almost everywhere he had met with a warm reception. He collected about \$2,000 and secured the promise of 15 parishes to contribute during the coming year.

The Society wasted no time in distributing scholarships. In 1858 it awarded funds to three students. One attended the Virginia Theological Seminary, another Berkeley Divinity School and the third the Episcopal Academy at Cheshire. Students in seminary, college or secondary school were eligible. By 1862, 58 men received aid from SIM.

In the next two years the board of directors established a separate scholarship fund for the sons of clergy. Recipients did not have to be candidates for holy orders. The rationale for this support was to recruit clergy. Indeed, five of the first eight students aided under the “Sons of the Clergy Fund” did intend to prepare for ordination. By 1865, the Society granted aid to 106 students from 21 dioceses with 13 in the “Sons” category.

Difficult Days

It is not uncommon for institutions to encounter the problem that “nothing fails like success.” SIM did remarkably well in raising money in its early years. In 1865, contributions totaled nearly \$19,000, but the number of students receiving assistance grew at an even more rapid rate. In 1866, there were 120 “scholars” from 19 dioceses. When the number of students reached 133 in 1867, the Society found itself in debt for the first time in its history to the tune of \$700. Despite increased donations, the deficit for the next year hit nearly \$2,500 when 160 students received aid. The trend continued so that in 1870 with a record \$32,458.12 in receipts, the Society continued to run in the red. A modest surplus of several hundred dollars gave some relief the next year when income surpassed \$44,000, but the Society would continue to face financial challenges.

SIM continued its struggle to gain recognition as a national or “general” organization rather than a diocesan one. The bishops of 21 dioceses served as patrons, students from New Hampshire to Iowa had received scholarships, and contributions had been received from the Rocky Mountain region and the Pacific coast, but the belief

persisted in some quarters that SIM was a local organization. It did not help matters when a group of Pennsylvania churchmen founded the Divinity Students Aid Society on a diocesan basis. Urgent pleading from SIM did not persuade the Pennsylvanians to make their organization a branch of the Society. In 1863, President Eliot offered to resign because he believed his connection with Trinity College led some to believe the Society was connected to the College, but the board refused to accept his resignation.

During the Civil War, the Society made every effort to keep up the appearance of a “general” agency of an undivided Church. The names of the Southern patrons and local secretaries continued to appear in all official listings, even though there were no communications from the Confederacy. Perhaps the good faith in which SIM acted received its due when the bishop of Virginia presided over the public meeting held in Zion Church, New York, on October 11, 1868.

The effort to advance the Society for the Increase of the Ministry as a “general institution” of the Church apparently made some headway by the early 1870s. One interesting sign of that came from a group of the Anglican Church in Canada who asked about the possibility of joining with SIM in its work. The board of directors agreed to report at the next annual meeting, but the Canadian proposal “died in Committee.” The time for expanding the scope of the Society must have seemed inappropriate in the face of an unprecedented deficit in 1872 of over \$11,000. Contributions had fallen that year to \$28,597.74 but the number of students receiving aid grew to 177 with disbursements of \$40,199.05.

The immediate response to the deficit problem was more borrowing, but clearly the Society needed to find a long-term solution to its financial difficulties. A change in the by-laws would henceforth restrict assistance to postulants and candidates for holy orders whereas previously men under 21 years of age and not yet admitted as candidates were eligible. The by-laws also raised the minimum age for receiving aid to 17.

On the disbursement side, the Society cast a more critical eye on applications for scholarships. In 1873, only 140 of the 250 applicants received aid, a measure that helped reduce the deficit to \$7,000. Despite the depression that hit the country in 1873, contributions in 1874 rose to \$32,000 with disbursements to 124 men, allowing the treasurer to report a deficit reduction to \$4,000. The next year contributions of more than

\$45,000 eliminated the debt, but the board cautioned the executive committee to look for ways to reduce expenses without undermining the interests of the Society.

The executive committee reported at the annual meeting in 1876 that administrative expenses accounted for approximately 29 percent of the total. Subsequently economies sought to reduce that number. The Society spent less on advertising in the Church press and no longer employed a full-time agent. Annual meetings shrank to little more than a business meeting at the Society's headquarters rather than bigger meetings at a large church in a major city. Of course, eliminating the expense of the larger meetings also eliminated the collections taken at them. Nevertheless, the finances improved, yet SIM seemed in the doldrums. In 1882 the annual meeting only took place after three attempts failed for want of a quorum and the 1883 meeting took place on the third attempt.

While the Society seemed almost asleep, it was far from dead. It benefited from the bequests of pious supporters. Parishes, even if less geographically dispersed than previously, continued to take up annual collections for SIM. In fact, the resources of the Society—particularly through real estate bequests—now approached the \$25,000 limit upon the assets of the Society imposed by the Charter of 1859. In 1884, the Connecticut state legislature amended the Charter by raising the limit to \$75,000 and did so again in 1895 to a limit of \$150,000.

More Stable Times

At the end of the 19th century the Society entered a period of stability. The success of its endowment took the pressure off raising annual funds, and the board could accomplish its task by adopting the methods of a business corporation. After 1898, the income from invested funds consistently exceeded the contributions from parishes. Some of the enthusiasm of the early years gave way to sound and conservative management, which had the merit of assuring large contributors that their funds rested in good hands. The endowment fund of \$40,000 in 1880 had more than doubled by 1900.

The more conservative way of conducting its affairs led the Society to reduce appreciably the number of students receiving aid. In its early days SIM bestowed grants on seminarians, college students, students in preparatory schools and to those studying

theology under the private tutelage of Episcopal clergy. Now the Society changed its policy to direct its aid only to those in theological seminaries or in the senior year at college. The board would only approve men enrolled in seminaries of the Episcopal Church and studying for degrees approved by the board. The board also made it clear to recipients that it expected them to provide a major portion of their own support. The Society's grants generally fell in the \$50 to \$125 range and thus provided "encouragement" to candidates without being sufficient to meet all expenses.

The Society also received requests less frequently than in the early days, as candidates turned to other sources of support. Although SIM had once tried to incorporate the various diocesan and independent "aid" societies into its own organization, it gradually came to take a more kindly view of what it had once regarded as its "rivals." Now the Society regarded the other organizations as partners rather than competitors whose disbursements served to release SIM funds for candidates not covered by the other societies.

A comparison of SIM with some of the other aid organizations underscores the Society's unique position as the only organization ready to give financial assistance to candidates for the ministry without regard to particular dioceses, seminaries or brand of Churchmanship. The Church Scholarship Society of Connecticut antedated SIM and extended its help only to members of the diocese. The Society for Promoting Religion and Learning in the State of New York provided scholarships chiefly for St. Stephen's (now Bard) College and the General Theological Seminary. The Education Committee of the diocese of Ohio aided students attending Kenyon College and Bexley Hall. The Massachusetts Society for the Increase of the Ministry gave assistance to candidates for holy orders from New England dioceses other than Connecticut. Finally, the Evangelical Education Society assisted those inclined toward the Evangelical party. SIM stood out as *the* general aid society of the Episcopal Church.

The first decades of the 20th century found the Society for the Increase of the Ministry so confident that its resources would more than meet the needs of its mission that it decided no further energy need be expended on raising funds! As the late Professor Glenn Weaver put it in his centennial history, the Society "lapsed into a sleep even deeper than that of the early 1880s"! The endowment of some \$100,000 yielded high

returns and the number of students aided dropped to an all-time low. The country at large enjoyed a period of prosperity. It appeared to the board that the Society's income would never fall short of its needs. Between 1900 and the outbreak of World War I, the number of students receiving grants did not exceed 50 in a single year. America's entry into the war in 1917 did not immediately lead to a decline of Society beneficiaries, as the college seniors and seminarians could, under the draft laws, complete their courses. Even by 1921, and despite the small classes of 1917, 1918 and 1919, the number of students aided fell to only 37. By 1922, that number bounced back to a normal of 49 and in 1924 it hit an even 50.

The prosperity boom of the 1920s had an adverse effect on the seminaries of the Episcopal Church. Fewer men thought of entering the ministry at a time when more remunerative careers caught their attention. The five Church-related colleges (Trinity, Hobart, Kenyon, St. Stephen, and the University of the South) also prospered in the post-war years, but fewer of their students sought to enter seminaries. The seminaries themselves reached new levels of scholarship and teaching despite the decrease in the number of theological students attracted to them.

Despite the varying circumstances of particular times during its century and a half of existence, the Society has always elicited profound gratitude from the recipients of its assistance. Its modest grants often did make a substantial difference to the men in seminary and they reminded those men that members of the Church at large had not forgotten them. One example from the 1920s was the Rev. Fennimore E. Cooper who attended the General Theological Seminary from 1925 to 1928. Years later he recollected that he was one of only two or three married students. In those days, GTS provided no quarters for married students, and its all-male ethos largely ignored the few wives in the community. When the Coopers became parents of a daughter in the second year of study, "it was a difficult time for our little family financially," but the Society gave help and encouragement.

The financial stability, even prosperity, of the Society in the 1920s did not lead to an increase in the amount of individual scholarships. Instead the board gave some thought to initiating new endeavors such as scholarships for graduate study. Although this idea failed to take hold, it indicated the development of programs for advanced theological

degrees being developed at the General Theological Seminary and at the Divinity School in Philadelphia.

The prosperity of the 1920s ended abruptly with the onset of the Great Depression in the 1930s. In those difficult days, the modest grants of SIM made an even greater difference to seminarians struggling to make ends meet. James Grant was a student at Trinity College when the stock market crash of 1929 had a devastating impact on his family's finances. Had it not been for financial help from Trinity's President, Remsen Ogilby, he might have ended up "selling apples on the street corner." He entered General Theological Seminary in 1934 and later transferred to Virginia Theological Seminary where he graduated in 1938. SIM helped Grant as an undergraduate at Trinity and during his years in seminary, permitting him "to get an education for the priesthood that otherwise would have been impossible."

The Rev. Reamer Kline, later President of Bard (formerly St. Stephen) College had a similar tale to tell as a seminarian at the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge from 1935 to 1938. His wife worked in a Boston department store and he had Sunday duty at St. Andrew's Church, Orient Heights. The modest incomes from these jobs "plus the grants from [the] Society enabled me to piece together a very marginal but still viable financial pattern, which, maintained for three years finally, led me to the completion of the ETS course, and ordination."

America's entry into World War II at the end of 1941 quickly brought the Society's work to a standstill. Seminaries rapidly lost their students to the war effort. Of the 12 seminaries of the Church, one reported only four students and another had to cease operations completely. That, nevertheless, represented only one portion of the larger picture. During the war and in its immediate aftermath, the country experienced something of a religious renaissance that led to rapid church growth that lasted until the late 1960s. Church attendance increased, contributions rose to unprecedented levels and hundreds of veterans flocked to the Church's seminaries. The "G.I. Bill" initially led to a tremendous growth of undergraduate and graduate schools of all kinds that would continue until the early 1970s. All of this activity brought about new demands upon the Society.

Post War Growth

The Society created a reserve fund during the war years when it had few demands for financial aid. This fund would help SIM respond to the flood of seminarians in the early 1950s. In 1953, for example, when scholarships went to students in each of the Church's 11 seminaries, the endowment provided \$11,000, new contributions another \$1,400 and the reserve fund a hefty \$5,000. The next year the reserve fund had less to give, but endowment income rose to \$15,500. Ninety-three men from 41 dioceses received scholarships that year.

When the Society celebrated its centennial in 1957 it could look back with satisfaction on what it had accomplished. Total disbursements for the first century had just passed the \$1 million mark. In the five-year period of 1952 to 1957, it gave out 313 grants to students from 70 dioceses that totaled \$80,900. Nevertheless, the challenges in the coming years would be great. Church growth continued for another decade before it began to level off. Costs for undergraduate and seminary years accelerated in the 1970s amidst a general wave of inflation that outpaced the modest increases in the Society's grants.

By the 1930s, the Society had found a home within Trinity Church, Sigourney Street, in Hartford. Miss Jane Marlor, the parish secretary, faithfully recorded minutes of meetings and kept the records for 46 years until her death in 1978. The Rev. Raymond Cunningham, Trinity's rector from 1923 to his death in 1950, served as SIM's secretary. The Rev. Kingsland ('Rip') Van Winkle succeeded him both as rector and secretary in 1951. After retirement in 1971, he continued as secretary of the Society until his death in 1983.

The Society flourished under the dedicated and untiring leadership of Rip Van Winkle. Indeed his 'retirement' in 1971 allowed him to devote his time and considerable energy to SIM affairs. The endowment grew rapidly in the 1980s and would reach nearly \$4 million by the end of the century. Consequently the number and size of grants grew, and although growth in the membership of the Church nationally fell off after the 1960s, the number of candidates for ordination remained steady. Grants to seniors in college came to an end with Ward Ewing, Trinity College class of 1964 and today Dean of The General Theological Seminary, being the last recipient. The decision to ordain women in

1976 obviously gave an additional boost to those preparing for the ministry. In 1983, the Society awarded 188 grants, totaling \$86,509.

During the Van Winkle years, new challenges faced SIM. Despite the growth of its available funds, the needs began to outpace resources. There were more seminarians, and in the 1960s the board decided to end aid for college seniors and give all its grants to those in seminary. The general inflation of the 1970s meant a consequent rise in seminary tuition. At the same time the national Church adopted a policy that favored older candidates who had gained experience and presumably maturity in secular careers. Many candidates now came to school with families and thus required more financial support. The Society did what it could to help, but even its enhanced grants could not keep pace with increased costs and needs. One factor that gave a measure of relief was the contribution of some of the older seminarians through their use of personal savings to support themselves and their families during the three years of seminary. The fruits of their secular labor provided a subsidy to the Church that only postponed a day of financial reckoning.

The Society had established the practice of attending the triennial General Conventions to keep its work and ministry visible to the national Church. In preparation for the 1964 General Convention, Secretary Van Winkle sent a letter to active clergy who had received grants, asking that they contribute their thoughts as well as their dollars to the Society. The dozens of letters that came back provide a snapshot of SIM as it began its second century of ministry that revealed both its impressive history of accomplishment as well as the mounting challenges for the future.

Not surprisingly, the common thread through all the letters was gratitude for the financial help. Some men had entered seminary during the Depression years of the 1930s. As the future bishop John Burgess put it: "I entered the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge during the Depression days and I can assure you that any amount of money was more than welcome for those of us seeking an education. The Society was the Good Samaritan that kept us going when things looked bleak indeed."

Conditions improved after World War II, but expenses could be tight indeed for a war veteran returning to school with a family. Tom Fletcher, later rector of St. Mark's in New Britain, Connecticut, entered ETS in 1950 with a wife and two children. "While, as

a veteran, I was helped through the G. I. Bill and obtained a part-time job in a local store, there were many times when we were unable to afford some of the necessities of life.” Grants from SIM in his second and third years helped him and his family get through. Tom Blair, also a vet with a family who benefited from the G. I. Bill, thought of the assistance from SIM “like manna from heaven.”

Recipients also appreciated the Society’s interest in them as individuals and the relative ease of the application process. John Eberman wrote that the “grant came as a shot in the arm, for it seemed to say that other people, from all over the Church, thought that what I was doing was important and were willing to give me their tangible support.” Curt Denney, a graduate of GTS in 1963, commented, “This interest in the individual student is by far as valuable as the grant itself,” and the grant came with “no strings attached to the money which would dictate to or encroach upon a man’s conscience.” James Considine also remarked on the “no strings attached” and the “minimum of red tape” in the process of procuring a grant.

In particular, some clergy mentioned, with reference to the no-strings-attached theme, the lack of any requirements regarding Churchmanship. As one put it, he received the help “without the exacting of commitments to any particular style of Churchmanship and other freedom-robbing restrictions.” The Society’s lack of specifying “what kind of priest I was to be” established a bond of trust that “means a lot to anyone who receives help” is the way John Docker put it. A good summary of the many comments on this subject came from the Rev. Richard P. Constantinos:

While I was much helped financially, and for this I am more than thankful, the greater gift was the care I received. I was cared for, not because I held a particular slant in matters of Churchmanship, nor because I was in the upper ten percent in college (I wasn’t), nor even because my parents were “important” people in the Episcopal Church (they weren’t). They cared because I had an honest need to support myself, my wife and my family while I studied for the ministry.

The Rev. Barry Bloom of Oakland, California, raised some key issues about the financing of seminary education in the Episcopal Church. Writing 13 months after graduating from the Church Divinity School of the Pacific in 1963, he commented on what he had learned from his association with a Lutheran pastor in a cooperative ministry. His Lutheran associate “was appalled” when Fr. Bloom explained how

Theological Education Sunday sent seminarians out regularly to raise money for the seminaries. Bloom noted that the “obvious lack of centralized control and/or monetary support for our seminaries does much to enforce the image of P.E.C.U.S.A. as a congregational fiasco with the fiscal resources of a marginal sect.” The Church managed to get by because some seminarians had the personal means to pay for their seminary education, including those older men who had enough savings to do the job. His class at C.D.S.P. averaged 36 years of age. In his case, the diocese of Massachusetts was a tower of strength as was SIM. It was organizations like SIM that “come to the rescue of the already destitute seminaries.” Bloom’s analysis pointed out the uncomfortable fact that support for seminaries and seminarians was fragmentary and inadequate to the growing needs of the Episcopal Church.

New Challenges

Rip Van Winkle realized that the burdens he carried for the Society outweighed the time and energy of one person. Consequently, he wrote a recommendation, dated November 11, 1982, that the Society review his position. Supported only by the part-time help of Trinity Church’s parish secretary, he had carried out a wide variety of duties as an executive or administrative secretary, “representing the Society for the seminaries and to the Church at large. Such a position does involve such a person in visitations to the seminaries, arranging some role or presence at the General Conventions; and at the same time reading and evaluating all the applications that are submitted, discussing individual problems with students, financial advisors and bishops, and acting as an enabler for the Scholarship Committee to perform its task of recommending grants.”

This recommendation led to the decision to appoint an Executive Director as a paid, part-time position. At the annual meeting on November 11, 1983, the Rev. Jervis S. (“Jerry”) Zimmerman was recognized as the “Society’s first-ever Executive Director.” Rip Van Winkle then retired from office and sadly died just a short time later. Zimmerman’s seven years in the new position marked a new chapter in SIM history. Retired after years as a parish priest and diocesan officer, Zimmerman began the process of updating the office and its records as well as attending to a growing number of

scholarships granted each year and shepherding initiatives taken by the Society as it searched for new ways to fulfill its mission.

At the annual meeting of November 9, 1984, Zimmerman reported on the evaluation by an ad hoc committee of the new internship program that had begun toward the end of Rip Van Winkle's term. The Rev. William N. Penfield was liaison with the Episcopal Church Foundation which granted the society \$12,000 to support the program. Seminarians between their second and third year could apply for an internship "in which the student engages in full-time ministry away from the seminary community under supervision for a period not less than nine consecutive months." Two internships had been granted that year. Overall the program received high marks, but with the caveat that internships should remain an option for some and never a requirement for all. After the E.C.F. funding ran out, the Society continued the internship program as an integral part of SIM's program.

Jerry Zimmerman visited the seminaries regularly and worked closely with the financial aid officers as well as the deans. The visits also included meeting with individual students that fostered a solid pastoral relationship with grant recipients. These visits also helped to highlight the new challenges facing those preparing for the ministry. No doubt the major challenge for many was the growing debt they accumulated to pay for their education, often both undergraduate and seminary. Consequently an increasing number of newly ordained clergy began their ministries saddled with debts difficult to repay on modest salaries. The debt issue put into sharp relief the dilemma facing the Society: despite the growth in the endowment and the increase in both number and average amount of scholarships, the costs of education for seminarians grew even more rapidly. The resulting gap between resources and needs would only continue to grow.

In 1990, Jerry Zimmerman retired as Executive Director and was succeeded by the Rev. William N. Penfield. Under Penfield's leadership the finance committee began a review of its investment policies and subsequently made changes in policies and procedures to ensure growth of the endowment while yielding maximum income for scholarships. Increasingly during the 1990s, the Society sought to understand and address the conditions defining seminary education and preparation for ordained ministry facing the national Church. It voted, for example, in 1996 to initiate a five-year pilot grants

program for candidates preparing for ordination outside the traditional seminary setting when approved by the Bishop and Standing Commission on Ministry of a particular diocese, as provided in Canon 9. In 1998-99, SIM scholarships became available for vocational deacons called to the priesthood. Although grants for vocational deacons and interns subsequently came to an end, these initiatives illustrated SIM's continuing willingness to change and adapt in order to remain dedicated to its original and core mission of assisting those called to the ordained ministry.

In 1996, the Society published a pamphlet titled *Transitions From Seminary To...* as a manual dealing with issues facing graduating seminarians. Revised editions appeared in 2001 and 2004. The booklet deals with spiritual and vocational matters and a host of specific aspects of the transition from layperson to seminarian to priesthood and ministry. It offered advice on resumes, interviews, budget planning, insurance, taxes and more. In the words of the Preface to the 2004 edition, the Society hoped that "this modest volume will help the students served by the Society and others as well to anticipate and identify some of the practical, vocational, and spiritual challenges that confront them in transition, and will provide some answers and guidance to resources where other answers may be found."

Penfield increasingly emphasized the need to assist and support seminarians beyond the modest grants SIM could give them. In a typical year, he visited all the Church's seminaries, many of them twice, to distribute checks and to meet with grantees individually. The visits thus had a personal and pastoral aspect that helped him understand the difficulties facing many of our candidates for ordination. As he stated at the annual meeting in 1996, the Society could act as an "advocate for seminarians" while also working to make SIM's vocation known nationally. Indeed these two themes of advocacy and vocation went together. If SIM was to fulfill the mission it set for itself in 1857, it needed to do so in a way that would meet the conditions and challenges of the late 20th century and early 21st century.

During Bill Penfield's 11 years as Executive Director, SIM's assets continued to grow. The endowment stood at over \$3.6 million by 2000 and the annual scholarship budget reached \$200,000. More vigorous annual fundraising helped growth with nearly \$70,000 raised in 2000. In that year the average grant was about \$1,900 with \$3,000 as

the maximum for any one grant. These increases were impressive. On the other hand, Penfield reported in 1999 that the average indebtedness of the seminary class of 2001 increased by \$4,000 in just one year. He stated the challenge to SIM in no uncertain terms: either expand fund-raising to provide larger and more numerous grants or dissolve!

Bill Penfield decided to retire from the post of Executive Director in 2001 after 11 years of service. His decade of leadership had brought unprecedented growth in the Society's assets, while underscoring the developing crisis for the national Church in funding and supporting candidates for ordination. At the annual meeting on November 13, a host of friends and colleagues paid tribute to Bill's efforts: Max Smith, SIM President; Bishops Andrew Smith and Clarence Coleridge of Connecticut; Bishop Stephen Charleston of the Episcopal Divinity School; the Rev. Nancy Charles Miller of the Executive Committee; Nicholas Mason, SIM treasurer during Bill's tenure; the Rev. Borden Painter, past President and member of the Executive Committee; and last but far from least Mary Stoughton, long-time member and sometime chair of the Scholarship Committee. It was Mrs. Stoughton's pleasure to announce the establishment of a new \$1,000 Penfield Grant to be awarded annually.

The newly elected Executive Director, the Rev. Canon John L. C. Mitman spoke to the 2001 annual meeting about the task facing the Society. He pointed out that postulant debt had been increasing at an alarming rate and that the ability of most newly ordained clergy to repay their debts was limited. He declared that the Society must take steps to double its endowment, then at about \$3.36 million in the next five years and to double it again in the following five years. As the first full-time Executive Director of the Society since 1892, he pledged to lead a major effort to raise the necessary funds and to seek new ways of working with the national Church to meet the needs of today's seminarians. SIM thus began the new century determined to undergo sufficient change to fulfill its mission to *"furnish means for the education of candidates for holy orders in the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States."*

Fr. Mitman initiated talks with appropriate agencies and institutions of the Church: the Episcopal Church Foundation, the Office of Ministry Development and the Standing Commission on Ministry Development, the Church Pension Group, the Council

of Seminary Deans, the Evangelical Education Society, the Consortium of Endowed Parishes and the Department of Mission among others. In 2002 and 2003, he traveled extensively to discuss issues and share information with bishops and seminary administrators throughout the country. The consensus that emerged saw the need for a much larger fund-raising effort than the Society had originally envisaged. The goal must be to raise sufficient endowment funds to provide a continuing income to ensure that future seminarians in the Episcopal Church will not have to add additional debt while studying in our seminaries. The projected annual cost of accomplishing that goal is \$10 million a year, which would require an endowment of approximately \$200 million.

In 2004, the Society agreed to take the initiative in raising funds for **“Funding Future Leaders: A National Endowment for Episcopal Seminarians.”** The success in reaching out to form a partnership with agencies and institutions of the national Church now required SIM to look within itself for ways to become an organization better able to meet its ambition to change the way it and the Church at large supported seminary education. The first step was raising half a million dollars, led by a \$300,000 grant from the Episcopal Church Foundation, to expand staff and provide adequate office space. As a result, SIM moved from Trinity Church, Hartford, to an office in West Hartford that it shared with the General Board of Examining Chaplains and its Executive Secretary, the Rev. Richard Tombaugh. Staff expansion included a two-thirds time administrative assistant, an associate executive director and a part-time Director of Scholarship Programs.

In the fall of 2004 the Society hosted a retreat to consider a revision of the by-laws and an examination of its governance as an organization. The result was a governance committee that went to work on recommendations for change. This committee realized that SIM could not accomplish its goal of leading a national fund-raising campaign under the present governance model of a membership-based society typical of the 19th century. With advice from a lawyer specializing in non-profit organizations, the committee recommended that SIM adopt by-laws changing its status to that of a non-profit entity with a self-perpetuating board of directors similar to that found in universities, hospitals and other non-profit institutions. The annual meeting on

November 9, 2005, adopted the recommended by-laws and thus opened a new chapter in the Society's history.

SIM now has taken the lead in the national Church to develop a comprehensive and systematic program to support those preparing for and entering the ordained ministry. The financial challenge to the majority of seminarians continues to grow. In 2006, two-thirds of seminarians half-way through their course of study had an average debt of just under \$43,000. Such a burden can severely weaken and undermine the early careers of ordinands. Therefore, we must establish a fund to deal with that debt so that those responding to God's call to this special life may properly serve and lead the Church in the 21st century.

The centerpiece of this effort is **Funding Future Leaders: A National Endowment for Episcopal Seminarians**. (FFL) The Episcopal Church today remains the only major denomination in the United States that does not have a central funding source to support seminarians in the education and training. FFL aims to change that and thus begin a new chapter in preparation for ministry. The goal is an endowed fund of \$200 million dollars to accomplish the necessary change that will at least allow seminarians not to add educational debt while in seminary.

Funding Future Leaders is one phase of a three-phase plan to help ordinands to limit and manage successfully the repayment of accumulated educational debt. The first phase involves working with each diocese to develop a program of counsel and support to postulants and candidates before they enter seminary. The goals are to limit the amount of debt and to establish ways to deal with debt. The second phase is FFL itself. The third phase comes in the final year of theological education and upon arrival at the first assignment. It will provide each ordinand with advice and counsel on available strategies for enlisting the help of the employing parish in beginning to pay down accumulated debt. This comprehensive, three-phase plan meets head on the reality of debt and does something about it. It will assure new ordinands that their debt problems are understood and that they will be dealt with. Thus it will provide the kind of care and concern on a new scale that has characterized the traditional scholarships. The Society for the Increase of the Ministry remains committed to its original mission by leading a new effort to achieve it designed to meet the conditions of today's church and society.

The author, the Rev. Dr. Borden Painter, Jr., is Professor of History, Emeritus, of Trinity College. He served as SIM's president, 1988-1993, and a member of the executive committee, 1997-2004. This history of the Society's 150 years is based on its archives and, for the first century, the article by the late Professor Glenn Weaver, "The Society for The Increase of The Ministry: A Brief Centennial History," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, XXVI:4 (1957): 381-408.