



FAITH + FINANCES + FREEDOM

THE LIFELINE FUND

COMPOUNDING *By Deacon Mitzie Schafer*

*Casey felt the call and nudge to be a pastor from a young age, but never saw a female pastor to help affirm that call. "I remember thinking it wasn't for me," she shared. After taking a job that introduced her to several strong and faithful female clergy members, she recognized God's hand in showing her that her own nudges toward ministry were valid.

For Casey, the feelings wrapped up in attending seminary flowed openly between uncertainty in her ability to complete the coursework and trusting that God was with her. After seminary, in her first call, a new feeling emerged. "I was fighting the demons of seeing that student loan bill and trying to pick away at it, but it didn't feel like it was going anywhere. It was anxiety," she shared. "It was daunting – like it was never going to end. It's like when it comes to making dinner and it feels like, how can it be time to make dinner again? It seemed like it wasn't going down and in reality, it wasn't. The interest was compounding. It was hitting me in the face, and it was getting to be more and more. I was praying about it more and more too. I was trying to figure out what I could do, even wrestling with needing a side hustle in addition to my full-time call at the church. Then, thankfully, I found out about the Lifeline Fund through a conversation with Pastor John Mocko. He told me I should apply."

"It was a long process," Casey shared, "but it was so worth it. It took months and months to get everything done to be approved. I had to do a lot of extra classes with Portico, and I had to complete the Dave Ramsey course and graduate from that. I did, and after completion, the Lifeline fund paid off my student loans from seminary. All of them."

"The whole weight has been lifted off my shoulders," she continued. "It has given me a new peace to not just have the debt gone, but also in how I talk about stewardship in the congregation. A lot of the people in my congregation are older and they don't have debt, but they have families in debt. My stewardship autobiography is truly that all that we have comes from God. This gift has allowed me to focus on my call. It has changed my own giving 110%. I was taught to first give to God and then pay my bills, but it was hard. This gift has changed my heart to do that. I now live where I am giving 10% first and living off what comes after that, but that is secondary now. Now I know that I can trust."

Your generosity to the Lifeline Fund makes it possible to alleviate seminary debt for our pastors and deacons so they can feel the confidence to trust in God's call to ministry. A primary reason why those who feel called to ministry say, "no," is the burden of financial debt. The South Carolina Synod of the ELCA is working through the Lifeline Fund to live into God's gift of providing faithful leadership in our churches. Thank you for your generosity.

Learn more at <https://scsynod.com/faithfinancesfreedom/>

*Name changed to protect the financial confidentiality of the pastor.

Synod Assembly Offering

THE SOUTH CAROLINA SYNOD LIFELINE FUND

The offering received at worship at the 2023 South Carolina Synod Assembly Offering is designated to the Lifeline Fund. The Lifeline Fund helps address the economic challenges facing our rostered ministers from student loans taken out to pay for their seminary education. Our pastors and deacons across South Carolina are indebted to you for your investment in their financial well-being. Thank you so much for your gift to our Synod's Lifeline Fund. Since 2020, through the Lifeline Fund, with matching grants from the Lilly Foundation, we have paid \$164,989 to education lenders to eliminate the education debt of nine rostered ministers and a significant portion of debt for two other rostered ministers. Good news! In fact, the cumulative reduction in educational debt for our pastors and deacons provided by Lifeline grants is over 85 years of education debt payments eliminated.

Your generosity furthers this mission. It is tangible grace and love, sent directly to lenders to pay down education debt.

When this burden is lifted, we firmly believe it means more effective servants. More available pastors! More energized deacons! More prepared to fulfill their life callings! All Lifeline grant recipients must complete financial management education as well as make monthly debt reduction payments. All of this helps establish the disciplines to steward a healthier future.

So we invite you to continue to walk together with our pastors and deacons so that they may walk with less worry about financial concerns and set free to serve vital congregations and flourishing communities.

HOW TO GIVE ELECTRONICALLY

Use this qr code with your phone to give. This code takes you to the giving website only.



HOW TO GIVE BY TEXT

You may also give your offering by text. Simply text the word GIVE to 864-383-1482. If it is the first time you've used our text to give you will be texted a link to setup what you will use for the gift. Then, simply text the amount you would like to give in whole dollars with the word "Offering" (example - 50 Offering) You need not used the "\$" sign.