



Suggestions for Approaching Your Congregation for Support Through the FTE Congregational Fellowship

Over time and in a variety of ways, your congregation has played a significant role in calling you to faith and forming you as a disciple of Jesus Christ. In worship and Christian education, in fellowship and care for one another, as witnesses for justice and in service to the larger community, they have prepared you to respond to God's call to serve as a ministerial leader in other communities of faith. As you take the next step of entering into formal education and preparation for pastoral ministry, your congregation can continue to provide support to you through a financial commitment to your theological education. Here are some suggestions for how to ask for that support through FTE's Congregational Fellowship Program:

- Reflect prayerfully and carefully on the story of your own journey to seminary and be prepared to tell it to the leadership of your congregation.
- Be in the application and financial aid processes for a full-time M.Div. program at an ATS-accredited seminary in the fall prior to the fellowship year--the earlier, the better.
- Get your financial situation in order (you already will have begun this task when you apply for seminary financial aid): know what the costs will be for educational and living expenses (including the cost of relocating), what your and your family's debts and assets are, what you and your family will be able to contribute, and what your work plans are.
- Make an appointment to see your pastor in person--let her or him know the purpose of the meeting, provide a Congregational Fellowships brochure or [a link to the Calling Congregations section](#) of FTE's Web site, and ask for an hour of her or his time. If you do not know your pastor well, or if you have not heard her or his own story of the journey to seminary and ordained ministry, ask to hear it.
- Be sure you understand how the Congregational Fellowship works so that you can explain the opportunity clearly and answer questions.
- Don't hesitate to directly ask your pastor if she or he will be an advocate for you in garnering financial support from the congregation.
- Before you end the meeting, ask "What more do you need from me?" and make a follow-up appointment.
- If you would like further assistance in approaching your congregation, we at FTE would be happy to discuss your particular situation. Contact the Rev. Ellen Echols Purdum, director of Ministry Fellowships, at 404.727.1450.