

Nurturing the Seminarian's Spiritual Growth *Ideas for the "Home" Congregation.*

These are activities which would have to be sponsored/undertaken by the Session or by the Session liaison, unless the home congregation is quite small. Nevertheless, these few measures could bless a seminarian and do much to encourage his/her spiritual growth.

1. Be sure the student(s)' address is available to the congregation through frequent listing in the church newsletter and through frequent communication with the Church School classes and Presbyterian Women. Encourage the membership to send "thinking of you" cards, and to not expect a response in writing, due to the academic load on the students.

This can remind the seminarian of the power of community, and a sense of being connected closely to the people of God.

2. The Session, on behalf of the congregation, can send something to the person(s) under care marking each event in the Church year. These need not be expensive Commemoratives; they can be bought, made, or composed. For example: the children of the congregation could make some purple bookmarks, which are sent to the students in Lent or in Advent. Worship Committee could send a copy of the Sunday worship guide/bulletin from holy days such as Ascension Sunday, Christ the King Sunday, and the Sunday wherein we celebrate the Baptism of our Lord. If the service was taped include the tape, so that this student can share in the worship of the congregation on those days. A Hallmark ornament of religious significance, such as a star, would be a meaningful Christmas surprise; perhaps an Elder could compose a prayer for the seminarian, and have it printed on a large piece of paper, so that the Session could "frame" the prayer with their signatures, on the anniversary of the seminarian's baptism or on the anniversary of coming under care. If Session had the funds, it would be gracious to send the seminarian a commentary such as Willimon's commentary on ACTS OF THE APOSTLES (Interpretation series of Commentaries), to mark Pentecost.

3. Encourage prayers for the seminarian(s) not only in worship and in Session meetings, but also at gatherings of Presbyterian Women, church school classes, and other times when the community gathers.

4. Invite the seminarian(s) to offer the Prayers of the People in worship when s/he comes home for a visit.

5. Seek the funds from groups or individuals, then fund one personal reflective retreat a year for each seminarian. For example, a student at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary could be given a weekend for spiritual renewal at Mo Ranch. A student at Union Seminary in Virginia could be encouraged to spend a reading week at Montreat, room and board covered. Another seminarian might be encouraged to participate in Walk to Emmaus, as her/his expense-paid retreat for spiritual growth.

6. Upon receipt as a Candidate, present the seminarian with *A Guide to Prayer for Ministers and Other Servants*. (Shawchuck, Upper Room) or *The Book of Common Worship* of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

7. At various opportunities, members of the congregation can communicate with the seminarian that the church is eager to hear about what God is "up to" in that person's life.