

Seminary Debt Assistance Program helps support the pastor of a small church

The island village of Gambell, Alaska is so out of the way, a visit to the dentist can mean a \$300 plane ride. **“Because it’s so remote and isolated, jobs are hard to come by,”** explains Rev. Nathan Lim of the Gambell Presbyterian Church. **“One of the main challenges here is dealing with depression and suicides.”** With social services 200 miles distant, much of that work falls to Rev. Lim. **“I’m the counselor, I’m the pastor, I’m the funeral home director,”** he says, **“I do a lot of crisis intervention.”**

In his five years of service, Rev. Lim has seen his congregation grow from **“a handful of persons”** to as many as 300 on special occasions. But his accomplishment might not have been possible without the Board of Pensions Seminary Debt Assistance Program. That’s because Rev. Lim graduated from theological seminary with \$18,000 in student debt. Repaying that debt would have been difficult with his small salary and the astonishingly high cost of living (a box of cereal costs \$6). **“The Seminary Debt Assistance Program allowed me to serve in Gambell,”** Rev. Lim says. **“A financial burden has been removed and I’m able to focus more on ministry here.”**

The Seminary Debt Assistance Program has been an affirmation for Rev. Lim. **“I believe that where God calls**

you, he will provide you with resources and tools,” he says. **“Because all ministries serve the people and bring glory to God.”**

Interview conducted in February 2004.

About the Seminary Debt Assistance Program

Under the Seminary Debt Assistance Program, ministers of the Word and Sacrament can receive a grant of up to \$2,500 per year for up to four years to help them repay educational debt incurred while seeking a Master of Divinity degree. The program is designed to assist small congregations with less than 150 members and a budget of less than \$250,000. Ministers who are in their first seven years of ministry can apply.

The Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) oversees benefits programs for church workers and their families, while being guided by the Biblical principles of community and stewardship.

For information and an enrollment form, call 800-773-7752 (800-PRESPLAN). Or visit the Board’s Web site at www.pensions.org.



Bringing warmth to the North: Rev. Nathan Lim with his daughter Esther and wife, Rachel. To learn more about his small Alaskan congregation, visit www.gambellpresbyterian.org.