

*Note: This document briefly summarizes provisions in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (“the CARES Act”) that could possibly be of interest to church plans, ministries and plan members. This summary reflects those CARES Act provisions as they are currently understood on March 31, 2020, without any agency guidance. As guidance is issued that may be applicable, we plan to provide information to you on that guidance or to refer you to that guidance, but may not be able to update the summary with that information. This summary is for general information only. It is not a complete analysis and should not be relied upon as legal advice.*

# Student Loan Relief

## Quick Summary (read below for details)

- Employers may contribute up to \$5,250 annually toward an employee’s student loans and that payment would be excluded from the employee’s income
- Principal and interest payments are deferred on federal student loans through September 30, 2020

## Exclusion for Certain Employer payments of student loans

The provision expands tax-free educational assistance to include student loan repayments for employees. It enables employers to provide a student loan repayment benefit to employees on a tax-free basis.

Under the provision, an employer may contribute up to \$5,250 annually toward an employee’s student loans, and such payment would be excluded from the employee’s income. The \$5,250 cap applies to both the 2020 student loan repayment benefit as well as other educational assistance (e.g., tuition, fees, books) provided by the employer under current law. The provision applies to any student loan payments made by an employer to the employee or directly to the lender on behalf of an employee after March 27, 2020 and before January 1, 2021.

## Temporary Relief for Federal Student Loan Borrowers

Principal and interest payments are deferred without penalty on federal student loans through September 30, 2020. No interest will accrue during this period and the borrower will be treated as if payments were made for purposes of loan forgiveness and loan rehabilitation programs. Collection activity on such loans also must cease during the period ending September 30, 2020. Borrowers have the option to continue to pay principal on their student loans during this period.

The CARES Act requires notices to be provided to borrowers about the deferral period. It also requires notices to be issued beginning on August 1, 2020 about resumption of payment obligations and options with respect to such obligations.

## Service Obligation to Teachers

For teachers who could not finish their year of teaching service as a result of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (“COVID-19”), their partial year of service will be counted as a full year of service toward TEACH grant obligations or Teacher Loan Forgiveness. The CARES Act waives a requirement that teachers must serve consecutive years of teaching service for Teacher Loan Forgiveness eligibility, if a teacher’s service is not consecutive as a result of COVID-19.