

Tuition Assistance Policy for Commissioned Pastor Candidates

Illinois Prairie Presbytery

1. Purpose

Illinois Prairie Presbytery affirms its commitment to the theological education and ongoing formation of Commissioned Pastors (CPs) serving congregations within the bounds of the presbytery. This policy establishes a process by which Commissioned Pastor Candidates may apply for financial assistance to cover tuition costs at approved seminaries or theological institutions.

2. Eligibility

Commissioned Pastors may apply for tuition assistance if they meet all of the following criteria:

- They are currently an Ruling Elder within the Presbytery
- They are enrolled or seeking enrollment in an **approved seminary or theological institution** recognized by the PC(USA) or by the presbytery's Committee on Ministry (COM).
- The coursework is directly related to pastoral formation, theological education, or competencies required for continued service as a Commissioned Pastor.
- They are active in the presbytery, and in compliance with all requirements of the Manual for Commissioned Pastors on the Presbytery website.

3. Approved Institutions

Eligible institutions include:

- PC(USA) seminaries
- Seminaries of other Reformed traditions
- Accredited theological schools approved by COM on a case-by-case basis

The presbytery reserves the right to determine whether a program or institution meets its standards for theological education and pastoral preparation.

4. Allowable Expenses

Funds may be used for:

- Tuition for credit-bearing courses
- Required course fees and books

Funds may **not** be used for:

- Non-credit courses unless specifically approved by the CPM
- *Funds for purposes other than those listed above may be available upon request to CPM.*

5. Funding Levels

- The presbytery may provide **up to 100% of tuition costs per course**, subject to available funds.
- A maximum annual award amount may be set each year by the presbytery's budget or by CPM.
- Funding is not guaranteed and is contingent on available resources and demonstrated need.

6. Application Process

Commissioned Pastors seeking tuition assistance must submit:

1. A completed Tuition Assistance Application Form
2. A brief statement (250–500 words) describing:
 - o The course(s) to be taken
 - o How the coursework supports their ministry and pastoral development
3. Proof of enrollment or acceptance
4. A letter of support from the session or supervising pastor (if applicable)

Applications should be submitted to the Commission of Preparation for Ministry at least **30 days before** funds are needed.

7. Review and Approval

- The Commission on Preparation for Ministry will review applications.
- Decisions will be based on:
 - o Alignment with established course requirements set by the presbytery
 - o Financial need
 - o Available presbytery funds
- CPM will notify applicants in writing of approval, partial approval, or denial.

8. Disbursement of Funds

- Funds will be paid directly to the educational institution whenever possible.
- If reimbursement is necessary, the applicant must submit proof of payment.

9. Accountability and Reporting

Recipients must:

- Provide proof of course completion (grade report, transcript, or certificate).
- Remain active in the presbytery throughout the period of study.

Failure to meet reporting requirements may affect eligibility for future funding.

10. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years by the Commission on Preparation for Ministry and may be amended by action of the presbytery.
