

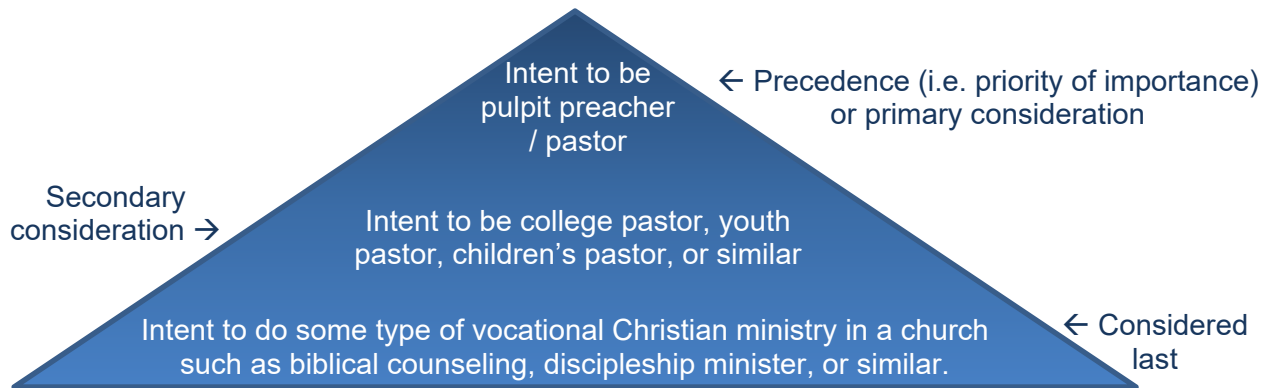
Mary E. Bivins Foundation Religious Scholarship

Scholarship Purpose:

The purpose of the Scholarship Program is **to educate ministers to preach the Christian religion**. Scholarships are provided for upper-level undergraduate or graduate education that will lead to a Bachelor's or Master's Degree in a field that prepares the student to preach the Christian religion.

Individuals who intend to serve as a pulpit preacher/pastor* upon graduation will be given precedence.

Individuals must have a strong inward call or desire, the necessary gifts and abilities to be successful in that calling, and external affirmation of their call to be selected as a Scholar. Individuals in subsequent tiers, as indicated by the graphic below, will be considered if additional funding is available.



*The term pastor and minister are often used synonymously but the description varies based on denomination. Per a strict definition, all pastors can perform the duties of a minister, but not all ministers can act as pastors. The strict definition will be used for the purposes of this policy. Other titles used include Reverend, Elder, or Father. Regardless of terminology, discretion will be used to determine if the individual is serving as a minister with limited responsibility in the church or a pastor with full oversight of the church and its congregation.

The following will not be considered

(1) Individuals seeking a second advanced theological Degree (whether or not the Bivins Scholarship funded the first); (2) Individuals seeking a PhD; (3) Individuals who intend to serve in music ministry; (4) Individuals who intend to teach at a theological school; (5) Individuals who intend to enter the international mission field full-time; and (6) Individuals who intend to work in a parachurch organization.

Eligibility Criteria:

- Must be a citizen of the United States of America and a permanent resident of the northernmost 26 counties of the Texas Panhandle. *
- Must be classified as a college junior or above by the first semester for which the scholarship would be effective. **
- Must have a cumulative undergraduate GPA of 2.75 or above or a cumulative graduate GPA of 3.0 or above. ***
- The degree program selected must prepare the student to preach the Christian religion or enter into vocational ministry. The institutional degree plan specifying the course requirements must be submitted to and approved by the Scholarship Committee as part of the application process. Scholarship funds may be applied only to those courses included in a student's approved degree plan.

*A permanent resident of the Texas Panhandle is defined as an individual (1) who has resided or been gainfully employed in the northernmost 26 counties of the Texas Panhandle for the 12-month period immediately preceding the date of application or (2) who has graduated from a high school or college located in the northernmost 26 counties of the Texas Panhandle and has been continuously enrolled in a post-secondary program.

- Exceptions to residency criteria will be considered on an individual basis for applicants who have served in the military or Peace Corps for the 12-month period immediately preceding the date of application and who lived in the Texas Panhandle immediately preceding service.

**Applicant can apply during sophomore year of college (January) as scholarship would become effective the first semester of the student's junior year (August).

***For new or returning scholarship applicants, all previous college level work completed within the last 5 years will be considered when applying the cumulative GPA requirement. If no college coursework has been completed in the last 5 years, the most recent cumulative GPA will be used.

Scholarship Requirements:

- Must accept the terms of the scholarship by signing the Scholarship Acceptance Agreement.
- Must enroll in a college or university that is an accredited institution. An accredited institution is defined as a school, college, or university that has been accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency listed on the U.S. Secretary of Education's published list. Theology schools must be accredited by The Association of Theological Schools (ATS).
- Must enroll and pass a minimum of 24 hours per academic year (August-July) at the undergraduate level or 18 hours per academic year at the graduate level with said hours being applicable to the approved degree program.
 - Exceptions may be considered for graduate students employed in a full-time pastoral role by a church located within the 26 counties of the Texas Panhandle. Such exceptions must be approved by the Committee. In such cases, students will be required to enroll and pass a minimum of 9 hours per academic year.
 - A student attending an institution that grants quarter hour credit rather than semester hour credit should understand that 18 quarter hour credits equals 12 semester hour credits (2/3 semester hour equal one quarter hour), and should plan their schedule accordingly to meet enrollment and course completion criteria.

Scholarship Awards:

Scholarship awards are to be used for tuition, books, fees, and other expenses as necessary for college/university attendance. The scholarship award amount is listed below and is payable in two equal installments - one for Fall/Winter courses and one for Spring/Summer courses. Fall/Winter payments are typically made to the institution in August and Spring/Summer payments in January.

-\$5,000 for students classified as a junior or senior (for up to a period not to exceed two years)

-\$7,000 for full-time graduate students (including those in full-time pastoral role who chose to attend school full-time) (for up to a period not to exceed four years)

-\$3,500 for graduate students employed in a full-time pastoral role by a church located within the 26 counties of the Texas Panhandle and who have been approved by the Committee for less than 18 but no fewer than 9 hours per academic year (for up to a period not to exceed six years)

Any amount paid to the institution in excess of the student's financial need must be refunded to the Foundation. Any student who withdraws from school should inform the Foundation immediately and have any remaining funds returned to the Foundation.

If individuals have questions, they should contact The Mary E. Bivins Foundation scholarship staff.

Application Process:

The application process will begin in January of each year with award decisions being made no later than May of the same year for the upcoming academic year (August-July). Individuals who have the intent to be a pulpit preacher who become Bivins Scholars (i.e. Tier 1 Scholars) must submit grades and registration information each semester to ensure compliance with the scholarship requirements and a brief personal essay describing the activities of the previous year, any adjustments to their calling, and any pertinent information each January (to coincide with the application deadline). Tier 1 Scholars will continue to receive the scholarship within the timeframe indicated under the *Scholarship Awards* section as long as all scholarship requirements continue to be met and there are no changes in calling, school, or degree plan. If there are any changes to the Scholar's circumstance or plans they must re-apply. The scholarship is a one year award for all other recipients. Individuals who receive the scholarship who are in Tier 2 or 3 are eligible to re-apply in the subsequent year as long as they continue to meet the eligibility criteria. Individuals who have received the scholarship in the past but are not currently receiving the scholarship may apply (again) as long as they meet the eligibility criteria.

Interview Process - New Student, Renewal or Returning Student:

All applicants completing the new student application are required to participate in an in-person interview with the Scholarship Committee and Scholarship Advisory Committee. In-person interviews typically take place in late March/early April. Video-conferencing will be allowed for individuals whose location prohibits an in-person interview. The Scholarship Committee and Advisory Committee will review all new student applications that meet eligibility criteria and complete interviews with each new student applicant. Any student who has been a Bivins Scholar in the past (i.e. not a current recipient at the time the application is due for the next academic year) who is applying again is required to interview in person with the Scholarship Advisory Committee. The Scholarship Advisory Committee's role is to evaluate applicants' inward call, gifts and abilities to be successful in that call, and affirmation of that call. Information and subsequent recommendations from the Scholarship Advisory Committee are to be presented to the Grants and Scholarship Committee (typically at a committee meeting in late April following the in-person interviews) for consideration in formulating final recommendations to the Mary E. Bivins Foundation Board of Directors which will be considered at the next board meeting (typically held in May).

Bivins Scholar:

It is a prestigious honor to be a Bivins Scholar. Bivins Scholars are announced annually and pictures may be used as a part of that announcement. The Bivins Foundation is committed to continue Mary E. Bivins' legacy by encouraging Scholars in their growth and progress. Bivins Scholars may be called upon from time to time to speak at various gatherings regarding what the scholarship has meant to them and the significance of being a Bivins Scholar. Bivins Scholars are asked to keep the Foundation informed as to how their career in the ministry continues to take shape.

Additional Information:

Questions should be directed to
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