



General Conference 2012 established the Central Conference Theological Education Fund and charged the Council of Bishops to elect a commission that would administer the fund and set policies and procedures.

General Conference 2012 set these priorities for funding submissions to the Central Conference Theological Education Fund:

- Development of theological schools;
- Development of Courses of Study;
- Development of libraries and contextually developed resources;
- Scholarships and faculty development;
- Support for associations and networks of faculty and schools;
- Support for new and innovative approaches to theological education.

Guided by these priorities, the newly formed commission gathered in August 2013, in Haslev, Denmark, to begin its work. The commission set four general priorities for funding:

- Capacity building;
- Development of contextual education;
- New and innovative initiatives;
- Sustainability.

The commission also established guidelines for who may apply for these funds:

- Institutions in central conferences that are related to The United Methodist Church;
- Boards of Ordained Ministry;
- Organizations that are integrally related to ministry in The United Methodist Church and theological education.

The commission further stipulated that “no individual applications will be accepted for

scholarships. Scholarships would be requested via institutions for faculty or students as they expand the capacity of the school in particular fields, or by Boards of Ordained Ministry to strengthen the ministerial outreach for a particular context for ministry.”

In February 2014, the commission met in Atlanta, Georgia, USA, to review applications and award the first grants. Fifty-seven grants totaling more than \$1 million were awarded for theological education in 11 countries in Africa, Asia and Europe. Projects funded in 2014 included curriculum development, training of local pastors, continuing education for clergy, faculty development, provision of e-readers and even \$50,000 for the solar electrification of the Banyam Theological Seminary in Nigeria.

The commission placed a high priority on fair distribution of the funds. To do so, the commission relied on regional screening committees from each central conference to ensure as many qualified recipients as possible received some funding.

While General Conference 2012 approved \$5 million for the fund, the General Council on Finance and Administration expected the World Service Apportionment Fund to pay out at 85 percent; therefore, the commission initially planned to award \$4.2 million, or about \$1 million a year for each year of the 2013-2016 quadrennium. The World Service Apportionment Fund came in at a higher rate than expected in 2013, so the commission had an extra \$13,000 to award that year above the forecasted \$1 million.

Under the leadership of Bishop John Innis, the commission met in December 2014 in Dallas, Texas, USA, to review and award the 2015 grant applicants. In this second round, 73 grants totaling \$1 million were awarded for theological education in 22 countries in Africa, Asia and Europe. Again, funded projects included the training of local pastors, development of faculty, provision of e-readers, curriculum development, development of libraries and more.



At the conclusion of its December 2014 meeting, the commission agreed that the combined efforts of Central Conference Theological Education Fund awarded projects would make a tremendous, positive impact on the development of theological education throughout the central conferences. With that confidence, the commission resolved to petition General Conference 2016 to renew its approval of \$5 million for the Central Conference Theological Education Fund, through the World Service Apportionment Fund.

In May 2015, the commission initiated the application process for a third round of grants to be awarded in 2016. A final round of grants for the 2013-2016 quadrennium will be awarded later in 2016 for distribution in 2017.