



Center for Leadership Development – A Theological Grounding

The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM), a leading educational agency for more than 150 years, is constantly adapting its work to new challenges and opportunities. Since 1968, GBHEM has provided education for lay and clergy who serve the life and ministry of The United Methodist Church. In 1984, GBHEM began working globally by helping to create and support Africa University, associations in various regions, and new schools, colleges, universities and seminaries in the

Central Conferences. The 2008 General Conference charged GBHEM with the responsibility for leadership development in The United Methodist Church. As a natural step in this process, GBHEM is building on its historic role, utilizing existing resources, and relying on emerging expertise within and beyond the agency to evolve into an innovative center for leadership development. This initiative is based on a strong biblical, theological, and Wesleyan grounding to better serve the church and the world in the 21st century.

The Leading of God and the Leadership of the Church

We do not often speak about God’s leadership except when we speak of individual Christians or the church as “being led.” And yet, when we think about leadership as Christians and United Methodists, the model for this leadership must come from the God who calls the church into being.

In a recent article titled [*The Leadership of God*](#), Methodist scholar, Neil Richardson, argues that the God who calls the church into being is a God of self-emptying love who reaches out to all his creation because he yearns for its fulfilment. If we want to see a vision of God’s leadership, Richardson points us to the cross of Jesus from which God leads in patterns of sacrificial, non-coercive, life-giving grace.

In every generation the church needs leaders—leaders who help keep the church focused on its core purposes of worshipping and bearing witness to this God and who ensure that the formation of disciples and communities manifests in the example of God’s self-emptying love. Such leadership is needed at every level of church life from Sunday school classes to the cabinet of an Annual Conference, from the leadership of a Wesley Foundation to the leadership of a fresh expression of church.

Nor is the work of leadership all about the knowledge, skills and gifts of particular individuals. As important as personal leadership is, it is always a gift received for the



building up of the body and a gift to be exercised in collegiality with others. It is a gift to be exercised collegially and communally as we work together as lay and ordained people in the councils of the church—from local to General Conference level—to discern God’s leading.

Christian leadership is about more than the leadership of the church. Because God’s care is not only for the church, but for the life of the world, the church also needs to be about the business of forming leaders for the transformation of the world—leaders who will influence and affect public life and social institutions. Leaders who will shape and form young people through schools and universities, and leaders who will build businesses and deploy resources in ways that reflect Christ. Without leadership focused in this way, as Richardson observes, human beings lose the capacity to distinguish “right from wrong and truth from falsehood; societies fall apart into division and injustice; human relationships grow shallow and manipulative; trust and fidelity decline.”

Effective Christian Leadership in Education and Ministry

Guided by a renewed theological grounding, GBHEM is evolving into a center for leadership development. We are dedicated to providing leadership resources The United Methodist Church needs today, while preparing for tomorrow; not only for the U.S., but across the world, with respect for differences and contexts.

GBHEM supports the preparation of denominational leaders to ensure they are well equipped to effectively implement the United Methodist mission and ministry across the globe. Our agency supports lay and clergy leaders as they discover, claim and flourish in Christ’s calling for their lives, so they become difference-makers—individuals who make an impact for good upon our denomination and our world. This mission begins with establishing pathways designed to help individuals discern their gifts and passions and continues as the church encourages their journeys and nurtures them in education and formation.

The vision established here comes even as the church confronts important challenges. Regardless of the outcome of imminent legislative decisions, the need for effective leaders serving at all levels of the church worldwide, including local churches, districts, the episcopacy, colleges and universities, and other organizations and institutions, such as the military, jails, hospitals and counseling centers, will not diminish.



A Foundation in Research

To inform our work, GBHEM conducted an extensive gap analysis designed to identify and maximize leadership strengths and areas for improvement within the connection. We began with a ROI Institute, Inc. (ROI) survey. Founded in 1992, ROI helps organizations evaluate the success of projects and programs, including measuring financial return on investment.

This research produced the following key observations:

- The four core performance measures of greatest concern to church leaders are membership, diversity, engagement and retention.
- Accountability is an important measure that is sometimes overlooked. Processes need to ensure accountability for resources bestowed on us, and of clergy and laity, as they serve as leaders whom others trust.
- Now is the time to rethink the measures the church values, by focusing on measures that lead to the development of difference-makers and the impact they make on church and society.
- Prioritization in developing leadership competencies should begin with a focus on integrity, trust, authenticity, accountability, active listening, adaptive leadership, transformation, innovative leadership and cross-cultural competence.
- Developmental program offerings should align with the needs of constituents and the organizations they serve. In other words, leadership training must be crafted to be contextually oriented. Constituents want to connect with leadership development opportunities that align with their specific environments.
- Respondents suggested that the establishment of a “central repository” for leadership development resources would be very or extremely useful. While the definition of “central repository” was not clearly established, it appears to suggest strong interest within the denomination for leadership development resources.

As a result of this extensive research, GBHEM has aligned our work across the agency to help both lay and clergy to **Discover, Claim** and **Flourish** in the arc of their maturing call. Here are the processes we have put in place to achieve and sustain this work.

Strategy for Leadership Development

GBHEM created the Office for Strategic Leadership to help us discern God’s leading for the future. This office foresees the leadership needs of the church for the next 40 years by doing the necessary research and then communicates the resources we develop to meet those needs.



Flourishing Ordained Ministry

Additional research into effective Christian leadership—for the church and the world—identified that successful leaders, who can not only lead now but also help us to be faithful in worship and witness into the future, will be people who are:

- Inspired by the God who calls us into life in all its fullness;
- Rooted in the depth and height of the rich Christian faith as the UMC practices it;
- Agile as they interpret that faith for new contexts and challenges; and
- Connected in the fellowship of the church and able to connect with those inside and outside our denomination.

Fueled by the General Conference action of 2016 requiring a mandatory eight-year assessment for all clergy under appointment, and drawing on the ROI research, GBHEM's Division of Ordained Ministry has developed Effective Ministry 360 that enables Annual Conferences to both support and hold accountable their clergy members. This process is designed to set clear expectations of clergy, from early years of candidacy to senior responsibility. In tandem, GBHEM is developing a model of supervision for use at all levels of church life among clergy and those lay people who hold significant responsibility. (More information can be found at gbhem.org/em360)

GBHEM has continued and expanded its work on “creating a culture of call,” recruiting and supporting clergy leaders through a series of processes, including the Course of Study and the Young Clergy Initiative. (More information can be found at explorecalling.org/yqi)

Investing in Higher Education

Drawing upon both ROI research and engagements across the church, the need for lay leadership development is as acute as the need for clergy leadership development. The Division of Higher Education (DHE) was established to support the long and historic investment of the church and countless individual parishioners in the expansion of educational resources and accessibility across our society. DHE works with both institutional and student leaders within the 117 United Methodist schools, colleges and universities in the U.S., and Methodist institutions around the globe (gbhem.org/education/scu). DHE strengthens the role of these institutions in the development of ethical leaders to serve varied roles throughout our society.

Currently, DHE is implementing a leadership formation process that identifies core competencies and provides a pathway for the strengthening of skill sets possessed by educational leaders. DHE also provides leadership development processes that support chaplains, campus ministers and campus ministries (gbhem.org/education/collegiate-ministry). These processes support both those discerning their suitability for leadership,



and institutions in search of new senior leadership resources. DHE houses the Publishing Office, which produces materials that support young scholars, emerging leaders and the intellectual life of the church. (More information can be found at gbhem.org/about/publications.)

For more information about Division of Higher Education initiatives, see: gbhem.org/education.

Contextualization Through Global Education and New Initiatives

Through the “Methodist Global Education Fund for Leadership Development” (MGEFLD), GBHEM is expanding three programs: GraSP (scholarships), TAP (technical assistance), and MAP (academic exchanges). See methodistgloaleducation.org for more information.

Recognizing that becoming a center for leadership development for the world requires contextualization, GBHEM has launched 11 Leadership, Education, and Development (LEaD) Hubs around the world. The role of each LEaD Hub is to work within the particular setting, strengthening leadership development and education to face local mission challenges in each region; from Abidjan, Cote d’Ivoire to Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The LEaD Hubs also provide formal networking with the International Association of Methodist Schools, Colleges and Universities (IAMSCU) and other regional associations. For a list of the 11 LEaD Hubs and respective executive directors, see gbhem.org/preparing-global-leaders/regional-hubs.

Loans and Scholarships Create Long-Term Impact

The Black College Fund and Office of Loans and Scholarships represent some of the longest-serving initiatives in the history of GBHEM and have been providing grants, loans, and scholarships to support students since 1866. Among the various scholarship programs, GBHEM continues to offer the Gift of Hope Scholarship to United Methodist undergraduate leaders, the Special Seminary Scholarship to United Methodist students attending United Methodist theological schools, and the Women of Color Scholarship to support and mentor women of color pursuing doctoral degrees. Loans and Scholarships has also created new programs to address clergy indebtedness and partnered with other agencies and foundations to secure funds for seminarians. Based on the ROI methodology, various scholarship programs are being adapted to align with opportunities focusing on leadership development with long-term impact. For more information, see gbhem.org/loans-and-scholarships.



Nurturing Leaders, Changing Lives

As we implement all these processes and promote global leadership, we are also collecting and telling stories about the worldwide impact of these initiatives. With a new campaign, “Nurturing Leaders. Changing Lives,” we are focusing on listening to the many voices of those who are being led by God’s life-giving grace. Our GBHEM Board of Directors, under the leadership of Bishop Bill McAlilly, has fully embraced both the ROI methodology, the new communication strategies and the implementation of innovative initiatives in all our work. Our purpose in making this radical realignment of staff and resources to create the center for leadership development is to better serve The United Methodist Church in navigating the rapid changes ahead. For more information, see gbhem.org or contact Cynthia Howard executive director of Marketing and Communications at choward@gbhem.org.

Every blessing,

Rev. Dr. Kim Cape
General Secretary
General Board of Higher Education and Ministry
The United Methodist Church
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"Lord, I am no longer my own, but yours. Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will. Let me be employed by you or laid aside for you, exalted for you or brought low by you. Let me have all things, let me have nothing. I freely and heartily yield all things to your pleasure and disposal. And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you are mine and I am yours. So be it. Amen." John Wesley's Covenant Prayer