

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A **UNITED** **METHODIST-RELATED INSTITUTION**



A PRIMER for Higher Education Executives
and Campus Leaders at U.S. Institutions



HIGHER EDUCATION & MINISTRY

General Board of Higher Education and Ministry

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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High Point University, North Carolina

Preface



Illinois Wesleyan University, Illinois

The United Methodist Church's commitment to education is rooted historically in the vision and actions of John and Charles Wesley, the founders of the Methodist movement. John Wesley encouraged intellectual development alongside spiritual growth. He worked to connect "knowledge and vital piety," relate faith and reason and educate the whole person in body, mind, and spirit. The denomination's interest in education has evolved from John Wesley's concern for the well-being of all people. Accordingly, three concerns have motivated the United Methodist denomination to be involved in education throughout its history:

- That all people should have access to education;
- That education should be of the highest quality in program quality, financial integrity, and shared governance; and
- That the expression of all religious traditions should be guarded and encouraged on United Methodist-related campuses.

This Primer is the result of reflection and discussion around questions of identity and meaning for United Methodist-related schools, colleges, and universities, particularly in North America. It reflects collaborative work with colleagues at GBHEM and Global Ministries including Dr. David Scott, executive director for theology and strategic planning, who penned the sections Access to Education, Intercultural Communities of Learning, and Education, Service, and Justice; and Todd Willis, general counsel, who continually reminds us that policy and theology work in tandem. That said, dialogue from around the world over many decades has contributed to the church-related conversation in The Primer.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the invaluable guidance and insight provided by Roland Fernandes, general secretary. His thoughtful leadership and feedback during the revision process have significantly enhanced the value of The Primer. It will continue to be a living document that provides a foundational text for the church and the academy to continue the church-related conversation. Institutions should feel free to use all or parts of The Primer to interpret the church relationship to their campus communities.

The Rev. Dr. Tammy Gieselman
Director of Education
Executive Secretary, University Senate

The Role of Education in United Methodism



John Wesley

The United Methodist Church's commitment to education is historically rooted in the vision and actions of its founder, John Wesley. Wesley, himself well educated, encouraged intellectual development alongside spiritual growth. He worked to connect "knowledge and vital piety," relate faith and reason and educate the whole person in body, mind and spirit.

The denomination's interest in education has evolved from Wesley's concern for the well-being of all people. He founded Kingswood School in 1748 near Bristol, England, to provide education, especially for the poor. American Methodists founded their first school, Cokesbury College, in 1787.

From these beginnings, Methodists invested heavily in founding schools, colleges, and universities throughout the world. Many of these institutions were built to provide education to populations with limited access to formal education, including freed slaves in the American South, modernizing societies in Africa, Asia and Latin America, areas of population growth, and the economically marginalized throughout the world.

Three concerns have motivated The United Methodist Church and its predecessors to be involved in education throughout their history:

- That all people should have access to education;
- That a United Methodist education should be of the highest excellence in program quality, financial integrity, and shared governance; and
- That the expression of religion for all faith traditions should be guarded and encouraged on United Methodist-related campuses.

These three concerns reflect deeply held theological convictions. United Methodists believe all people are created in the image of God and therefore of sacred worth. This belief is rooted in biblical accounts of creation (Genesis 1:27) and Jesus' teachings to love our neighbors as ourselves and to consider everyone our neighbor (Matthew 22:36-40).

Education enables all people to cultivate their God-given abilities. In the United Methodist tradition, an educated person is one who has developed the potential within them — morally, culturally, and spiritually, as well as intellectually and physically.

Education is not ultimately about training people to be intelligent or successful but about discovering what it is to be the full human beings God intended. Education is a process that occurs within individuals and is expressed in relationships of care and justice with self, God, other humans, and the rest of the created world.

LOVING GOD WITH ONE'S MIND

United Methodists take seriously Matthew 22:37, which calls us to love God with our minds.

John Wesley was as much an educator as a preacher. Methodist involvement in education stems from his passion for education, rooted in his understanding of the Bible, and centuries of Christian tradition.

Wesley clearly thought acquiring a good theological understanding guided Christian experience and that, in turn, Christian experience informed and shaped theological understanding. This is not far removed from current learning cycle theory and reinforces the view that learning is a lifelong process.

It was Wesley's commitment to lifelong learning and self-knowledge that made him a pioneer in the field of popular education because, as he told one preacher, "it cannot be that the people should grow in grace unless they give themselves to reading."

He drew up a list of recommended reading, set up libraries, acquired a printing press, and produced a vast array of publications, including hymnbooks designed to educate people in the essentials of religion.

When he built his first school at Kingswood, he made provision for adult education and it was his hope that people of all ages would attend classes at the school. The Methodist societies he created have been described as seminars in adult education.¹

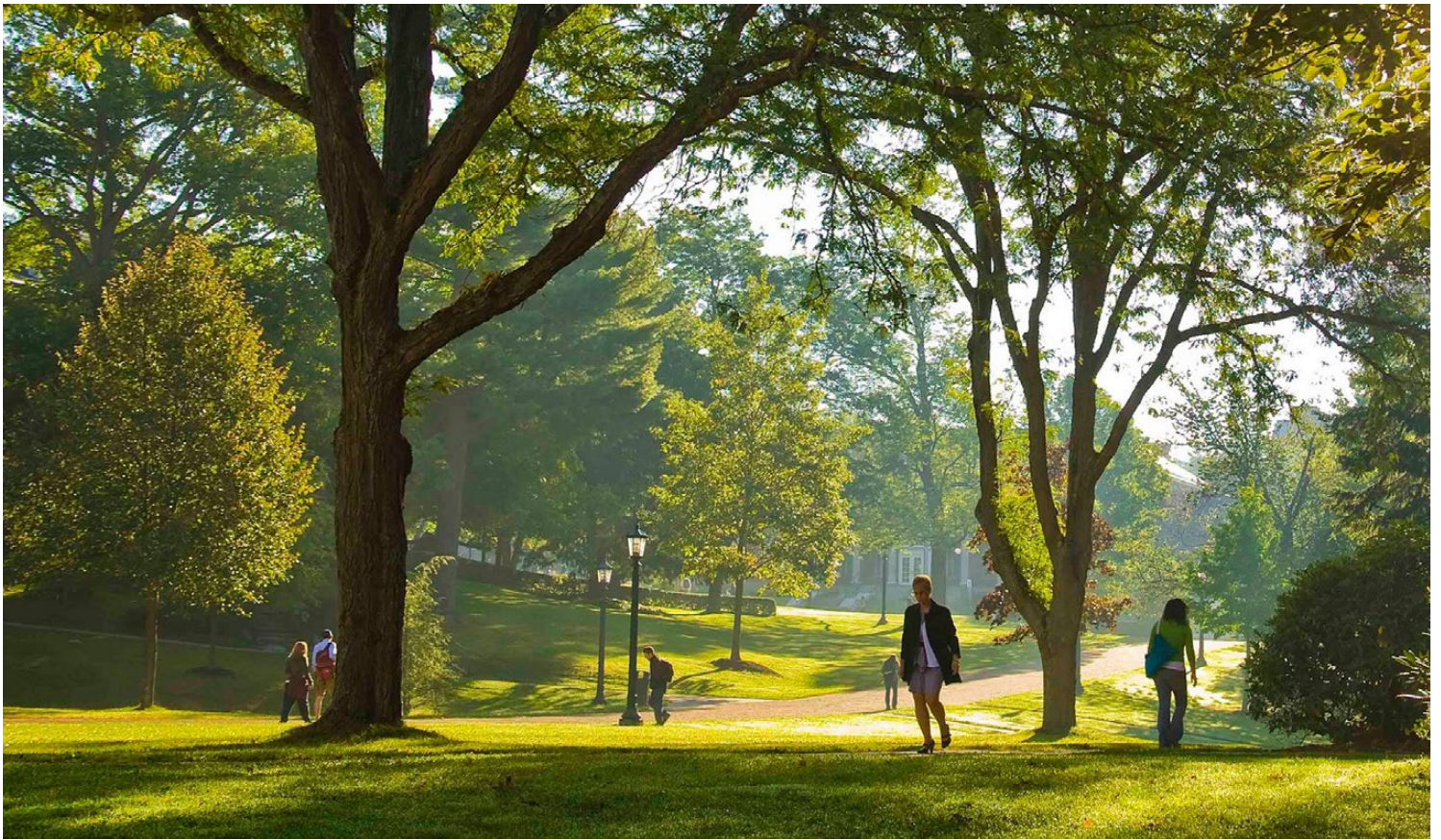


Wofford College, South Carolina



University of the Pacific, California

Education, from a United Methodist perspective, is a means of attaining freedom from ignorance and prejudice so that justice and equity can prevail throughout the world.



Allegheny College, Pennsylvania

METHODISM AND EDUCATION IN AMERICA

After the early initiatives of John and Charles Wesley and many others, Methodism began to establish itself as a denomination that would include education in the fabric of its everyday mission. Bishop Francis Asbury famously recommended that Methodists erect a school in the vicinity of every church.

Hence, the number of Methodist schools, colleges, and universities expanded considerably during the 19th century. By 1820, annual conferences received the authority to act autonomously in establishing schools, yet there was a concern for the need to operate within a connectional system that would align quality and sustainability for all Methodist institutions.²

In 1860, the Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church suggested a General Conference board be created, and by 1866, the Board of Education was established for a worldwide mission: to diffuse more generally the blessings of education and Christianity throughout the United States and elsewhere.

Access to Education

The United Methodist Church has a theological commitment to access to education that is grounded in our religious heritage and our beliefs about God's call to work for mission and justice in the world.

United Methodists recognize all humans are created in the image of God. Therefore, everyone is called to treat all people with love, care, respect and justice. As the Church's constitution states, "The United Methodist Church proclaims the value of each person as a unique child of God and commits itself to the healing and wholeness of all persons." (The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, Article 5, *Racial Justice*.) This commitment to the well-being of all people is rooted in God's calling, Jesus' teachings and Wesley's understanding of holiness, which must be expressed through love of God and neighbor.

As part of the commitment to the "healing and wholeness of all persons" and the desire that all may develop their God-given abilities for the service of others, United Methodists believe all people have a right to access the blessings bestowed by God, including a right to education. The United Methodist Church's Book of Resolutions states, "All people, irrespective of sex, age, race, color, ethnicity, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property or birth, as well as persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous persons and children and youths, especially those in vulnerable situations or other status should have access to inclusive, equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities" (The 2024 Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church #4214, *The Right of All to Quality Education*).

Although education is a basic human right, not all people have the same access to education. This has been true historically and remains true today. Indeed, "the right to education remains one of the most widely and systematically violated of all human rights" (2024 Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church #4214, *The Right of All to Quality Education*). These violations often occur along the lines of social distinction mentioned in the paragraph above. These violations are a form of sin that contradicts our teachings and a grave issue of social injustice.

United Methodists are called to oppose injustices that threaten the recognition of the inherent worth of all people, including unfair differences in access to education. Our faith compels us to take concrete actions to create a more just world, including steps to promote access to education through scholarships, admission processes, support and mentoring and other means.



DePauw University, Indiana



Young Harris College, Georgia



Morningside College, Iowa



Randolph-Macon College, Virginia

Higher education, at its best, creates a culture of open dialogue, curiosity, and appreciative inquiry, educational virtues that are not unique to United Methodist institutions; however, for those institutions related to The United Methodist Church, an open and inclusive culture is of particular responsibility.

United Methodist-related schools listed by the University Senate are distinguished from other educational institutions by how they combine faith and reason.

Methodists have always established, intentionally so, broad parameters for church relationships. UM-related institutions are thus able to craft a variety of approaches that allow faith to play a meaningful role in the educational process.

Rather than either isolating faith as something outside formal curriculum or mandate a particular doctrine, United Methodist-related schools, colleges, and universities offer curricular and co-curricular programs enabling students to safely and bravely ask questions of meaning and purpose.

Thus, UM-related higher education does not exist simply to provide easy answers, but to formulate better questions and to create lifelong learners.³



McKendree University, Illinois

In 1748, written for the dedication of Kingswood School in Bath, England, Charles Wesley's hymn charged all Methodist educators to: "Unite the pair so long disjointed, knowledge, and vital piety: learning and holiness combined."

Intercultural Communities of Learning

The United Methodist Church affirms that, not only do all people have a right to access education, but all people have the right to contribute to the educational process as learners and educators based on insights unique to their backgrounds and life experiences.

Such work involves not only benefits for all people but contributions from all people. This includes “all people, irrespective of sex, age, race, color, ethnicity, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property or birth, as well as persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous persons, and children and youths, especially those in vulnerable situations or other status” (2024 The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church #4214, *The Right of All to Quality Education*).

United Methodists see this variety of backgrounds as an asset, proclaiming, “We believe that our strength lies in our racial and cultural diversity and that we must work toward a world in which each person’s value is respected and nurtured” (2024 The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church #3325. *A Charter for Racial Justice In an Interdependent Global Community*). Therefore, The United Methodist Church is “committed to the principle of social inclusiveness” and believes that “inclusionary efforts that lead to diversity yield enriched environments for our daily living and learning” (The 2024 Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church #3326. *Affirmative Action*).

Increasingly, United Methodists use the term “intercultural” to describe the process of mutual learning and exchange that occurs when all members of a community from different backgrounds are empowered to offer their unique contributions to the work of that community. Schools, colleges and universities are communities of learning. Learning is strengthened when members’ unique perspectives and experiences are recognized.

Creating a space for all within communities of learning prepares all to contribute to the fruits of learning: service and justice. A major theological insight in the past century is that all people are called to be active participants in God’s life-giving mission in ways consistent with their cultural, linguistic and racial-ethnic backgrounds and that God’s work of healing the world requires contributions from all. Education contributes to this vision.



Millsaps College, Mississippi

**“Do all the good you can,
by all the means you can,
in all the ways you can,
in all the places you can,
at all the times you can,
to all the people you can,
as long as ever you can.”**

—Attributed to John Wesley in *The Fundamentals of Ethics* by Russ Shafer-Landau



Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, D.C.

EDUCATION, SERVICE, AND JUSTICE

The United Methodist Church believes true education should lead learners to engage in service to others and pursuit of justice for the whole society.

John Wesley consistently held that education of the highest quality will produce capable and caring individuals to serve the world's communities. Wesley taught that personal holiness must always be accompanied by social holiness, through which the love of God motivates individuals to engage in service to others and to pursue justice for all.

Wesley believed society would be changed for the better by transforming the lives of individuals, teaching them values and vocation, and not just personal well-being. Education should promote self-discipline and hard work, and a recognition that the more we are given, the more is expected from us. It should equip a person with the right habits for a life of service to others. Education should be an instrument for reforming and reshaping society, not for maintaining the status quo. It should encourage people to want to change the world for the better. This includes generating greater environmental responsibility for the welfare of the world God has created.



Hendrix College, Arkansas



Bethune-Cookman University, Florida



Oklahoma City University, Oklahoma



Dickinson College, Pennsylvania

THE WHOLE PERSON: BODY, MIND AND SPIRIT

John Wesley was concerned with body, mind and spirit. He was convinced God cared about the whole person. Many have argued that a well-working body was fundamental to Wesley's holistic view of health and a sensible regimen was viewed as the natural way of realizing a life of health and wholeness. To that end, Wesley established a visitation program for the sick, dispensed medicine, and recommended plant-based therapies to the poor in London and Bristol.

In 1747, Wesley published his collection of simple remedies under the title, *Primitive Physick*. Wesley scholar Randy Maddox notes the following about Wesley's book of home remedies: "He was trying to offer medical advice that had been used for generations and that went back, as he understood it, to the roots of creation."⁴

It can be argued that Methodism grew out of a whole person spirituality with "do no harm" disciples who built schools, orphanages, and hospitals for all to access. That love of God was built on a foundation of service in and with the community with an eye toward social justice ministry. We might further assess that UM-related educational institutions, now in the 21st century, are stewards of that which is rooted in Methodism's whole person spirituality.

Wesley also believed society would be changed for the better not by government policy but by transforming the lives of individuals, by educating them about the importance of sacrifice and service, and teaching them values and vocation and not just personal well-being.

Education should promote self-discipline and hard work and recognition that the more we are given, the more is expected from us.

Connectionalism ensures that institutions are not isolated and asks us all to embrace a global perspective.



Columbia College, South Carolina

THE CONNECTION

The United Methodist Church is a connectional denomination. The idea of a connectional church has been central to Methodism since John Wesley began the movement in 1739.

Wesley thoughtfully organized a network of Methodist societies across England, connected to one another through a common mission. Wesley recognized the need for an organized system of communication and accountability, and developed what he called the “connexion,” a network of classes, societies, and annual conferences. Since then, the connection has always been about relationship.

Today, United Methodists continue to be organized in a “connectional” system, which “enables us to carry out our mission in unity and strength” (2024 Book of Discipline, ¶ 701). International Association of Methodist Schools, Colleges and Universities (IAMSCU, see page 30) April 2023 task force report, “Visibly Re-Imagining the Wesleyan Heritage” notes that being connectional is by far the most important value of our Wesleyan heritage.

We are designed to be connected, which is why the term “disaffiliation” may not accurately describe an institution leaving the denomination. We are more than “affiliated” with one another, we are connected. We are United Methodist-related. Thus, UM-related higher education institutions work through a connectional mechanism, meeting, collaborating, co-creating, and convening together, embodying the historic identity of Methodism.

When a president or a whole institution grieves, we all grieve because the connection is about relationships. When students and the campus community realize the virtue of connectionalism, they will better understand why Methodism is more than a historical identity. Connectionalism is a modern way of interpreting our life together. No one goes it alone.

“...Methodist education has always loudly proclaimed every boy and girl, every woman and man, matters to God.”

– The British Methodist Church



Claremont School of Theology, California

The United Methodist Identity and Ethos



Tennessee Wesleyan University, Tennessee



Baker University, Kansas



Greensboro College, North Carolina

A United Methodist-related campus embodies the church's deep-rooted commitment to accessible, high-quality education, expressing its identity by integrating the United Methodist ethos into academic programs and campus life. It employs a holistic approach rooted in John Wesley's emphasis on educating the whole person – intellectually, culturally, spiritually, and physically – creating a caring and compassionate citizenry.

The United Methodist ethos views education not merely as a path to intellectual proficiency or career success, but as a transformative process that enables individuals to cultivate their gifts and discover what it means to be the full human beings God intended. Central to this is the conviction that all people are created in the image of God. The United Methodist ethos stands on a sacramental foundation and reflects an inclusive theology, symbolized by Holy Communion's open table and baptism's vocational call to a life of purpose and service. This ethos fosters social holiness, where personal growth leads to active engagement in service, the pursuit of justice, and the transformation of the world. The curriculum of a United Methodist institution prepares students to understand a religiously diverse world across public and private sectors, in commerce, health care, and public life.

The chaplain on campus plays a central role in interpreting the institution's United Methodist identity with leadership, donors, faculty, and staff. Chaplains bring knowledge and vital piety, faith and reason together, facilitating interfaith engagement and creating space for students of all backgrounds to explore their beliefs. Chaplains facilitate the institution's connection to The United Methodist Church, ensuring the institution's mission remains rooted in education for personal and social transformation.

A United Methodist-related campus has a vibrant culture that prioritizes open dialogue, critical inquiry, and appreciation for diverse perspectives. Academic freedom allows for scholarly exploration of religious faith and its intellectual dimensions across disciplines. The campus environment actively seeks to create intercultural communities of learning, empowering students, faculty, and staff to contribute their unique experiences to the beloved community.

The connectional relationship between the campus and The United Methodist Church fosters a collaborative mission that aligns a global perspective with a just society for all.



Spartanburg Methodist College, South Carolina



Adrian College, Michigan

The United Methodist Church views both the love of God and love of neighbor, concepts integral to Christian faith, as having an intellectual component. This underlying assumption is a driving force in the denomination's interest in education and shapes the character of schools, colleges, universities, and theological schools that relate to the denomination.

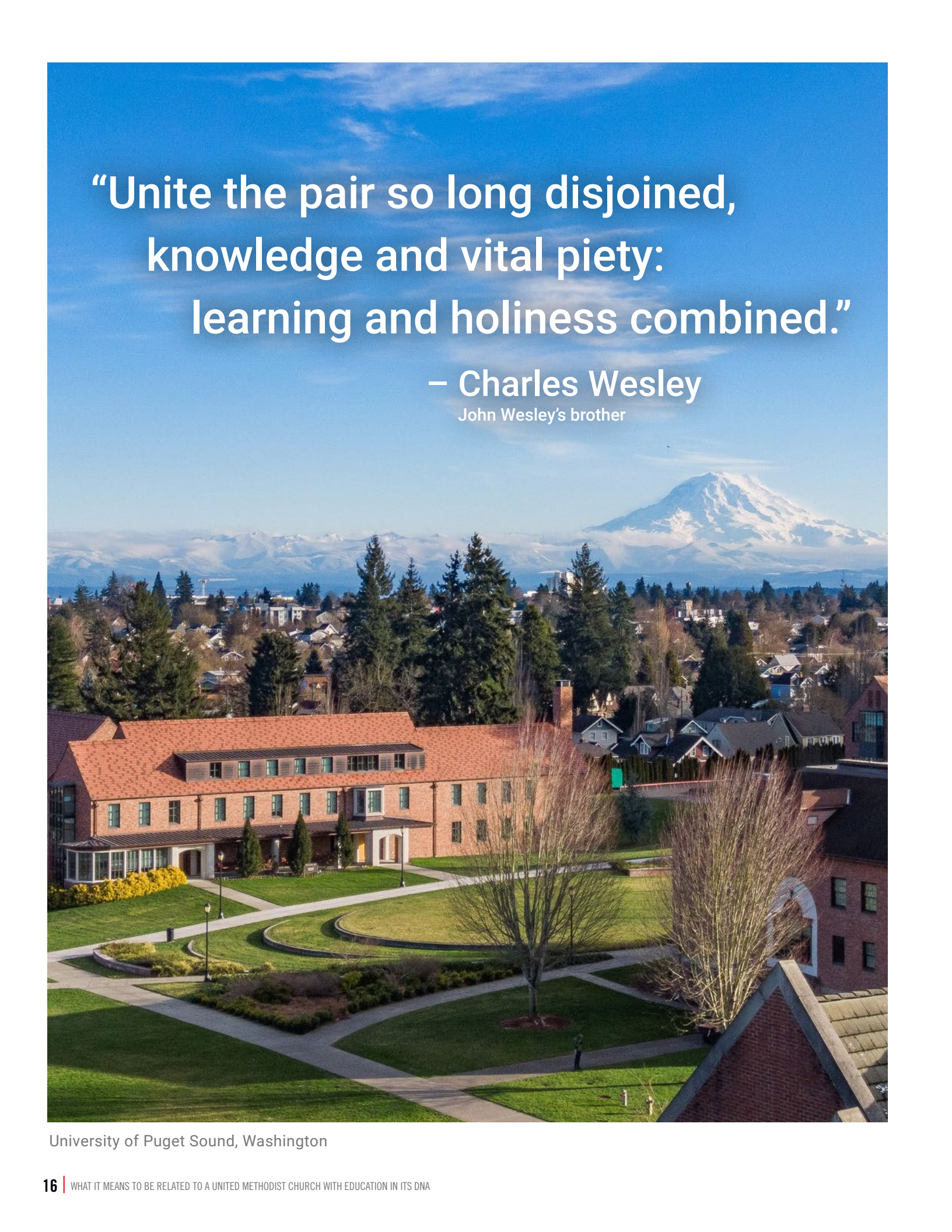
John Wesley viewed education as a channel of self-understanding that was crucial for salvation, granting intellect a prominent role in the denomination's conception of faith.



Centenary University, New Jersey



Philander Smith University, Arkansas

A wide-angle photograph of the University of Puget Sound campus. In the foreground, a large brick building with a red roof and many windows sits on a green lawn. A paved path winds through the lawn. In the background, a dense forest of evergreen trees covers a hillside, and a large, snow-capped mountain (Mount Rainier) rises prominently against a clear blue sky with some light clouds.

“Unite the pair so long disjoined,
knowledge and vital piety:
learning and holiness combined.”

— Charles Wesley
John Wesley's brother

University of Puget Sound, Washington

General Board of Higher Education and Ministry



Dillard University, Louisiana



Louisburg College, North Carolina

In 1972, several divisions, departments, and boards related to United Methodist education were reorganized to form the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM), one of 13 agencies in the UMC. That same year, General Conference established the **Black College Fund** (BCF) to promote and contribute to the history of African American Methodist education in the United States and the future of United Methodist-related HBCUs.

Today, GBHEM is the United Methodist agency charged with stewarding the intellectual life of the denomination. It connects with, on behalf of the denomination, more than 1,000 educational institutions in 80 countries and five continents around the world.

In addition to ordained and licensed ministry initiatives and programs, GBHEM is the agency responsible for managing and executing the **University Senate**, scholarships, and the **United Methodist Endorsing Agency** (UMEA). Additionally, GBHEM supports the North American Association of Methodist Schools, Colleges and Universities (NAAMSCU, more information on page 30) through program collaboration, administrative assistance, accounting and investing, event planning and other partnerships.

Two award programs, managed by GBHEM, include the **Exemplary Teaching Award** for faculty who teach at UM-related institutions, and the **Francis Asbury Award** for those who have served with excellence on behalf of United Methodist education. Other awards and scholarships are available through GBHEM and include both higher education and theological education worldwide.

COLLEGIATE MINISTRIES

United Methodist Collegiate Ministries is the missional presence of The United Methodist Church on college and university campuses worldwide.

Through an international network of university/college chaplains, campus pastors, religious life directors, Wesley Foundations, ecumenical and inter-religious partnerships, and local church outreach, The United Methodist Church serves more than 1,300 campuses around the world.

GBHEM supports and advocates for collegiate ministries by cultivating meaningful relationships and convening collegiate ministers to empower a new generation of thoughtful Christian leaders.

GBHEM works with presidents, university chaplains, campus pastors, and leaders in bringing knowledge and vital piety, truth, and love together. We work with ministers and presidents on resources for connectionalism with local churches and annual conferences, leadership development, interfaith work, discernment, and other useful tools that contribute to a vibrant campus spiritual life.

For more information about Collegiate Ministries at GBHEM, email UMCollegiate@gbhem.org.

The first Wesleyan group to be called Methodist met at Christ Church College at Oxford, England, where Charles Wesley was a student and brother John had just graduated.



Boston University, Massachusetts



Reinhardt University, Georgia



Central Methodist University, Missouri

THE UNIVERSITY SENATE

The United Methodist Church has more schools, colleges, universities, and theological schools than any other protestant denomination in the country. The predecessor bodies of The United Methodist Church were anxious to serve the larger society by engaging in education. In this endeavor, they were true to John Wesley's concern for education and, more specifically, to the institution-building commitments of early American Methodism.

American Methodism has always sought to serve the larger community, as well as its members, through a series of complex UM-related institutions including schools, colleges, universities, theological schools, hospitals, youth homes, and retirement homes.

The University Senate was established in 1892 as one of the earliest accrediting bodies in the United States. Indeed, the senate began modeling peer review processes in the United States even before the regional accreditation system had been established. In that regard, the University Senate was instrumental in giving shape to the accreditation system in America. The senate's mission was to be certain that the schools, colleges, and universities reflected a high standard of excellence consistent with Methodist education.

Today, the University Senate, while not a federally recognized accrediting body, continues to be charged with the responsibility of reviewing all United Methodist-related educational institutions to affirm a high level of excellence in the church-academy relationship, which encompasses church-relatedness program quality, financial integrity, and governance.



Paine College, Georgia



UNIVERSITY SENATE
OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

The University Senate is an outward and visible sign of an inward and inherent commitment to the relationship between a denomination with education in its DNA and UM-related schools, colleges, universities, and theological schools.

THE MARKS OF A UNITED METHODIST INSTITUTION



Southwestern University, Texas

THERE ARE SOME MARKS OF CHURCH RELATIONSHIP WHICH SHOULD BE MANIFESTED IF AN INSTITUTION IS TO BE RELATED MEANINGFULLY TO THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH.



**Access the CEO Directory for
UM-related institutions.**

THE MARKS OF A UNITED METHODIST INSTITUTION

- A United Methodist-related institution fosters a culture of service among its students, faculty, and staff that encourages engagement in the Wesleyan tradition.
- A United Methodist-related institution recognizes The United Methodist Church's Social Principles; creates a community of scholarship and learning which facilitates social justice; and is committed to actions and initiatives promoting justice, solidarity and equity among all people.
- A United Methodist-related institution respects, honors, and provides the scholarly teaching of religion and especially the teaching of the Christian tradition as it relates to other living world religions to foster interfaith leadership on campus and in the community. In the case of professional institutions and programs, the curriculum includes opportunity for faculty and student reflection on the ethical dimensions of professional practice.
- A United Methodist-related institution respects and honors religious practices for people of faith and, specifically, worship and service for faculty, staff, and students who choose to participate in religious traditions within the total life of the institution.
- A United Methodist-related institution encourages faculty, staff, and students to explore the place of religious belief and practice; the intellectual dimensions of religious faith in academic disciplines and co-curricular activities; and advocates for the appropriate recognition of the contributions and challenges of religion in the public square.
- A United Methodist-related institution includes in its faculty, administrative officers, and board of trustees, persons who understand and respect the relationship with The United Methodist Church.
- A United Methodist-related institution identifies itself as such in marketing materials, official listings, and other statements of self-description.



Southern Methodist University, Texas

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

The United Methodist Church believes that schools, colleges, and universities are called to ensure academic freedom is protected for all members of the academic community and a creative learning environment is fostered, allowing for a free exchange of ideas.

Religious ideas deserve careful consideration within that exchange of ideas, but religion should not limit that exchange.

Education, from a United Methodist perspective, is a means of attaining freedom from ignorance and prejudice so that justice and equity can prevail throughout the world. Higher education, at its best, creates a culture of open dialogue, curiosity, and appreciative inquiry because this type of culture is crucial for the creation and refinement of knowledge.

These educational virtues are not unique to United Methodist institutions. However, for institutions related to The United Methodist Church, an open and inclusive culture is of particular responsibility. The United Methodist Church teaches epistemological humility and the need for dialog: “In humility, we affirm that God’s love is too strong, too broad, and too deep for any of us to constrain or prescribe how God continues to work among us. ... [I]f we do not respect, honor, and listen to our neighbors, and especially our enemies, then we have not love (1 Corinthians 13:1–7).” (2024 The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church #4100, *A Statement Concerning Church-Government Relations and Education*).

Academic freedom extends to the study of religion. Rather than either isolating faith as something outside formal curriculum or mandating a particular doctrine, United Methodist-related schools, colleges, and universities offer curricular and co-curricular programs that enable students to safely and bravely ask questions of meaning and purpose. This dedication to ongoing learning is rooted in pedagogical and theological convictions. These convictions include the United Methodist teaching of sanctification, or ongoing growth in love and understanding, and commitment to religious freedom. “Religious freedom, as a human right, involves not only every individual’s freedom of belief, thought and conscience, but also a person’s right to change one’s belief” (2024 The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church #4100, *A Statement Concerning Church-Government Relations and Education*). Thus, United Methodist-related higher education does not exist simply to provide easy answers, but to formulate better questions and to create lifelong learners.



Rocky Mountain College, Montana



Alaska Pacific University, Alaska



Emory & Henry College, Virginia

INTERFAITH ENGAGEMENT

In dialogue, we mutually seek insight into the wisdom of other traditions, and we hope to overcome our fears and misapprehensions.



Union Commonwealth University, Kentucky

The intent in developing interreligious relationships is not to amalgamate all faiths into one religion. United Methodists have no interest in such syncretism. To engage in interreligious dialogue is neither to endorse nor to deny the faith of other people. In dialogue, we mutually seek insight into the wisdom of other traditions, and we hope to overcome our fears and misapprehensions. Far from requiring a lessening of commitment to Christ, effective dialogue is only possible when one's own faith is strong and may ultimately serve to deepen or extend it.

United Methodists are seeking to be neighbors with persons whose religious commitments are different from our own and to engage each other about the deepest convictions of our lives. In our assurance of and trust in God's grace in Jesus Christ, we open ourselves to dialogue and engagement with persons of other faith communities and to other Christians whose understandings, cultures, and practices may be different from our own.

This interreligious engagement challenges United Methodist Christians to think in new ways about our lives in the broader human community, about our mission, evangelism, service, and our life together within the Christian church. We seek to promote peace and harmony with persons of other religious traditions in our various towns, cities, and neighborhoods. Yet we do not hide our differences, nor avoid conflicts, but seek to make them constructive. In each place, we share our lives with each other, we witness and are witnessed to, we invite others into the Christian community, and we are invited into theirs. Our prayer is that the lives of all in each place will be enriched by the differences of others, that a new sense of community may emerge, and that others may receive the gift of God in Christ while we receive the gifts which have been given them.

Source: For more information, see The 2024 Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church, #5202. *Called to Be Neighbors and Witnesses: Guidelines for Interreligious Relationships.*

VIRTUES OF UNITED METHODIST EDUCATION

The educated person is one who has most nearly attained the potential which he or she have it within them to become, morally, culturally, and spiritually as well as intellectually and physically. Education is not ultimately about training people to be clever or successful, but about discovering what it is to be the full human beings God intended us to be.⁵

The Shield for UM Virtues

TOP QUADRANT

Latin for “knowledge and vital piety,” describes the intellectual and spiritual relationship between the church and the academy.

RIGHT QUADRANT

The globe symbolizes worldwide connection and broad diversity; it acknowledges contextual tension and holds space to help balance that tension. It also symbolizes theological inquiry and grace, which is a major component of Wesleyan theology.

BOTTOM QUADRANT

The chalice and bread are images that symbolize Holy Communion and a sacramental church that aspires to embody an inclusive theology that invites everyone to the table and assures no one eats alone.

LEFT QUADRANT

The torch of knowledge symbolizes a denomination founded on education, a channel for God’s grace.

CENTER

The scalloped shell is the heraldic image for baptism and pilgrimage; it symbolizes exploration and discovery related to one’s vocational journey through life and the value of study away and intentional travel; it is also the heraldic symbol for the Wesley family name.



BLUE

Surrounds the shield with the liturgical color for hope and provides a visual outline for connection.

FOUR QUADRANTS

Symbolize the Wesleyan quadrilateral for theological inquiry, “scripture, tradition, reason, and experience.”



Willamette University, Oregon

UNITED METHODIST SCHOLARSHIPS

United Methodist Student Day was the original Special Sunday and was founded by United Methodist Church Sunday Schools that collected offerings to help advance education for children. The fund was originally established in 1872 as the Children's Fund.

Today, United Methodist Student Day Sunday, now celebrated in May, has the same purpose, calling upon the denomination to support students as they prepare for life by adding knowledge to their faith.

Every year, the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry awards an average of \$3 million in financial aid to United Methodist students. The offering taken on United Methodist Student Day is one opportunity to support these scholarships whereby substantial funding goes toward supporting and educating United Methodist students who are attending United Methodist institutions. Supporting this Special Sunday is truly an investment in society and democracy.

There are scholarships available for undergraduate, graduate or doctoral United Methodist students. Financial support for all General Board of Higher Education and Ministry scholarships come from five primary sources: endowments; wills and annuities; United Methodist Special Sundays, online gifts, and fiduciary income.

Print and post the scholarship flyer on page 35 for students to see.



Access information about
**United Methodist
Scholarships**



HIGHER EDUCATION & MINISTRY

General Board of Higher Education and Ministry

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

THE BLACK COLLEGE FUND



Clark Atlanta University, Georgia

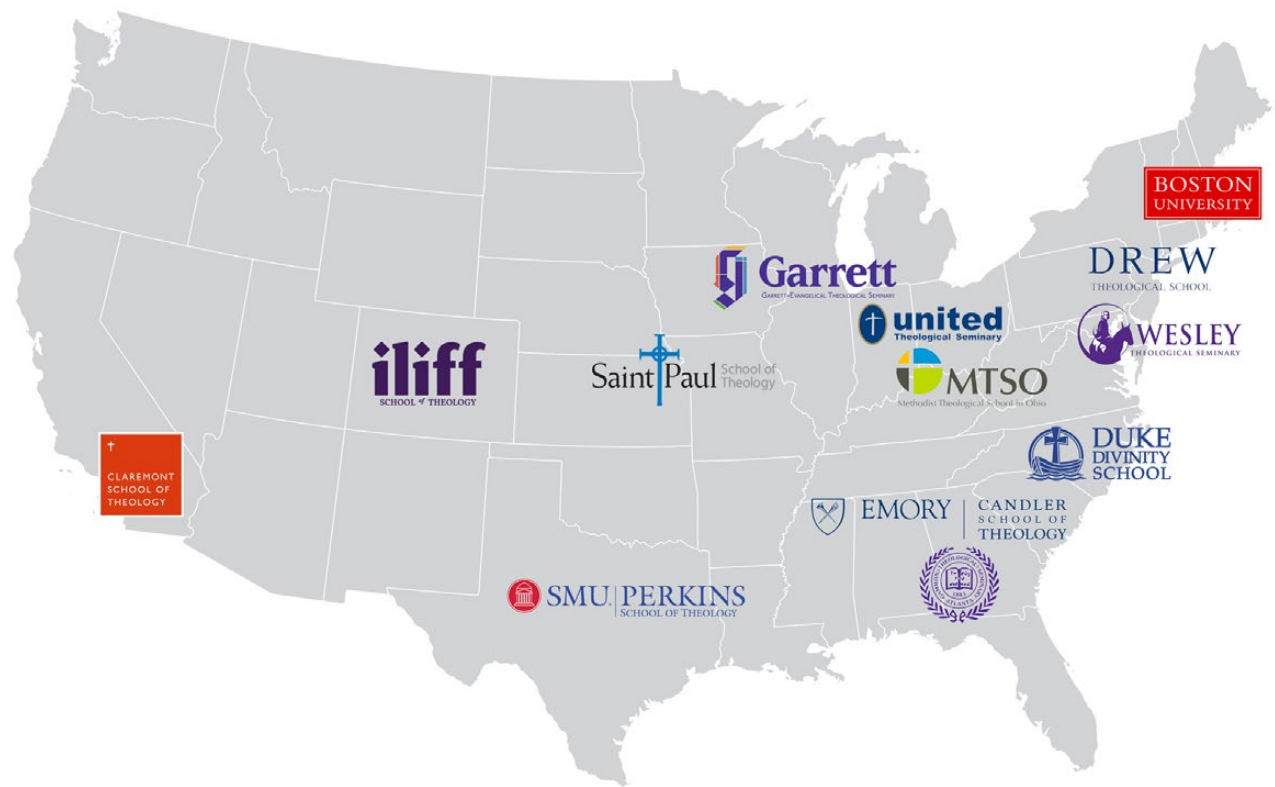
Education is one of the most valued themes that runs through the history of Methodism. In the 1860s, the Methodist Episcopal Church started the Freedmen's Aid Society, which helped provide quality education at Black colleges across the South. Now, more than 144 years after the church recognized the significance of educating a newly freed population, the **Black College Fund** (BCF) continues the legacy of faith and service.

The fund supports the largest number of historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) in the United States. It is one of seven apportioned funds of The United Methodist Church and is administered by GBHEM. Established by the 1972 General Conference, it provides financial support to maintain solid and challenging academic programs, strong faculties, and well-equipped facilities at the 11 United Methodist-related HBCUs.

As we move through life fulfilling our aspirations, we also can stand in the gap for others by supporting education and those who have the potential to discover how we will sustain our world. Through the generosity of others and the BCF, countless students will have opportunities and support for their education and their work in the church, the community and the world.



Access information about
Black College Fund



THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

There are 13 United Methodist theological schools in the United States that have educated outstanding preachers, teachers, professors, evangelists, missionaries, chaplains, lay leaders, and others. United Methodist theological schools are vital components of the United Methodist connection and provide a clear focus on the practice of ministry, as well as thoughtful theological reflection.

Our Theological Task

Theology is our effort to reflect upon God’s gracious action in our lives. Our theological explorations seek to give expression the mysterious reality of God’s presence, peace and power in the world. Theology serves the church by interpreting the world’s needs and challenges to the church, and by interpreting the Gospel to the world.

Theological Guidelines: Sources and Criteria

Two considerations are central to this endeavor: the sources from which we derive our theological affirmations; and the criteria by which we assess the adequacy of our understanding the witness.

Wesley believed that the living core of the Christian faith was revealed in Scripture, illuminated by tradition, vivified in personal experience, and confirmed by reason.

In theological reflection, the resources of tradition, experience and reason are integral to our study of Scripture without displacing Scripture’s primacy for faith and practice. These four sources – each making distinctive contributions, yet all finally working together – guide our quest as United Methodists for a vital and appropriate Christian witness.

Source: The 2024 Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, Part III Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task ¶ 105.



Access information about
**13 United Methodist
theological schools**

NORTH AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF METHODIST SCHOOLS, COLLEGES, AND UNIVERSITIES

The North American Association of Methodist Schools, Colleges, and Universities (NAAMSCU) is a voluntary association for presidents/CEOs who lead United Methodist-related educational institutions. For an educational institution to be eligible for NAAMSCU membership, its primary campus must be in the United States, Canada or a country within the Caribbean region.

Any president who serves an educational institution formally related to The United Methodist Church, based upon its review and University Senate listing, in accord with standards outlines in the body's guidelines, is eligible to be a member of NAAMSCU.

Further, institutions having an historic association with the Methodist tradition in North America may be eligible for membership, even if they are not formally related to The United Methodist Church, based upon review and approval of the NAAMSCU Board of Directors.

In considering applications from institutions seeking membership in NAAMSCU, the Board of Directors shall consider the following factors: the integrity of the institution; the quality of the institution's academic programming; the financial health of the institution; and evidence of the relationship of the institution to the Methodist tradition. The board of directors shall make available to interested institutions instructions on how to apply for membership. NAAMSCU membership renews annually pending receipt of annual dues.



West Virginia Wesleyan College, West Virginia



Albright College, Pennsylvania



Access information about
**North American Association
for Methodist Schools, Colleges,
and Universities (NAAMSCU)**

 **NAAMSCU**
North American Association of Methodist
Schools, Colleges and Universities

UNITED METHODIST RESOURCES

Several United Methodist resources include robust and comprehensive interpretations of the denomination's relationship to education, especially as it relates to social justice work in the public square. Additional resources on page 30.

- The Book of Discipline is the denomination's instrument "for setting forth the laws, plan, polity, and process by which United Methodists govern themselves."
- The Book of Resolutions accompanies The Book of Discipline and contains all resolutions or pronouncements approved by the General Conference on issues that affect humanity.
- The Social Principles are found within The Book of Discipline and are a prayerful and thoughtful effort by the General Conference to speak to issues in the contemporary world from a sound biblical and theological foundation.
- The full text of the Social Principles can be found beginning on page 105 in The 2024 Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, Part V Social Principles ¶ 160-164.



American University, Washington, D.C.



Ohio Northern University, Ohio



University of Evansville, Indiana

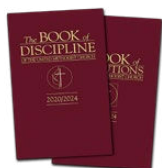


Rust College, Mississippi

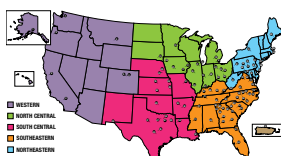
Additional Resources



Access online
The United Methodist Church



Access the
United Methodist Book of Discipline and Book of Resolutions



Access the
List of UM-Related Schools, Colleges, and Universities



Access the
University Senate Guidelines



Access the
Association of Methodist Schools, Colleges, and Universities (IAMSCU)



Access the
Educational and Institutional Insurance Administrators (EIIA)



Access the
United Methodist Higher Education Foundation (UMHEF)

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There is extensive literature on the nature, history and theology of the involvement of The United Methodist Church and its predecessors in higher education. Major book-length treatments of the topic of United Methodist higher education include the following:

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Learn More

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Notes

1. www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/education-amethodistperspective-270312.pdf
2. Bowser, Beth Adams. *Living the Vision: The University Senate of The Methodist Episcopal Church, The Methodist Church, and The United Methodist Church, 1892 - 1991*, v-xii.
3. See *Guidelines*, University Senate, www.gbhem.org/education-leaders/university-senate/university-senate-guidelines/
4. *What it Means to be Church Related*, University of Evansville, 2007.
5. www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/education-amethodistperspective-270312.pdf



Wesleyan College, Georgia



Huntingdon College, Alabama

Resources for Student-Centered Offices

Admissions, Career Services, and Financial Aid Offices



United Methodist Higher Education Foundation

UMHEF awards about \$2 million a year in scholarships to United Methodist students. Learn more at umhef.org



HIGHER EDUCATION & MINISTRY

General Board of Higher Education and Ministry

General Board of Higher Education and Ministry

GBHEM awards an average of \$3 million each year in scholarships for United Methodist students pursuing undergraduate, graduate and ministry degrees inside the United States and outside the United States. Learn more at gbhem.org/scholarships



Global Mission Fellows Program

Global Mission Fellows is a two-year program for young adults (20–30) who serve alongside community organizations in the U.S. or internationally. Fellows grow professionally while addressing issues like migration, education, health, and poverty within a supportive cohort of peers. Learn more at umcmmission.org/work/missionaries/global-fellows



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FELLOWS

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the faith to change the world?

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