

# ANSWERING THE CALL

# 2025

IMPACT REPORT

“Let us not become weary  
in doing good...”

— Galatians 6:9



**HIGHER EDUCATION & MINISTRY**

General Board of Higher Education and Ministry

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



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On the Cover:

The Rev. Colleen Bookter blesses the elements of Holy Communion at St. Luke's United Methodist Church in Louisiana.

Photo: Mike DuBose, UM News



# The Call of the Gospel in a Changing World

As we reflect on the work of the past year, we do so with a solemn awareness of the times in which we serve. Across the world, shifting geopolitical landscapes have rapidly reshaped educational and ministerial contexts. In the U.S., diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives are under attack, and cuts to the Department of Education will reduce support for low-income students and other vulnerable groups who rely on federally funded academic resources.

The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) remains more committed than ever to nurturing leaders and strengthening institutions of higher education. We hold onto Paul's reminder for the early church in Galatia: "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." (NIV)

Grounded in our Wesleyan conviction that education is a means of grace, GBHEM continues to defend equal access to learning. We work closely with United Methodist-related colleges, universities, and seminaries to strengthen identity, collaboration, and resilience. Through scholarships and grants, we support schools and students who carry forward the church's educational mission. We continue to provide support to 11 United Methodist-related Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) through the Black College Fund.

To further support these vital efforts, GBHEM, in partnership with its sister agency, Global Ministries, launched a granting and funding initiative called This Moment Matters to help fill a portion of the gap left by cuts to funding. The initiative is focused on supporting five areas of urgent need — education, agriculture and food security, global health, migration, and peace.

Two newly formed groups convened by GBHEM — the Study of Ministry Commission and the Course of Study (COS) Review Team — both met in 2025. Through dialogue and discernment, the commission is shaping the future of ordained ministry in the UMC. And the review team considered revisions to the COS to ensure that the program meets the educational needs of today's licensed local pastors.

This moment challenges us, yet it also reveals the depth of God's faithfulness and the transformative power of collective action. Thank you for your partnership, prayers, and generous support. In this report, it is our hope that you see how we are — together — upholding a vision of education and ministry that brings hope and justice to our world.



**Roland Fernandes**  
General Secretary  
Higher Education and Ministry  
Global Ministries  
UMCOR



**Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball**  
Board President  
Higher Education and Ministry



OUR WORK AND IMPACT

# CONNECTING THE CHURCH AND THE ACADEMY

GBHEM strengthens the educational mission of The United Methodist Church by fostering environments of intellectual development alongside spiritual growth.

GBHEM assists in setting and maintaining the standards of United Methodist-related schools, colleges, and universities by supporting the work of education senates in the United States, the Philippines, and Africa. By convening and collaborating with major regional and global educational organizations, GBHEM helps connect the church with pan-Methodist and ecumenical collaborative partners around the world.

GBHEM networks with campus ministers, religious life directors, Wesley Foundations, and ecumenical and interreligious ministries to provide support and offer resources.

- \$7.9M** DISBURSED THROUGH THE BLACK COLLEGE FUND TO THE 11 UMC-RELATED HBCUS
- \$13M** DISBURSED THROUGH THE MINISTERIAL EDUCATION FUND TO 13 UMC SEMINARIES IN THE UNITED STATES
- 2,450** STUDENTS WERE SUPPORTED THROUGH SCHOLARSHIPS, TOTALING \$3.9M ACROSS 601 INSTITUTIONS IN 13 COUNTRIES
- 290** SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS GRADUATED IN 2025

Empowering leaders in their regional contexts

The Central Conference Theological Education Fund disbursed a total of \$1.26 million in grants to 79 theological education projects across 21 countries in 2025. Each grant supported institutions and leadership development across Africa, Europe, and the Philippines.

Data and statistics referenced are based on 2025 sources.

# DEVELOPING TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERS

GBHEM prepares global leaders for The United Methodist Church, supporting both candidates and clergy as they discern and follow their calls to ministry.

Elders, deacons, and licensed local pastors benefit from GBHEM training and candidacy programs and resources. Many young adults find help in clarifying their vocation and God’s call on their lives through our leadership and discernment programs.

For clergy who seek to serve beyond the walls of a church in roles like chaplains or pastoral counselors, the United Methodist Endorsing Agency (UMEA) supports them in their specialized ministry settings such as prisons, hospitals, and the military.

- 516** UNITED METHODIST-ENDORSED CHAPLAINS  
46% HEALTHCARE, 29% MILITARY
- 42** CHAPLAINS WERE ENDORSED FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 2025
- 1,527** STUDENTS ENROLLED IN THE COURSE OF STUDY OR ADVANCED COURSE OF STUDY

Strengthened resources for more effective ministry

A refreshed Board of Ordained Ministry Library and Handbook were launched in 2025 with updated tools to support licensing, ordination, and spiritual formation. The digital collection equips annual conferences to walk alongside those answering God’s call to ordained ministry in the UMC.

Data and statistics referenced are based on 2025 sources.



# THIS MOMENT MATTERS

Who will feed the hungry?

Who will care for the sick?

Who will welcome the stranger?



**HIGHER EDUCATION & MINISTRY**  
General Board of Higher Education and Ministry



## A FAITHFUL RESPONSE TO URGENT NEED

Early into 2025, Higher Education and Ministry, Global Ministries, and UMCOR recognized that we stood at a critical crossroads.

U.S. policy changes — such as the weakening and dissolution of the Department of Education — depleted funding sources for vital educational institutions, health care organizations, sustainable livelihoods programs, and peace efforts, putting already struggling families and communities at further risk.

### We responded to the moment.

By focusing on five areas of urgent need — education, agriculture and food security, global health, migration, and peace — we encouraged prayer and giving through the This Moment Matters granting and funding initiative.

Learn more at [ThisMomentMatters.com](https://ThisMomentMatters.com).

**\$30 million in  
funding has been  
awarded to help  
address gaps  
in response.**

As of May 2026

## EDUCATION

For decades, Methodists have prioritized educating leaders for the church and the world and provided access to education through scholarships and support of Historically Black Colleges and Universities and other United Methodist-related institutions. We reaffirm our commitment to breaking cycles of poverty and systemic inequality to work for educational opportunity that empowers the next generation of transformative leaders.



## AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY

Global efforts to eliminate hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition are moving in reverse because of the elimination of many U.S. foreign aid programs. In Africa, we are expanding the Yambasu Agriculture Initiative to help communities in areas directly impacted by the withdrawal of U.S. foreign aid and providing food security grants.



## GLOBAL HEALTH

Cuts to U.S. foreign aid have devastated global health programs, impacting tens of thousands. We are working to fund some of these suspended initiatives — supporting health systems in underserved areas, partnering with African health boards to address preventable diseases, and helping to provide continued access to lifesaving treatments, vaccines, and essential healthcare for those in need.



## MIGRATION

Forced migration uproots lives as people flee war, poverty, and disaster with little but hope. In response, we support legal aid, partner with faith-based immigration advocates, and provide essential services — food, shelter, and medical care — to refugees and displaced individuals, helping restore dignity and justice to those forced from their homes.



## PEACE

Many areas of the world are under siege from war and conflict. Places like Gaza, D.R. Congo, Ukraine, and Sudan continue to suffer because of ongoing warfare. Working through trusted partners, we provide humanitarian aid to impacted communities and bolster peace initiatives.





# \$22 MILLION IN FUNDS GIVEN ACROSS 25 COUNTRIES

## STORIES OF ANSWERED CALLS

Region by region, see how we connected the church and the academy and developed transformational leaders for the ministry of the church.

Angola  
Cameroon  
DRC  
El Salvador  
Ethiopia  
France  
Germany

Hungary  
Kenya  
Liberia  
Mexico  
Mozambique  
Nigeria  
Philippines

Romania  
Russia  
Sierra Leone  
Spain  
Switzerland  
Tanzania  
Uganda

Ukraine  
USA  
Zambia  
Zimbabwe



STORIES OF ANSWERED CALLS

# AFRICA

## Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe BRINGING TOGETHER EDUCATION AND FOOD SECURITY

MOUs with Africa University in Zimbabwe and North Katanga University in the DRC are focusing on bringing a comprehensive approach to education, economic empowerment, and community development through sustainable agriculture – collaborative work enabled by Higher Education and Ministry and Global Ministries.



## Zimbabwe SCHOLARSHIP HELPS FUTURE PASTOR FULFILL CALLING

A GBHEM scholarship enabled Elysee Agneba to pursue a theological degree at Africa University without the financial stress that often distracts students from their studies. The support not only eased his tuition burden but also reinforced his commitment to serve his church and community with stronger theological training and pastoral preparation.



## South Africa PAN-AFRICAN EDUCATORS UNITE TO DEEPEN IMPACT

At a GBHEM-sponsored gathering in Johannesburg in October 2025, Pan-African Methodist educators from across the continent met to strengthen connections between the church and academy, promote collaboration, and advance leadership and educational initiatives within Methodist-related institutions in Africa.

“This scholarship means the opportunity to pursue my dreams without the burden of financial constraints, which is truly empowering.”

— Paulo Bussane, Africa University



## Kenya STUDENT ACHIEVES CAREER GOALS WITH SCHOLARSHIP

Emmah Onacha, a student at Kenya Methodist University, used GBHEM financial support to pursue her degree in information science. The scholarship gives Onacha the opportunity to fulfill her educational aspirations and, upon graduation, opens doors to job opportunities.



# EUROPE, MIDDLE EAST & ASIA

## Prague MTSE GATHERING FOCUSES ON STRENGTHENING EDUCATION

At the Methodist-related Theological Schools in Europe forum in Prague in February 2025, faculty, students, and leaders from nine institutions, and GBHEM, focused on self-care practices and strategic planning for strengthening Methodist theological education across the region. The event renewed the commitment to collaborative learning and support among European Methodist schools.



## Philippines STRENGTHENING SUPPORT FOR SHARED MISSION GOALS

At a roundtable meeting in Manila, United Methodist mission partners from the Philippines Central Conference, Global Ministries, and GBHEM shared strategic priorities, engaged in dialogue about decolonizing mission, and identified ways to strengthen mutual support and long-term collaboration across leadership, education, and community ministries. The gathering highlighted shared mission goals such as leadership development, health care access, indigenous and migrant ministries, and disaster response.



## Germany MINISTERING TO THOSE WHO SERVE AT HOME AND ABROAD

Col. Karen Meeker, a United Methodist-endorsed chaplain, serves in Germany where she ministers to paratroopers and military personnel. Meeker, a master parachutist herself, is the second woman chaplain in the 82nd Airborne Division. Her decades of leadership and spiritual care across deployments and commands emphasize her commitment to providing comfort, guidance, and support to service members and their families.

## West Bank “COME AND SEE” YOUNG ADULT PILGRIMAGE

A group of 15 people, including seven UMC seminary students from the U.S., took part in a pilgrimage to the West Bank. Sponsored by Global Ministries, the journey aimed to deepen participants' understanding of the region's social, political, and religious complexities and to strengthen their commitment to peace and justice ministries.





# NORTH AMERICA



## Michigan

### LEARNING INTO UNITED METHODIST IDENTITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The University Senate held a joint meeting with the North American Association of Methodist Schools, Colleges and Universities in June 2025, bringing leaders together to reaffirm and deepen their collaboration around United Methodist identity, academic excellence, and social justice in higher education.

## Ohio

### MTSO SELECTED AS NEW HOME FOR CIPP

GBHEM selected Methodist Theological School in Ohio (MTSO) as the new academic home of the Center for Integrative Pastoral Practice (CIPP), ensuring the continued growth of its accredited Clinical Pastoral Education program. This transition leverages seminary infrastructure to expand access, innovation, and leadership formation.



## Tennessee

### DEACONS EXPLORE NEW SACRAMENTAL AUTHORITY

About 150 deacons gathered in Nashville to discuss questions about how new sacramental authority, granted by the 2024 General Conference, will work in varied ministry settings. Hosted by GBHEM, participants wrestled with this significant change in denominational life and what best practices look like in the future.



## Pennsylvania

### LOCAL PASTORS LEARN NEW SKILLS FOR MINISTRY

The National Fellowship of Associate Members and Local Pastors met in September 2025 for its annual gathering. Licensed local pastors and associate members came together for worship, learning, fellowship, and sessions focused on ministry skills and mutual support.

## New Jersey

### DREW SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT NURTURES CALLING TO MENTOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

Jaqualine Chipongo, a United Methodist scholarship recipient at Drew Theological Seminary, is pursuing ordained ministry as an elder. She feels that her calling is to focus on community engagement and clergy mentorship for women and girls.



## Louisiana

### SCHOLARSHIP FUELS STUDENT'S DREAM OF IMPROVING HEALTHCARE ACCESS

Kayla Hennigan, a senior at United Methodist-related HBCU Dillard University in New Orleans, is pursuing her dream of becoming a doctor and public health advocate. A recipient of multiple scholarships from GBHEM, Hennigan is dedicated to improving healthcare access in underserved communities.



## Tennessee

### HBCUS LEADING THROUGH CHANGE

In 2025, leaders of the 11 United Methodist-related HBCUs gathered to strengthen their shared vision for the future. Amid funding challenges and evolving educational landscapes, they reaffirmed their commitment to equity, innovation, and student success. With GBHEM support, these institutions continue the faithful work of preparing future leaders and ensuring their enduring impact.



## North Carolina

### CHAPLAIN EMPHASIZES FAITH FORMATION WITH DIVINITY SCHOOL STUDENTS

The Rev. Meghan Benson, chaplain at Duke Divinity School, has spent nearly two decades in ministry with students through worship leadership, pastoral care, and intentional faith formation that nurtures resilience and call discernment. She believes that holistic formation — including spiritual practices, mentoring, and deep relationships — is essential for preparing students to serve the church and the world.



# LATIN AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN

## Panama

### LEADERS CONVENE TO STRENGTHEN REGIONAL IMPACT

Methodist leaders and mission partners from across Latin America, the Caribbean, and beyond gathered in Panama City in July 2025 to strengthen collaboration, share priorities, and build relationships that support the church's mission in the region.



“The task and mission of the church is to go beyond the four walls, to go where the need is...transforming itself into a space of hope amidst despair.”

— Bishop Jorge Merino Riffo, Methodist Church of Chile



## Brazil

### EXCHANGE PROGRAM BRINGS JOY IN MUSIC

A cultural exchange program at Lebanon Valley College welcomed music students from Brazil in January 2025. This initiative enriched participants' appreciation of diverse music traditions and also strengthened relationships across cultural and geographic boundaries through faith-infused education. Lebanon Valley College's Brethren legacy makes it part of GBHEM's network of United Methodist-related colleges and universities in the United States.

## Argentina

### EDUCATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOCUSES ON SOCIAL ISSUES

In September 2025, 65 Methodist educators from across Latin America and the Caribbean gathered in Rosario, Argentina, for the annual assembly of the Association of Latin American Methodist Educational Institutions. The assembly focused on democracy and inclusion, gender and culture, and included indigenous and migrant perspectives. A parallel youth gathering brought together 70 high school students.





# LEADERSHIP FOR THE FUTURE

In 2025, Higher Education and Ministry strengthened its leadership through a series of appointments that position the agency to meet the evolving needs of The United Methodist Church.

The Rev. Margaret Lassiatt was appointed **executive director of Ministry**, providing leadership for GBHEM's work in clergy formation, leadership development, and vocational discernment. Dr. Philip Wingeier-Rayo was appointed **executive director of Education**, forming and nurturing partnerships with United Methodist-related institutions and educational initiatives. GBHEM also welcomed the Rev. Dr. Lt. Col. Kent Lundy as **director of the United Methodist Endorsing Agency**, overseeing the endorsement and support of chaplains serving in military, healthcare, correctional, and other specialized ministry settings.

In two appointments shared with the General Board of Global Ministries that serve to deepen the alignment between the agencies, Dr. Dana Lyles was appointed as **executive director of Multiethnic Ministries** and the Rev. Haley Reardon as **chief development officer**.

Together, these staffing transitions will enable GBHEM to continue equipping leaders to effectively and compassionately serve the church in a changing world.

**“These appointments will help GBHEM at this critical time as we continue to review and reassess our programs that equip clergy and lay leaders for impactful service in the church and beyond and forge vital connections between the church and the academy. I am excited to see how their expertise will help shape the future of our ministry and education work.”**

**— Roland Fernandes**  
General Secretary



Rev. Margaret Lassiatt



Dr. Philip Wingeier-Rayo



Rev. Dr. Lt. Col. Kent Lundy



Dr. Dana Lyles



Rev. Haley Reardon

# A LIFETIME OF LEADERSHIP



Garrett Seminary conferred an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree on General Secretary Roland Fernandes for his impact and leadership in global mission, education, and humanitarian service in The United Methodist Church. Roland has dedicated more than 30 years to mission and ministry work, providing leadership to Global Ministries, the United Methodist Committee on Relief, and Higher Education and Ministry.

**“As a layperson who understands his work as ministry, we honor him for his wise and bold stewardship of our key institutions, for his partnership in amplifying the church’s voice, role, and purpose in the most vulnerable communities around the world, and for the witness of his life lived in total service to God and to neighbor.”**  
the Rev. Dr. Javier A. Viera, president of Garrett Seminary

# A LEGACY OF LEADERSHIP

GBHEM celebrated the retirement of Dr. Cynthia Bond Hopson in 2025. A lifelong United Methodist, Dr. Bond Hopson benefited from scholarships, grants, and encouragement from the church throughout her academic journey, earning multiple degrees and ultimately dedicating more than 20 years of service to GBHEM and the Black College Fund. Her leadership helped strengthen support for the denomination’s 11 Historically Black Colleges and Universities and advanced initiatives focused on inclusion, equity, and educational opportunity. Both her life and vocational path embody the transformative power of United Methodist support for education and leadership development.





# 2024-2028 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Southeastern Jurisdiction  
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# FINANCIALS

For Higher Education and Ministry's latest financial report, please visit [GBHEM.org/Accountability](https://gbhem.org/Accountability).



Latest GBHEM financial documents



# THIS MOMENT MATTERS

## GOD ASKS: "WHO WILL INVEST IN THEIR FUTURE?"



Together, we can sustain access and shape future leaders.  
[ThisMomentMatters.org](https://ThisMomentMatters.org)



# STRENGTHENING THE CHURCH TOGETHER

The general boards of Global Ministries and Higher Education and Ministry are separate agencies, but work as one, with a unified presence and integrated structure to strengthen UMC impact and connect education, leadership formation, and global mission in service of God's work in the world.



View Global Ministries' Impact Report





“What gives me hope? It’s those three qualities: community, ethical action, deep commitment to the common good, that I see lived out every day here at North Central College.”

— The Rev. Max Blalock, Chaplain  
North Central College in Naperville, Illinois



## HIGHER EDUCATION & MINISTRY

General Board of Higher Education and Ministry

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



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