



2024 ANNUAL CONFERENCE REPORT

The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) embraces the ministry of learning and leadership formation in the Wesleyan and United Methodist tradition, stewarding the intellectual life and educational mission of the UMC. Our mission is to bring people together to **discern, learn, and lead** for the Church and the Academy, creating a world where everyone is living fully into God's call on their lives.

GBHEM programs - like Course of Study, Exploration, Journey Towards Ordained Ministry (JTOM) and Passage UMC - support the development of transformative leadership in The United Methodist Church. We remain committed to building and sustaining collaborative cross conference networks that foster collegiality and guide credentialing for licensed and ordained ministry.

Alleviating student debt through financial support remains a priority for GBHEM. The GBHEM Office of Scholarships awarded over \$3.9 million in scholarships to 2,100 students in 2023. Scholarships were awarded to students all over the world including 54 annual conferences and two central conferences. In addition, GBHEM stewarded the distribution of roughly \$20,000,000 in grants and scholarships to United Methodist ministries.

Because of your generous support, each year approximately \$10 million is apportioned for the 11 historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) related to the church through The Black College Fund. The funds are utilized for enhancing capital improvements, providing scholarships to students in need, and providing resources for faculty, staff, and students.

GBHEM also supports the next generation of critical thinkers and leaders through the University Senate peer-review and evaluation process for church-related educational institutions. The UMC is related to 107 educational institutions across North America, the largest cohort of protestant educational institutions in the USA. Similarly, 52 educational institutions representing 25 countries formed the Africa Senate for Methodist Education (ASME) this past year providing culturally appropriate standards for the evaluation of Methodist education throughout the African continent.

Among its various activities, GBHEM is also responsible for two initiatives approved by General Conference: The Methodist Global Education Fund for Leadership Development (MGEFLD), which includes the Grants and Scholarships Program (GRASP); and the Central Conference Theological Education Fund (CCTEF). The CCTEF advances theological education in all central conferences by strengthening theological institutions, creating networks among these schools, and increasing access to theological education.

Since 2008, GBHEM has established 11 regional Leadership, Education and Development Hubs (LEAD Hubs) around the world. Each LEAD Hub is a part of the agency's strategic plan to connect with The United Methodist Church worldwide through collaboration with Pan-Methodist and Ecumenical leaders in Africa, Asia Pacific, Europe, and Eurasia, Latin American and the Caribbean, and North America.

For the past two years, GBHEM and the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) have been moving toward greater collaboration and strategic alignment, attending each other's consultations, and bringing together program ministry staff in the areas of scholarships, granting, regional work, shared services, theological reflection, and leadership formation and training. Last October, the board of directors announced that my colleague and friend, Roland Fernandes, would become general secretary of both agencies when I retire in June of 2024.

We celebrate our partnership with your Annual Conference and thank you for nurturing and supporting United Methodist lay and clergy leaders throughout the UMC world-wide connection.

Respectfully Submitted: Rev. Greg Bergquist, General Secretary (GBHEM)