

The mission of The United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Living out this mission is not possible without the tens of thousands of clergy who have dedicated their lives to our Church. They provide the link to our twelve million members in more than 125 countries, equipping them to live out God's mission in the world.

In order to minister effectively to this population, our clergy must be provided with the necessary tools and resources to be successful through education in the Wesleyan tradition. Theological education prepares clergy to be leaders who are trusted in the community and able to address the spiritual, social and economic needs of our world.

Despite the complex nature of the work done by pastors, access to theological education varies greatly across our connection. In the central conferences, which include Africa, Europe, and the Philippines, obtaining a theological education can be very difficult. Some of the most common challenges to receiving a theological education in the central conferences include:

- Seminaries are too far away or too expensive
- Seminaries struggle to find well trained professors and to offer library resources in needed languages
- Courses of Study for initial and continuing education need to be developed
- Scholarships are needed for initial and post-graduate studies

General Conference has recognized the need and approved short-term funding for immediate support. However, a long-term solution is required. The most cost-effective and sustainable method for strengthening theological education in the central conferences is an endowment fund. **The Endowment Fund for Theological Education in the Central Conferences** was created as a permanent solution by the Council of Bishops. The Endowment Fund will provide funds that the Commission on Central Conference Theological Education will allocate in support of:

- Theological education of local pastors
- Theological education of candidates for ordained ministry
- Continuing theological education of clergy
- Scholarships for theological education (on all levels including postgraduate studies)
- Development of infrastructure for theological education (literature and other resource material, libraries, networking among institutions, exchange of professors, etc.)
- Support and promotion of new promising avenues in theological education

This ministry requires a minimum of \$25,000,000. Philanthropic support from across the denomination is critical to create this sustainable funding source. Early progress has been promising. Accomplishments include:

- More than \$3,000,000 has been pledged or gifted from just a handful of pledges, gifts and grants
- The Stead Challenge has been developed to encourage generosity – gifts of \$100,000 or more will be matched on a 1:4 basis
- Gifts have been received from Africa, Europe, the Philippines and the United States, including six-figure gifts from Europe and Africa
- An international campaign committee including bishops, pastors and laity has been recruited

For more information, please visit www.endowftecc.org or email: umctheologicaled@endowftecc.org.