

The Oklahoma United Methodist Foundation

Pastor Education Fund Talking Points

The Oklahoma Annual Conference is home to many great pastors. We are fortunate to call Dr. Bob Long, Dr. Mouzon Biggs, Rev. Linda Harker and many other talented preachers, teachers and leaders our own. Our pastors play a vital role in our lives. They shepherd and disciple us in our Christian walks, comfort and care for us in our times of need, and equip us to discern God's call to *Go and Make Disciples*.

As we give thanks for our great pastors, we must also look to the future. Who will be the next generation of clergy in the Oklahoma Conference? Where will they come from? Many young people have the desire to go into ministry but are deterred by the cost and potential debt incurred to attend seminary. Unfortunately, our current seminary education system continues to become more expensive with fewer scholarship opportunities available.

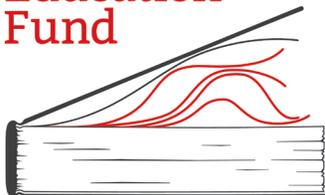
The average cost of tuition, books, and fees for one of our United Methodist seminaries is more than \$60,000 over three years, yet the beginning salary for new pastors is significantly lower. This cost is in addition to any undergraduate work prior to seminary.

We face the challenge of many clergy beginning their ministry with \$50,000 or more in student loan debt. This is unmanageable for a pastor, especially a young pastor in their first few years of ministry. The Oklahoma United Methodist Foundation created the Oklahoma United Methodist Pastor Education Fund as a response to this challenge.

The Milburn Family of Shawnee has generously joined us in this cause and will match every dollar given to the fund up to \$1 million. Fully funded, the Pastor Education Fund will help recruit qualified clergy candidates and scholarship them through seminary without the burden of student loans.

We will take up a special offering on January 26 for the Pastor Education Fund. Begin praying about your part in supporting bright and talented young people who are answering God's call to ministry.

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