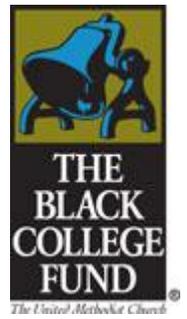


## ***Why Churches Should Give to the Black College Fund***



Education is one of the most valued themes that run through the history of Methodism. The Black Colleges of The United Methodist Church represent the church's commitment to the church's future. 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 continues the legacy of faith and service.

*The 1972 General Conference, in response to a request from the Commission on Black Colleges and the Council of Presidents of the Black Colleges, established the Black College Fund as an apportioned general church fund. Thus, for the first time, these essential educational ministries were included for regular support through the apportionment procedures of The United Methodist Church. Next to the wisdom of the founding of the Black colleges, the establishment of the Black College Fund may have been the most crucial and productive development in their history and the best assurance of their future. The chief result of the 1972 action was the removal of these colleges from the occasional support system of a special appeal and offering to one of regular, consistent support by apportionment. (Black College Fund brochure)*

Since their inception, the colleges and universities have been open to all. These institutions of higher education give more than 15,000 students opportunities to reach their full potential academically, spiritually and socially. Supporting the fund makes it possible for each institution to open its doors to students who need a nurturing environment in which to learn. Faculty members know students by name, and it is rare for students to be lost in a crowd. Outstanding scholars help students find their passion and develop essential leadership skills that prepare them to become active citizens and positive contributors to society.

The Black College Fund institutions are highly successful at accomplishing their mission of providing an excellent education for students who might not thrive at other institutions. Their worth is proven in their alumni, and their continuing work will be needed as long as students need church-supported higher education and correct self-definition. Bennett, Bethune-Cookman, Claflin, Clark Atlanta, Dillard, Huston-Tillotson, Meharry Medical, Paine, Philander Smith, Rust and Wiley have been, in the words of Bishop James S. Thomas, "both gift and responsibility, partner and benefactor, giver and recipient of grace through The United Methodist Church."

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 our generosity, many more students will have opportunities and support for their education and their work in the church, the community and the world. In an appeal published as a part of an annual report of the Freedmen's Aid Society, I. W. Wiley wrote that with support, "the Society could speedily put into the field a corps of teachers and preachers whose power would be felt through the generations to come." The support is still needed. Relying greatly on the faithful generosity of church members, these colleges and universities lack the endowments of most private and many public universities, but they have the same educational rigors. Their proud alumni are our pastors, our bishops, our physicians, our lawyers, our social workers and our educators whose power will be felt through the generations to come.

Eighth annual report of the Freedmen's Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church (1875) Retrieved from <http://www.archive.org/details/eighthannualrepo00meth>