

FINDING FINANCIAL RESOURCES FOR YOUR ACADEMY EXPERIENCE

Many people, after looking at the information about The Academy for Spiritual Formation®, long to be a part of this experience but wonder how they will be able to pay for it. If this is your question, the information below may be of interest to you.

Discerning your call

The founding Director of the Academy, Danny Morris, used to say that this is about the fifth question to ask as a part of the discernment process. Some very important “first questions” include:

- Have I prayed about this deeply? Do I consider something I’ve tested in my heart for a period of time, or is it only a passing whim?
- Have I talked to my family about this yearning? Is it something they confirm as potentially being valuable for me? Have I consulted with my significant others?
- Have I talked with my church about it? Sharing on the level of your need for spiritual formation, you may be surprised to discover that others relate to and become supportive of your interests.
- Have I sought the counsel of those in authority? For laity, this may mean talking to your pastor. For pastors, it may mean talking to your district superintendent or denominational executive.

These conversations serve as background for your discernment. Additionally, you may want to talk with people who have completed the Academy, a member of the Leadership Team for the two-year Academy you are considering or the Academy Director in Nashville. Talking to various people can help you refine your own desire and also can give you some tips about finding the financial resources you need for this excellent program.

Locating financial resources

Here are some of the places people have found financial resources as a result of the process outlined above:

- Local church funds for continuing education for clergy and laity
- Sunday school classes; United Methodist Women’s groups
- Denominational, District, Presbytery or Conference funds. Sometimes these are located in foundations and trusts that may not be easy to locate.
- Ethnic minority funding from denominational offices and caucus groups
- Fraternities and Sororities
- Friends and fellow church members – think of people for whom you’ve been a blessing. Some Academy participants have been supported by people they’ve

helped along the way who were glad to have an opportunity to say thanks by investing in a spiritual friend's ongoing development.

- Family members
- Anonymous donors
- If you are a lay person, your employer may be willing to provide funding and/or time off to attend an Academy. The Academy Director is available to speak with someone from your Human Resources department to detail how participation in an Academy can make you a more effective employee.
- An independent Doble research study of the impact of the Academy on clergy is available from the Academy office. This can be a useful resource in approaching denominational leaders or church boards for support. There is data to support the benefits of the Academy and demonstrate a "return on investment."
- Use social media (i.e. – Facebook, blogs, etc.) to solicit support for your journey. Write about why you would like to engage in such an experience. You may be surprised how your story can resonate with others who are happy to support you in ways large and small. The key is to talk about it and ask!

Sometimes these sources of support open up and become available only after the Academy begins. A layperson from Ohio, for example, returned to her home church after her second five-day session at the Academy and talked about her experience to the women's organization. Afterwards, a significant financial gift was offered, to help her complete her experience. It is important to remember there is often an element of faith involved in taking the step to commit to an Academy.

United Methodist Women Scholarships – for women of all denominations

Lay and clergywomen from various denominations who are currently in or training for a Christian vocation (i.e., pastor, Christian Education, spiritual director, etc.) have received scholarships through the United Methodist Women of the United Methodist Church. You may contact Marva Usher-Kerr in the Women's Division below to request a scholarship application. Note: when applying, emphasize how you anticipate you will use your Academy experience for the sake of others.

United Methodist Women Scholarships and Grants Committee
475 Riverside Drive, Room 1504
New York, NY 10115, USA
Email: grants@unitedmethodistwomen.org
Telephone: +1 (212) 870 3738
Fax: 212-870-3736

For more information: <http://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/what-we-fund/grants>

Encouraging Spiritual Leaders – a matching program for United Methodists

Some United Methodist Conferences have responded to a matching grant program called “Encouraging Spiritual Leaders.” The Academy office provides up to \$5,000 to each Conference to match their financial support for participants. For example, one Conference contributed \$1,000 for five participants. A matching grant from the Academy Scholarship fund doubled that amount. The cost for each of these participants was reduced by \$2,000. To find out more information, contact your Conference office or the Academy office in Nashville academy@upperroom.org.

United Methodist Certification in Spiritual Formation

The General Board of Higher Education & Ministry (GBHEM) of the United Methodist Church have a professional and para-professional certification in spiritual formation. This certification is only available for United Methodists. There are five (5) academic requirements through United Methodist Seminaries but successful completion of the two-year Academy for Spiritual Formation satisfies two (2) of those academic requirements. GBHEM provides up to \$300 per academic requirement to support obtaining the certification, allowing participants in the Academy to receive up to \$600 toward their Two-Year Academy experience. You must contact GBHEM to apply for this certification and inquire about funding. More information is available at <http://www.gbhem.org/certification>.

United Methodist MEF Funds through the Board of Ordained Ministry

Through the MEF funds, the Board of Ordained Ministry gives a lifetime maximum of \$5000 for higher certifications and degrees, and The Academy is included in this, as well as DMin work and other advanced degrees.

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Glenn Hinson Academy Scholarships

The CBF may have some limited scholarship money for Baptists who want to attend the Academy. The fund is named in honor of Glenn Hinson, long time and well-loved Academy faculty who has taught Church History and Christian Spirituality at the seminary level for over 50 years. Interested applicants should contact Devita Parnell, CBF Director of Congregational Formation, at dparnell@thefellowship.info.

Academy Scholarships

Thanks to the generous support of people who have completed the two-year Academy, a scholarship fund has been developed to offer second-mile support for those who would otherwise not be able to participate. Academy scholarships are partial scholarships; they are intended as part of the financial package for an individual.

To qualify, individuals must complete an application to the Academy for Spiritual Formation and be accepted into a particular Academy. They may then apply for an Academy Scholarship -- forms are available at the Academy office. Consideration is based on income and expenses related to the Academy.

It is not always possible to resolve all scholarship concerns prior to the first session of the Academy, in part because a limited amount of money is available for each Academy and the number of scholarship applicants is not always known ahead of time. We will, however, do the best we can to offer you the information we have in a timely manner about your application.

Timeline for payments

A schedule of payments has been developed for each Academy. Please note that we have sometimes worked out different payment plans for individuals who needed to adjust their payments. Sometimes people have paid for their Academy over three years, instead of two. This can be particularly helpful if you are using continuing education funds. Contact us if you wish to make such adjustments.

You are responsible

These suggestions are offered as a way to help people participate in the Academy who otherwise would not be able to do so. Please respect the fact that some may need financial help more than you do. And while the Academy Director will do whatever he can to help you raise the funds you need to participate, you are responsible for securing your own funding, which includes filing scholarship applications in a timely manner and pursuing all options.

For more information

Contact:

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