Duke Divinity School prepares committed, gifted students to transform lives through the power of the gospel. Increasing our ability to offer financial aid is essential—not only to our students’ futures, but to that of our churches, Christian nonprofits, and other communities of faith.

In 1924, James B. Duke identified “the training of preachers” as one of the main purposes of Duke University. Today, Duke Divinity School is regarded as one of the best places in the world to study theology and prepare for ministry. Many talented students aspire to attend our Divinity School but cannot afford it. Of those who enroll, many are burdened with student debt after they graduate and some are forced to leave ministry—their true calling—for higher paying careers. Seminaries across the country face this same problem, which is the most significant challenge in cultivating the next generation of Christian leaders.

That’s why we are committed to substantially increasing resources for financial aid through the Duke Forward campaign. Your philanthropic support will make it affordable for students of all backgrounds to study under our renowned faculty and benefit from our exceptional field education program, building the foundation for a fruitful life in ministry.
Field Education Support

In the 1920s, Duke Divinity became one of the first divinity schools to integrate field education into the curriculum, and it remains one of our signature offerings today. Our transformational program immerses students in ministry experience. Every student completes two placements—in locations that have ranged from a rural North Carolina church to a nonprofit children’s home to a parish in Uganda. Some choose clinical pastoral education, where they work alongside hospital chaplains. For many students, field education is their first step in ministerial leadership. They discover where their true interests lie, and develop understanding and compassion for those they serve. They also practice listening, communication, counseling, and other skills critical for effective ministry.

These experiences shape students for a lifetime. The Duke Endowment currently funds field education in North Carolina’s rural Methodist churches, but there are a limited number of funded openings available in other congregations, denominations, and service organizations. We need funding to open up a broader array of opportunities for students and to help cover their modest stipends, which are a significant part of our financial aid packages and crucial for recruiting the most promising students. By investing in an endowment to support field education, you’ll provide students with more options, connecting them with mentors who can help them discover their particular gifts of ministry. In turn, more churches will benefit from student interns’ talent, energy, and passion. It’s one of the most powerful ways you can participate in the future of the church.

Your expendable gift of $50,000 or more will provide five or more students with the important opportunity to gain direct experience through enriching field education.
Scholarships for Future Ministers

For many divinity students, financial aid is their doorway to a life of service. Without this assistance, they would not have the freedom to follow their calling to serve God and the church. A common misperception is that churches and denominations help pay for their future leaders’ education, but that’s rarely the case.

Almost 90 percent of Duke Divinity School students qualify for financial aid, and we strive to help them. However, 65 percent of our students still have to take out student loans. Their average student loan debt by graduation is nearly $50,000, and that’s not including debt from undergraduate studies. This is a daunting figure, especially considering that annual salaries for new pastors start around $38,000 or less.

We believe that a high quality education for Christian ministers matters for the future of the church. Our students will someday fill the pulpits, minister at hospital bedsides, and lead nonprofits that assist people in crisis. While all institutions struggle to provide divinity students with sufficient financial aid, the problem is particularly acute at Duke because we are a young school with a smaller endowment compared to many of our peers. At the same time, the education we offer is exceptionally robust and relevant. Duke Divinity School offers world-renowned faculty, rigorous academic training, and practical ministry experience—exactly the kind of education that the future leaders of the church need. To adequately support our students—and attract the most promising students to Duke—we need increased private contributions.

New scholarship endowments established during the Duke Forward campaign will make an enduring difference in the lives of students—and those they go on to serve.

YOUR GIFT OF $100,000 OR MORE can create an unrestricted endowed scholarship that will make it possible for promising divinity students to attend Duke.

YOUR GIFT OF $250,000 OR MORE can create a restricted scholarship, such as an endowed fund that gives preference to students of a certain denomination or from a specific region.

YOUR GIFT OF $600,000 OR MORE can create a premium scholarship endowment to cover the complete costs of tuition, field education, and leadership development experiences for students over the years to come.

I AM SO THANKFUL

Joe Varner received his initial call to ministry in high school while volunteering at a church-based youth retreat. “I was up late one night with some guys. Normally we goofed around, but this time, a friend pulled out the Bible and we stayed up all night talking about it. He said he wanted to be a youth leader. Around that time, I heard God telling me, ‘it’s time for you to consider what to do.’”

Joe was offered a scholarship to Duke and to another divinity school. After prayer and contemplation, he chose Duke. “My experience at Duke has been exceptional,” says Joe. “I wouldn’t want to be anywhere else. The diverse faculty offers a number of voices and perspectives. Then, field education lets us take what we’ve learned in class and use it on the ground.” After he graduates, Joe plans to become a Methodist pastor in Virginia and “creatively preach the gospel in a way that really speaks to people—whether it’s on Sunday morning or while visiting people in prison—and calls them to a life with God.”

Joe’s scholarship gave him the opportunity to fully invest in his studies without the burden of worrying about where the money for tuition would come from. “Donors who contribute to financial aid will never fully know the effect they’ve had on the lives of recipients because it’s immense, immeasurable,” he says. “I am so thankful.”
It’s no secret that tomorrow’s Christian leaders will have to address many challenging, complex issues confronting the church and our world. To be prepared, they need exceptional teachers who can ask hard questions and unite learning with faith.

Duke’s rigorous Doctor of Theology (Th.D.) program trains future professors to operate at the intersections of theology and practice, and thus of the academy and the church. Our students cross disciplinary lines to produce cutting-edge work that’s grounded in the traditional areas of Scripture, theology, and history, as well as pastoral practices such as homiletics and liturgical studies. They graduate well prepared to shape future leaders by combining scholarly depth with a lively concern for the life of faith.

Students pursuing a Th.D. have taken on extra years of financial sacrifice. Your support will help them continue their studies and become experts who will teach the next generation of pastors and church leaders.

YOUR EXPENDABLE GIFT OF $165,000 will provide a talented doctor of theology student with full tuition support for five years.

Duke Divinity School Annual Fund

Help provide education and training to those who will bless the lives of others—consider making a gift to the Divinity Annual Fund. Our ultimate goal is to make theological education more affordable. For that reason, every gift to the Divinity Annual Fund goes to student financial aid, whether it’s for scholarships or field education placements in the United States and around the world. By making a gift to the Divinity Annual Fund, you’ll help shape our vibrant and diverse student body by providing promising students with the financial assistance they need to say “yes” to Duke. Leadership gifts of $5,000, $10,000, and $20,000 will cover a student’s quarter, half, or full tuition for one year, respectively. These gifts are especially critical because they directly affect students who want to be trained for ministry at Duke.

Duke Divinity students are passionate about serving God and their communities, and we are passionate about supporting them. Your gift to the Divinity Annual Fund—at any level—plays a vital role in meeting this commitment.