

Rural Ministry Fellowship Covenant

“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth...” (Gen. 1:1)

In the beginning, before there were cities, God created seeds, plants, trees, animals, and people and saw that it was good. From this earliest biblical account to the present, God has enveloped the countryside with God’s creative presence. The word “rural,” in its best sense, suggests people of the countryside who live in pastoral relationship with their agricultural surroundings. Duke Divinity School understands that God intended creation, in all of its beauty and diversity, to thrive and flourish as did that first glimpse of a garden called Eden.

There are rural communities in which thriving Christian congregations have positively contributed to God’s own people and creation. The Duke Endowment recognizes the profound impact these congregations and their pastors have within communities facing the growing challenges of our changing world. To address the need for pastors who are prepared to help their congregations live faithfully and thrive in rural North Carolina United Methodist Churches, The Duke Endowment, in collaboration with Duke Divinity School, has developed the Rural Ministry Fellowship program.

An important component of the Rural Ministry Fellows program is genuine openness to the possibility of serving in the pastoral office in rural United Methodist Churches in North Carolina. As part of your acceptance of a Rural Ministry Fellowship you are asked to covenant as follows:

- That it is a privilege to share in the service of Jesus Christ and you give yourself first to the Lord and then to others in keeping with God’s will (2 Cor. 8:5).
- That you will receive in joy and return with grace the learning and teaching opportunities that are entrusted to you by God through The Duke Endowment Rural Church Division, Duke Divinity School, and the United Methodist Conferences of North Carolina.
- That you will continually examine your calling and forfeit this scholarship if, at any time, you discern God directing you to other paths of service that do not include the provisions of this program.
- That you will make yourself available to the Bishop and Cabinet of either the North Carolina Conference or the Western North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church, indicating to the relevant persons that you are a Rural Ministry Fellow and that you feel called to begin your ministry by serving in rural communities where there is prospect and promise for the community and its churches to thrive.
- That if, at the time of graduation, you discern you are not called to ordination and/or service in the rural church, you covenant to provide ongoing substantial financial support to the Rural Ministry Fellows program so that others who are called to this vital ministry may benefit.

I so covenant on this ____ day of _____ 200_.

Covenanter