



Lent 2025

STATEMENT ON MEMPHIS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY'S STANDING WITH THE UNIVERSITY SENATE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Memphis Theological Seminary (MTS) is listed as an approved school of theology by the University Senate of The United Methodist Church. Our relationship with The United Methodist Church is a source of pride and gratitude, and our standing with the University Senate has not changed.

In the summer of 2024, **MTS received notice that the University Senate ended the 100% online distance learning policy for UM students** implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. **While this online policy expired for all listed non-UM institutions, such as MTS, it continued for the 13 United Methodist institutions**, allowing them to offer fully online education for their United Methodist students. As such, **MTS operates under the pre-COVID policy, in which no more than 50% of coursework may be conducted online** for United Methodist students who are preparing for ordination as deacons or elders.

In early 2025, **MTS appealed to the University Senate to allow our online programming to be treated the same as that of UM institutions**, which are permitted to offer fully online education for their students. We did this for two reasons: first, online learning is here and it is not going away. We offer online learning as one of several learning modalities, integrating it well as a strategic response to students' and churches' needs. Second, we advocate for fairness and justice in theological education. **We believe that all listed institutions with the University Senate should be permitted to educate United Methodist students under the same online protocols.**

The University Senate ruled that their current policy for listed non-UM institutions—the pre-COVID-19 policy—will remain unchanged.

At MTS, we are **committed to educating UM students** seeking ordination, and we will do so **under the prescribed distance learning policy** even as we advocate for change. **All coursework for UM students that comprises the Basic Graduate Theological Studies (BGTS, § 324.4) is offered using modalities that meet the current University Senate policy for listed non-UM schools.**

In summary, **Memphis Theological Seminary is listed as an approved school of theology by the University Senate.** Through our Methodist House of Studies, **MTS is committed to teaching and forming United Methodist students in the distinctive ethos of the United Methodist tradition** within the larger framework of the historic pan-Methodist movement. **We are fully prepared to teach and form our United Methodist students, and we welcome the opportunity to do so.**

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