

## AFRICA UNIVERSITY

*You are the light of the world. A city on top of a hill can't be hidden. —Matthew 5:14 (CEB)*

This year, The United Methodist Church marks 30 years of vibrant, transformative ministry through Africa University. Thank you, Virginia Conference, for your faithfulness and generosity in bringing the dream of Africa University (AU) to life.

In celebrating its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Africa University is honoring the past and looking to the future, while remaining true to its mission as the cornerstone ministry for United Methodist-related leadership development in Africa.

From the first conversations in 1984 to formal approval at the General Conference in 1988, the planting of Africa University required vision, faith, and bold action in the face of predictions that it could never succeed. Africa University found friends and advocates in Virginia, across the global Methodist connection, and beyond. The “Dream is Alive” was the rallying cry in March 1992 as forty students from six African countries attended the first lectures.

Africa University’s journey from day one to the present is a shared story of being salt and light. Africa University is also part of the Virginia Conference story—of restoring hope, equipping, and sending forth young leaders to shape an abundant life for themselves and for the communities they serve.

Like the year that preceded it, 2021 affirmed that God’s grace is sufficient in all circumstances. In January 2021, the students, faculty, and staff grappled with the sudden death of Africa University Vice Chancellor, Dr. Munashe Furusa. As the year unfolded, national lockdowns continued to restrict travel and damage livelihoods. Unable to be on campus together, the students, faculty, and staff grieved, pivoted, supported and encouraged each other, and persevered.

Africa University is grateful to the Virginia Conference for investing 69.17 percent of its budget commitment to the Africa University Fund (AUF) in 2021. Thank you to the members of the Virginia Conference for ensuring access to a lifechanging educational experience for students who are unable to fund a college education on their own!

Against the backdrop of a global pandemic, Africa University harnessed new opportunities for missional engagement in 2021. The year’s highlights include:

- **Effective online-only teaching, learning and student assessment:** About 99 percent of students participated in online learning. Enrollment held steady at 3,060 students and more than 500 graduates from 24 African countries were awarded degrees in July 2021.
- **The installation of AU’s fifth Chancellor:** Bishop Gaspar João Domingos of the Western Angola Episcopal Area was elected Chancellor following the death of Bishop John K. Yambasu of Sierra Leone.
- **Research and community service:**
  - AU researchers received US\$2 million in funding for regional initiatives to eradicate malaria, tuberculosis, and other communicable diseases.
  - AU’s students and graduates led, and showed their love of neighbor, with initiatives to feed hungry families, care for the environment, and improve the quality of life of legally blind parents and their children.
  - The Government of Zimbabwe recognized Africa University’s pandemic impact mitigation efforts with the 2021 Jairos Jiri Humanitarian Award.

Thank you, Virginia United Methodists, for letting your light shine for young women and men who would otherwise be left on the sidelines. “A city on top of a hill can’t be hidden” ...similarly, AU’s current students and its more than 10,000 graduates to date are that metaphor made real. Continue to walk alongside them, Virginia Conference, as they hone their abilities, live fully into their God-given purpose, and join in the work of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

*James H. Salley, Associate Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement*