



Contact: Gretchen Wolfram
317/916-7304

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Lilly Endowment offers program for Indiana congregations for 6th year

Up to 40 Indiana congregations may receive grants for their pastors in the 2004 Clergy Renewal Program for Indiana Congregations offered by Lilly Endowment Inc. It will be the sixth year for the program, which so far has awarded 159 renewal grants.

The program encourages pastors, in collaboration with their congregations, to plan a period of renewal and refreshment. For the pastors, the renewal program usually involves time away from the church – often two or three months – for such pursuits as traveling to near and far away worlds, reading deeply in the Bible, theology and literature, renewing family connections, writing everything from diaries to novels, meditating in solitude, visiting mission churches in Africa or Central America, or studying congregations of various kinds in this country.

For members of the congregations, the renewal program often features taking on some of the daily duties of ministry, enjoying the contributions of visiting pastors, participating in special retreats and conferences, calling on the help of congregational renewal consultants, learning how other churches are handling problems they too are facing, and, of course, planning joyous send-off and welcome-home parties for their pastors and their families.

Any Indiana congregation with an ordained minister is eligible to participate in the program, in which each congregation may be awarded up to \$45,000. Congregations may use up to \$15,000 of that total to cover pastoral functions while the pastor is away and certain other congregational renewal expenses.

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Clergy Renewal Program for Indiana Congregations
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“Pastoral work at its best is both rewarding and demanding. It takes the best a human being has to give – intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, even physically,” said Craig Dykstra, the Endowment’s vice president for religion. “These grants are intended to allow good ministers to take time away, breathe in as well as breathe out, and draw again on the wellsprings that led them to the ministry in the first place.

“A common thread through all these proposals,” he added, “is the genuine affection these congregations hold for their pastors. They recognize the need for their pastors to replenish their inner resources, and most seem truly to enjoy taking on the challenge of ‘being on their own’ for a while.”

The Endowment has planned an information program for pastors, their spouses and representatives of their congregations. It will be held Oct. 7 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. at North United Methodist Church, 3808 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, Ind., 46208.

To receive an application/brochure and an invitation and reservation card for that meeting, please contact the Endowment. Call 317/924-5471, or write Lilly Endowment, 2801 N. Meridian St., P.O. Box 88068, Indianapolis, Ind. 46208-0068. The application/brochure may be downloaded from the program’s Web site, www.indianaclergy.org.

All applications for the Indiana program must be postmarked by Feb. 16, 2004. Grant awards will be announced by early June 2004.

The Indiana program is separate from the Endowment’s National Clergy Renewal Program, under which congregations in the other 49 states receive similar awards.