



Contact: Gretchen Wolfram
317/916-7304
317/255-2640 (home)
wolframg@lei.org

For Immediate Release
Wednesday, July 9, 2008

Lilly Endowment announces 22 Indiana congregations as clergy renewal program recipients

Susan Shadburne Call took it literally when Lilly Endowment asked: “What will make your heart sing?” The answer was obvious: music.

The Rev. Susan Call at Downey Avenue Christian Church in Indianapolis is one of 25 pastors representing 22 congregations in Indiana who have been selected as recipients in the 2008 Clergy Renewal Program for Indiana Congregations. This is the 10th year for the program through which the Endowment invites congregations and ministers to consider and plan a period of “intentional reflection and renewal.” It provides a time for ministers to get away from their daily obligations and gain the fresh perspective and renewed energy that a carefully considered “sabbath time” of travel, study, rest and prayer can provide.

Call and her parishioners have been dealing with the aftereffects of a fire at the church that occurred just before Christmas in 2005. It destroyed the choir area and inflicted heavy smoke damage. While dealing with her normal busy schedule of pastoral duties, she was negotiating with insurance companies and other “providers” and permit people, and managing the day-to-day restoration of the sanctuary. “This is not something they teach you about in seminary,” she says.

They do teach about singing in seminary; they teach you about music both in times of trouble and in times of joy. But not voice lessons. So Call and her family will head for Nashville, Tenn., for a 23-member family gathering—their first time together as an extended and blended family. And while they are there, Call will take singing lessons. Actually, she has sung for years. “Music has given voice to my thoughts and emotions,” Call says. “Much of Holy Scripture that I know by heart I know because I have sung it in anthems, chorales and oratorios.”

Later Call and her husband will head to Santa Fe, N.Mex., where great opera is sung and opportunities for quiet rest are also available. Then it’s on to the Village Harmony Camp in McKenzie, Ore., where she plans to “sing in the heart of the Cathedral Forest on the McKenzie

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River with folks from all across the country. The music will be challenging; it will range from traditional New England shape-note singing to contemporary arrangements, a set of folk and sacred songs from Georgia in the South Caucasus and a set of Bulgarian two- and three-part songs.”

Finally, Call will travel to Australia, a place she’s wanted to see since reading *The Thorn Birds*, and to Fiji. There Call will participate in the Paradise Camp Gospel Singing program and indulge herself with singing spirituals, gospel songs and quartets.

During the course of her renewal program, Call won’t be the only one singing. Her congregation of nearly 200 at Downey Avenue will build on its own musical tradition and excellence with their music conductor and organist and also go on a retreat with a guest conductor. When Call returns, they all will sing together in their new sanctuary.

“Putting first things first” is the goal of the Rev. Sidney F. Gauby and his almost 900-member congregation at St. Joseph United Methodist Church in Fort Wayne. For the past few years, Gauby says, he’s “just been adding one more thing to my schedule and one more responsibility to think about.” This situation resonates with many of his congregants.

Gauby says that participating in this renewal program will “help focus the congregation on putting first things first, encouraging the development of a sustainable rhythm of life and making time to step back and see God at work in their own lives and others’.” During the grant proposal planning process, one member summed it up this way: “I don’t want one more thing to do or attend; I just want the time to be.”

Gauby’s renewal will involve returning to places of beginnings, reconnecting with his family and rediscovering the passions of the past. Next summer, he – as many of the renewal pastors do – will begin with a time of personal retreat. Gauby will get away to Gethsemani, Ky., to disengage from his active life of ministry.

He will take up photography again – he set it aside for the ministry – and head for the central European Alps and photo lessons from an expert. In the Dusseldorf area, he will meet up with his family as well as with members of the German family whose daughter was an exchange student four years ago in Fort Wayne.

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When he and his wife return stateside, they will spend some quiet time together in a rustic cabin near Crater Lake National Park, a place he enjoyed as a child. After some family time in Boise, Idaho, he will take a personal retreat to focus on prayer practices that have often been “shortchanged during my busy ministry.”

Meanwhile back in Fort Wayne, the parishioners have planned an ambitious “retreat” for themselves. They will be asked to share creatively how they “experience God’s presence.” The resulting photos, poems, stories, artwork and whatever will turn the congregational space into a gallery. Staff and congregational members may participate in retreats. Instead of church meetings in August, the leadership teams will focus on prayer.

“For a church with six worship services of varying styles, it often feels as if there are six small churches meeting in one building,” the members say. Therefore, a new “Sabbath Homes” program will start the first Sunday in July when members of the same service will visit each other’s homes. In August, Sabbath Homes will “mix it up” and members from different-style services will visit with others from different services. They will all welcome the Gaubys back with a churchwide meal and fellowship.

Eight churches are scattered throughout the one-stoplight southwestern Indiana community of New Harmony. But the 900 residents in this Wabash River town – a population that has remained fairly constant for two centuries – live in a unique place. The town was the site of two intentional communities, the Harmonists and the Owenites in the 19th century, and is an historic destination for travelers.

Says one of the ministers: “The spirit of community still exists, but New Harmony finds itself experiencing the challenges of a modern society.” She is the Rev. Martha A. Honaker of St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church. Even in tiny New Harmony, there are intra-church conflicts – political and theological – as well as external conflicts. “New Harmony’s desire to ‘own its heritage’ while at the same time welcoming new families with new ideas creates a healthy tension, but also has created some divisions,” she says. Honaker wants to explore ways in which people can “agree to disagree with each other without separating over issues.”

As a long-time student of reconciliation studies, she sees her renewal program as an “opportunity to explore the ministry of reconciliation by doing some of her favorite things: travel,

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history and creative writing. It will give me freedom of time, the gracious gift of rest and reflection, and the fun of learning and being with others.”

She will study one of the world’s most irreconcilable conflicts: the Arab-Israeli conflict. Under the umbrella of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (an interfaith international movement), she will stay in Palestinian and Israeli homes for two weeks, witness the effects of violence on communities and individuals and reflect on these experiences in the context of selected religious and cultural sites.

In Rome she will see the sights and spend time at the Anglican Centre to take a closer look at joint efforts at reconciliation between Anglicans and Roman Catholics. And she will study two peace-making saints: St. Francis of Assisi and St. Catherine of Siena.

Upon returning from Europe, she will rest at her family’s home in the North Carolina mountains. She plans to spend Christmas there with family and close friends for the first time in many years. While in North Carolina, she also will attend the John C. Campbell Folk School in Brasstown to take courses in writing, poetry and storytelling. It will be a special time because her brother, also a minister, will be there with his family.

Back in New Harmony her parishioners will undertake their own journey toward understanding reconciliation. They will read books by Nobel Prize recipient Desmond Tutu and invite townspeople and those from surrounding communities to hear guest lecturers. Together, pastor and congregation will seek new ways to practice reconciliation and “new harmony” in their own hometown.

The Rev. Paul F. Swartz and his King of Glory Lutheran Church in Carmel offered a “prepositional proposition.” One of his seminary professors told Swartz that “the smallest words, prepositions, were the most important words in the Bible.” He has been intrigued ever since. Thus the theme of his renewal: the directional thrusts of ministry.

His congregants report that he is troubled by what we often see in congregations, the subtle self-centered emphasis that directs our focus inward and thwarts our outward ministry. He has diagnosed this malaise and sees a corrective in reversing the directional indicators of the four celebrated prepositions: up and down, in and out.

He maintains that it is always the “downward reach of God that creates the upward life of his people. And it is the outward thrust (mission) of the church that engenders the inward pull of

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individuals to Christ.” The members report: “As we leave the shallow role of Sunday church attendees and move toward being committed Christ followers, there is a new sense of excitement in the congregation.”

Next summer Swartz’s time will be filled with visiting the Lutheran Chautauqua/Summer Assembly at Lakeside, Ohio, his childhood vacationland; meeting with his four siblings and their families for the first time in 10 years; engaging in a silent retreat at the Benedictine Inn and Retreat Center near Indianapolis; and serving as pastor-in-residence at Wittenberg University.

Then he and his wife will head for Berlin and the Lutheran Heritage Tour which will “underscore the initiating downward reach of God’s love and the upward lift of those who respond in faith.” They will travel to Eisleben, Wittenberg, Weidach, Wurttemberg, Frankfort and Prague.

Along the way, Swartz will meet with Luther stamp collectors and philatelic clubs. To his wife’s amazement, he has amassed a large collection of Luther/Reformation stamps, postcards and other related material from which he is organizing the “Life of Martin Luther Illustrated Philatelically.”

The Footsteps of St. Paul tour will take them across Greece and Turkey, a trip that should reinforce the outward thrust of being sent. He will return to enjoy “Re-Formation Sunday – Re-Engage! King of Glory Vision Night” with the congregation.

Swartz believes the renewal period will show him once again “how the downs of the Bible are followed by ups and how the outward thrusts of the church bring people into the heart of God.” He predicts that the program will give him a renewed sense of his Lutheran heritage and a chance to recapture that missionary zeal.

Any congregation in Indiana with an ordained minister is eligible to apply for a clergy renewal grant. The maximum award in 2008 was \$45,000, and up to \$15,000 of that amount could be used for congregational activities while the pastor is away.

The 22 grants this year total nearly \$933,000. They represent 13 cities and towns and 10 counties. Half have fewer than 200 persons at worship, while three have regular worship attendance of more than 1,000. Grantees include congregations from 10 different denominations or traditions.

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“As they prepare their proposals, we ask congregations and ministers to consider the question – ‘What will make your heart sing?’” – says Craig Dykstra, senior vice president for religion at the Endowment. “They always come up with wonderful and imaginative yet doable ways to fulfill their dreams. Their time away has freed them to pursue personal interests and needs in ways that have given them new energy for ministry – and the congregations have discovered that they too experienced a refreshment of their own and newfound sense of their own strengths.”

The Endowment’s larger goal is to bolster the good work that America’s pastors and congregations are accomplishing day in and day out, to reinforce and build upon the strengths that are evident on both sides of the pulpit. “In our religion grantmaking, we hope to encourage and support excellent pastors. It is no secret that pastors who have reconnected themselves to the passions that led them to the ministry in the first place are more likely to lead healthy and vibrant congregations,” Dykstra says.

The congregations and pastors selected for the 2008 program are the following:

- Central Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Indianapolis, \$39,321
Linda M. McCrae
- Christ Church (United Church of Christ [UCC]), Evansville, \$45,000
Kendall H. Brown
- Church of the Nativity (Episcopal), Indianapolis, \$44,997
Bruce W. Boss
- Cornerstone of Hope Church (nondenominational), Indianapolis, \$44,960
Dennis C. Johnson and Ida M. Johnson
- Downey Avenue Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Indianapolis, \$44,840
Susan Shadburne Call
- Englewood Christian Church (Christian Churches/Churches of Christ),
Indianapolis, \$31,100
Michael J. Bowling
- First Baptist Church (American Baptist Churches/USA), Terre Haute, \$44,900
Bernard A. Jackson
- First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Kokomo, \$40,781
William H. Jewsbury
- First Congregational Church (UCC), Indianapolis, \$31,444
Richard R. Clough
- Good Shepherd United Methodist Church, Fort Wayne, \$45,000
Phillip R. Emerson

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Kern Road Chapel (Mennonite), South Bend, \$44,868
André G. Stoner

King of Glory Lutheran Church (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America),
Carmel, \$44,107
Paul F. Swartz

Maple Ridge Community Church (Christian and Missionary Alliance),
West Lafayette, \$38,694
Bradford R. Bush

Open Gate Praise and Deliverance Ministries (nondenominational), Elkhart,
\$44,398
V. Wayne Malone and Mary D. Malone

Our Lady of Greenwood Catholic Church (Roman Catholic), Greenwood, \$44,980
Mark A. Svarczkopf

Redeemer Lutheran Church (Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod),
Fort Wayne, \$42,425
David H. Petersen

Reformed Presbyterian Church (Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America),
Lafayette, \$44,724
David W. Long

Southport Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Indianapolis, \$43,159
Stephen B. Lantis and Jennifer A. Steele-Lantis

Speedway United Methodist Church, Speedway, \$45,000
Darren C. Wood

St. Joseph United Methodist Church, Fort Wayne, \$45,000
Sidney F. Gauby

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, New Harmony, \$45,000
Martha A. Honaker

Union Christian Church (Independent Christian), Terre Haute, \$38,035
Mark A. Grayless