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Lilly Endowment announces 2003 National Clergy Renewal Program

Ministers and their congregations around the country are invited to participate in the 2003 National Clergy Renewal Program offered by the Indianapolis-based Lilly Endowment Inc. This will be the fourth year for the program in which the Endowment funds congregations whose pastors and parishioners, working together, produce compelling plans for an extended sabbatical time for the minister and a complementary set of activities for congregational renewal.

The Endowment anticipates awarding approximately 125 grants to congregations of up to \$45,000 each. Of that amount, up to \$15,000 may be used for congregational expenses associated with the renewal program.

More than 100 recipients of the 2002 grants were announced last month. Many of those ministers will head for Europe, Asia, Africa, South America and points closer to home. They will fulfill their intentions of spending time away from their official duties and engaging in activities that provide spiritual refreshment and opportunities to travel, delve into history and theology, study what goes on at other churches, spend good time with their families, and get some rest.

“Many people do not realize how hard these pastors work,” said Craig Dykstra, Endowment vice president for religion. “Ministers are with their parishioners during the best and worst times of their lives -- and at all points in between. Besides their pastoral

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duties, they are expected to be fund-raisers, mentors, orators, community leaders. Many of them have served for 20 or 30 years without an extended break from their duties. The Endowment hopes to reward these good ministers with a chance to step away for awhile and renew their energy and imaginations. At the same time, congregations are given opportunities for renewal experiences as well.

“We have found over the years of this program that the congregations are pleased with these programs. They know their pastors (and their families) work hard in service to the church, and they realize that pastors who have a chance for renewal return to the pulpit rejuvenated, refreshed and ready to continue their service with a new sense of purpose,” Dykstra said.

The program is a competitive grants program open to Christian congregations that have an ordained pastor who has received a master of divinity degree from an accredited theological school. Congregations in any of 49 states may apply (the Endowment administers a separate program for Indiana congregations).

Applications must be postmarked by July 18, and the awards announcement will be made by next December.

For more information, please contact the program Web site at www.clergyrenewal.org, send an e-mail to clergyrenewal@yahoo.com, call 317/916-7302 or write Lilly Endowment, Religion Division, 2801 N. Meridian St., P.O. Box 88068, Indianapolis, Ind. 46208.