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Lilly Endowment announces 5th year for National Clergy Renewal Program

Over the past four years, 499 congregations have received National Clergy Renewal Program grants from Lilly Endowment Inc. for renewal leaves for their pastors. By this time next year, that number will be more than 600. The Endowment announced today (Dec. 4) a fifth year for the highly successful program, during which it will award up to 120 grants.

This program addresses key aims of the Endowment's religion grantmaking: attracting a new generation of talented young people to the ministry, nurturing the excellent pastors already "on duty," and building vibrant and healthy congregations.

"In their efforts to address the constant demands of daily parish life, pastors' own needs for prayer and sustenance often are neglected," said Craig Dykstra, Endowment vice president for religion. "The clergy renewal program is a response to those needs. It has helped many pastors rediscover the joy of ministry.

"We see constant evidence of the deep commitment that pastors have to their congregations. The full extent of their dedication is not widely known – sometimes even by their own parishioners," Dykstra continued. "Pastors and congregations have told us repeatedly that the renewal experience has been life-giving for all, in many cases providing pastors with the spiritual grounding and momentum to take up their ministry in fresher, deeper ways. This time of Sabbath not only affirms and honors them, but renews them in their calling."

(more)

National Clergy Renewal Program
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The National Clergy Renewal Program allows pastors to be away from their congregations for an extended period of time in order to travel, study, spend time with families and friends and, in many cases, renew old hobbies or develop new ones that provide alternative avenues for creative expression.

There is no set “model” as to what constitutes an ideal renewal program. Pastors and congregations work together to plan a renewal experience that will meet the needs of the entire community. “We are finding,” said Dykstra, “that the most rewarding programs are those in which members of the congregation step up to the plate and take appropriate responsibility for leadership and ministry in the pastor’s absence, thereby finding themselves renewed in ways that were not at all expected.”

Any Christian congregation is eligible to apply for a clergy renewal program for any of its ordained pastors. The master of divinity degree is the basic minimum educational requirement. Each congregation selected may request up to a total of \$45,000 to support the renewal program. Of that amount, up to \$15,000 may be used for congregational expenses associated with the renewal program. (The Endowment administers a separate program for Indiana congregations.)

Deadline for applications is June 25, 2004, and awards will be announced by October. For information about the program, call 317/916-7302, send an e-mail to clergyrenewal@yahoo.com; write Lilly Endowment Inc., Religion Division, 2801 N. Meridian St., P.O Box 88068, Indianapolis, Ind. 46208-0068; or contact the program’s Web site at www.clergyrenewal.org.