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### Lilly Endowment announces continuation of National Clergy Renewal Program

After five years and grant awards to more than 600 Christian congregations in the country, Lilly Endowment Inc. announces that the National Clergy Renewal Program will continue in 2005. The awards, up to \$45,000 for each congregation, allow pastors to go on journeys of renewal and refreshment for creative ministry with the active support of their parishioners.

Just last month, the Indianapolis-based Endowment announced the 132 recipients in the 2004 program. They represent 23 major Christian denominations in 37 states and the District of Columbia.

“As this program has progressed, we at the Endowment have become increasingly impressed with the quality of the proposals and the variety of plans that these pastors have designed to replenish their energy and pursue the ideals that compelled them to become ministers in the first place,” said Craig Dykstra, Endowment vice president for religion.

“As these effective pastors reflect on their lives, they know that the demands on their time and talents can become relentless, and their commitments to their pastoral duties can place difficult demands on their family lives,” he continued.

“The most heartening thing is that most congregations recognize this situation, too. They know their pastor needs ‘a break’ from the pressures of the ministerial life.

(more)

National Clergy Renewal Program  
Add 2

They are eager to provide opportunities for their pastors and their families to be refreshed. And they are delighted when they come back with renewed passion for their ministries.

“We have been so gratified to discover that the pastors and congregations who have participated in this program are very enthusiastic about the benefits of their sabbaticals,” Dykstra said.

Interested pastors and their parishioners plan the sabbatical together; the congregation’s support is vital if the program is to succeed. Up to \$15,000 of each award may be used to provide “fill in” assistance with pastoral duties and for events and activities to foster congregational renewal.

The competitive grants program is open to Christian congregations in any state other than Indiana that are served by ordained pastors who hold a master of divinity degree from an accredited theological seminary. (The Endowment administers a separate program for Indiana congregations.)

Plans for the renewal programs are as varied as the ministers and congregations that apply. Some choose travel to religious sites, some explore the history of their denominations, some connect with family members they haven’t seen in years, some explore long-abandoned hobbies such as writing poetry or playing the guitar. Many take on challenges they have always wanted to pursue: living in a totally “foreign” country, learning a new language, writing a book.

“What all these pastors have in common,” Dykstra noted, “is that they have taken time to determine what will ‘make their heart sing.’ Their congregations have ‘signed on’ with excited encouragement. It is a most beneficial program for all concerned.”

Persons interested in the 2005 program may contact the Lilly Endowment Web site ([www: lillyendowment.org](http://www:lillyendowment.org)), click on Religion, and scroll down to the National

(more)

National Clergy Renewal Program  
Add 2

Clergy Renewal Program. The entire application may be downloaded from the site. For a hard copy of the brochure/application, persons may write Lilly Endowment, 2801 N. Meridian St., P.O. Box 88068, Indianapolis, Ind. 46208-0068. Interested persons may e-mail [clergyrenewal@yahoo.com](mailto:clergyrenewal@yahoo.com) or call 317/916-7302, if they have questions.

Deadline for applications is June 10, 2005, and recipients will be notified by next October.