Note to reporters and editors: Please be sure to check the list to see if one or more congregations and pastors in your area have received this award.
This release and the list are also available on our Web site: lillyendowment.org

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Lilly Endowment announces recipients of National Clergy Renewal Program awards

Some are going to Europe, others to Africa. Some will visit urban churches in the United States. Others will take the back roads of small-town USA. Some will unleash their creative impulses – write poetry, play an instrument, paint. Many will go on spiritual retreats. Still others will explore historic places within their particular religious traditions. All will share the experience of having the time simply to stop, step back, reflect and renew themselves and their spirits.

"They" are the 127 pastors representing 123 congregations (there are four clergy couples in the group) that are sending them on three- to four-month sabbaticals through the National Clergy Renewal Program funded by Indianapolis-based Lilly Endowment Inc.

"Many people just do not realize that part of a pastor's calling, part of his or her 'job description,' is to be spiritually growing all the time. Periodically, that requires an extended Sabbath – time away from the press of one's usual responsibilities," said Craig Dykstra, Endowment senior vice president for religion. "They write and preach sermons; they also make

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hospital visits, administer the 'business' of their churches, preside at weddings and funerals, and counsel parishioners. And they are expected to 'be there,' to be available at both the best and the worst times in people's lives.

"That's where this clergy renewal program steps in. It provides pastors the opportunity to work alongside their congregations to plan an intentional time away to do what will 'make their hearts sing,'" he continued. "Pastors cherish the chance to spend more time with their families, travel to places that may be new to them, pursue scholarly interests, enjoy nature, go on spiritual retreats, meet interesting people – and return home with the renewed energy, vigor and fresh outlook that can make a big difference in their pastorates and their congregations."

Since 2000 the Endowment has awarded 881 national clergy renewal grants in 48 states across the country to Christian congregations whose pastors have earned a master of divinity degree. (The Endowment administers a separate program for Indiana congregations.) This year's recipients represent 19 denominations and lead churches in 37 states and the District of Columbia. Their budgets run the gamut from nearly $76,000 to almost $7.5 million, and their worship attendance ranges from about 20 to 3,500.

Each congregation may apply for an award of up to $45,000, and up to $15,000 of that amount may be spent for congregational support during the absence of the pastor.

The congregation of Grace Episcopal Church in Amherst, Mass., says that the chance for its pastor to write poetry and paint, have time for renewal for his young family and reestablish healthy habits around work and recreation is what will make his heart sing.

He is the Rev. A. Robert Hirschfeld. He and his family – wife and three youngsters – have never traveled outside the country. Soon they will head for Italy for two weeks of exploration in Rome, Florence and Venice, soaking in the museums, churches, galleries and paintings. Then Hirschfeld will attend the Iowa Summer Writing Festival and an art workshop in Taos, N. Mex., and set up a studio in which to paint and write. He also will visit with old friends and family.

His congregation claims that this renewal program is a chance for the whole congregation to deepen their relationship with God through a variety of artistic activities.

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Congregants claim the church is "teeming with talent and energy. Among us are painters, novelists, poets, short story authors, musicians, dancers and actors, and all sorts of artists." They even have a Liturgical Arts Camp program for the youth. Grace sees this as a "wonderful opportunity for all of us to explore how Christ is the means by which God continuously recreates, restores, heals and 'makes all things new.'"

Not far away, in the heart of the African American community of Boston, the Rev. John H. Womack Sr. has built what was a struggling church of about 55 members when he arrived in 1993 into a growing community of more than 250. The Metropolitan Baptist Church (MBC), according to the congregation, "embodies its mission of being not just a church in the community, but a 'community church.'"

For the first seven years of his ministry, Womack served double duty – as a businessman and a pastor. He saw this church as his mission and worked tirelessly, seven days a week for it while running his businesses at the same time. He became involved in restructuring and reviving the infrastructure of the church's Christian life and community outreach. He has since sold his businesses, and his parishioners say that "he is at a point where rest, reflection and renewal are essential for us to continue."

Womack and his wife, Bertha, will travel to Liberia where MBC has helped sponsor a 400-student school. They also will go to London and visit urban churches there. Then they will board an RV and head through the South to visit congregations with a proven record of being committed to community outreach. He also plans to spend some time in Florida to relax and write about his experiences.

The Rev. Joyce E. Schroer enjoys the rural life as pastor of the First Congregational Church in Berlin Heights, Ohio (pop. 1,000). She wonders, however, what makes rural churches unique and how changes in the community's demographics will affect church growth.

Schroer and her husband, Steve, intend to find out by traveling the back roads across America's heartland, stopping in small towns, asking questions, and talking with other rural pastors in Illinois, the Dakotas, Iowa and Nebraska.

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Members report that she has “pushed them, encouraged new ideas and approaches to ministry, and made us work hard at reaching out to new people.” While they worked on the proposal for the grant, they solicited input not only from the congregation but from the townspeople as well. They say it was “challenging and fun brainstorming ideas, then putting it all together.”

As for Schroer, she says, “I love this small village and the people who live here. They have opened their hearts to me. As their pastor what can I learn that can continue to give them hope and revitalize their lives?” That will be the focus of her renewal agenda.

Out in Boise, Idaho, the Rev. Henry Carmona has spent three years at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist. In that short time, his congregation says he “has made way for a truly remarkable spiritual awakening in our parish. We’ve hosted five evangelization retreats, which led to the development of small faith-sharing communities. We’ve developed an adult education/formation program and are preparing for a 30-week in-depth Bible study. We have a vibrant youth program. Because he came from a country with poverty, he has opened our eyes to the universal needs of the poor and gotten us involved to make a difference.”

Indeed, Carmona’s hometown is Cali, Colombia, and it figures largely in his renewal plans. The first thing he will do is fly “home” and reconnect with family, friends and former parishioners in his home parish of San Juan Bautista Mission in Cali, where he served from 1979 to 1990.

After that he heads to Rome for a program called “Christ Renews His Priests” and anticipates an audience with Pope Benedict XVI. He plans to study Italian and visit various other cities in Italy, Germany, France and Switzerland. He will take time for a nine-day trip to visit a sister in England whom he has not seen in nine years.

“The wealth of imagination unleashed by this program is truly wonderful to behold,” said the Endowment’s Dykstra. “We can think of no better reward for these hardworking men and women than to enable them to experience personal growth and renewal in ways that they themselves dream up and that they feel will feed them most deeply.

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"The comments we have heard from returning pastors contain descriptions like 'life-changing' and 'a personal experience that leaves me permanently marked and changed.' Of course, the program affects not only the pastors but also their congregations, whose dedication to their pastors and churches is truly inspiring."

The Endowment plans to continue the program for 2007, and an announcement is expected soon.

Please see attached list for recipients.

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A complete list of the 2006 clergy renewal recipients follows.

National Clergy Renewal Program/2006
123 grants

Alabama

Birmingham – Baptist Church of the Covenant (Cooperative Baptist Fellowship), $44,900
Sarah J. Shelton

Arizona

Payson – Shepherd of the Pines Lutheran Church (Lutheran Church/Missouri Synod), $44,270
Todd W. Arnold

Scottsdale – Resurrection Lutheran Church (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America [ELCA]), $43,759
John D. Geske

Tempe – Community Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), $37,867
Douglas R. Bland

Arkansas

Siloam Springs – First Baptist Church (Southern Baptist Convention [SBC]), $44,420
Stephen L. Abbott

California

Fresno – Fresno University Presbyterian Church (Presbyterian Church USA [PCUSA]), $43,044
Chris W. Erdman

Gardena – Korean Presbyterian Church of South Bay (PCUSA), $45,000
Woong Taek Ra

Hilmar – Hilmar Covenant Church (Evangelical Covenant Church), $45,000
Bruce A. Metcalf

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Lafayette – First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), $35,000
Faye O. Matthews

Los Altos – Christ Episcopal Church, $41,882
Malcolm Young

Solvang – Santa Ynez Valley Presbyterian Church (PCUSA), $44,215
Jeffrey G. Bridgeman

Walnut Creek – Grace Presbyterian Church (PCUSA), $41,922
Roger S. Reaber

Colorado

Boulder – Trinity Lutheran Church (ELCA), $21,774
Mark G. Twietmeyer

Englewood – Mayflower Congregational Church (United Church of Christ [UCC]), $45,000
Paul L. Ramsey

Fort Collins – Plymouth Congregational Church (UCC), $42,371
Harry Row Chorpenning III

Connecticut

Waterford – Crossroads Presbyterian Church (PCUSA), $39,750
Anne E. Fuhrmeister

District of Columbia

Trinity Parish (Episcopal), $44,980
John T.W. Harmon

Florida

Fort George Island – St. George Episcopal Church, $38,639
Kathryn Mary B. Young

Jacksonville – First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), $37,591
Jeffery Lee Smith

(more)

Jacksonville – St. John's Parish (Episcopal), $33,634
Edward H. Harrison Jr.

Tampa – Grace Lutheran Church (ELCA), $31,200
John S. Hillmer

Vero Beach – First Presbyterian Church (PCUSA), $45,000
George T. Womack

Georgia

Atlanta – First Presbyterian Church (PCUSA), $33,000
Craig N. Goodrich

Brunswick – St. Athanasius' Episcopal Church, $45,000
Charles C. Amuzie

Macon – First Baptist Church of Christ (Cooperative Baptist Fellowship), $44,437
Robert Sefzer

Idaho

Boise – Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist (Catholic), $36,957
Henry Carmona

Post Falls – Post Falls Presbyterian Church (PCUSA), $44,698
Douglas B. Waltar

Illinois

Champaign – Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA), $41,051
Roger D. Digges

Chicago – Holy Trinity Lutheran Church (ELCA), $39,313
Craig M. Mueller

Lake Zurich – Peace Lutheran Church (ELCA), $32,910
Mark J. Sundberg

Maryville – First Baptist Church (SBC), $43,294
Fred Harland Winters

(more)

Park Ridge – Redeemer Lutheran Church (ELCA), $36,970
Fred J. Nelson and Carol R. Breimeier

Warrenville – Immanuel Presbyterian Church (Evangelical Presbyterian Church) $44,233
Mateen Assaad Elass

Iowa

Cedar Falls – First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), $37,492
Elizabeth A. Woodward

Orange City – Trinity Reformed Church (Reformed Church in America [RCA]), $44,805
Jonathan L. Opgenorth

Kentucky

Lexington – East Second Street Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), $37,110
Donald K. Gillett II

Maine

Belfast – Belfast United Methodist Church, $43,065
David Abbott

North Haven – North Haven Baptist Church (American Baptist Convention [ABC]), $37,861
David A. Macy

Maryland

Reisterstown – All Saints Episcopal Church, $39,338
David A. Stenner

Rockville – Christ Episcopal Church, $44,237
John M. McDuffie

Towson – Church of the Good Shepherd (Episcopal), $34,780
Scott G. Slater

(more)

Upper Marlboro – Melwood Church of the Nazarene, $42,500
John W. Nielson

Massachusetts

Amherst – Grace Episcopal Church, $39,185
Alfred R. Hirschfeld

Brookline – All Saints Parish (Episcopal), $32,950
David A. Killian

Cambridge – Berkland Baptist Church (SBC), $43,800
Paul K. Kim

Cambridge – First Church (UCC), $44,412
J. Mary Luti

Danvers – North Shore Chapel (Christian Reformed Church [CRC]), $35,968
Michael J. Laird

Dorchester – Metropolitan Baptist Church (nondenominational), $45,000
John H. Womack Sr.

Needham – Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA), $43,527
Jennifer Hitt

Waltham – First Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA), $43,941
Thomas E. Maehl

Michigan

Ann Arbor – Ann Arbor Chinese Christian Church (SBC), $45,000
Andrew Soon Teo

Ann Arbor – Shalom Community Church (Mennonite Church USA and Church of the Brethren), $43,500
Paul Versluis III

Berkley – Greenfield Presbyterian Church (PCUSA), $44,905
Peter T. Moore

Detroit – Metropolitan Church of God (Church of God, Anderson), $33,020
Robert O. Dulin Jr.

(more)

Holland – Hope Church (RCA), $40,900
Gordon S. Wiersma

Kalamazoo – Southern Heights Christian Reformed Church (CRC), $34,708
Daniel S. Sarkipato

Northville – First United Methodist Church, $44,687
John H. Hice

Portage – St. Barnabas Episcopal Church, $30,722
Kathleen A. Kingslight

Rockford – River Rock Church (CRC), $45,000
Jon Huizenga

Traverse City – Presbyterian Church of Traverse City (PCUSA), $45,000
Homer E. Nye

Minnesota

Duluth – Peace United Church of Christ (UCC), $40,172
Kathryn Nelson

Minneapolis – Bethlehem Baptist Church (Baptist General Convention), $45,000
Thomas R. Steller

Minneapolis – Grace University Lutheran Church (ELCA), $40,750
Daniel A. Garnaas

Plymouth – Church of the Epiphany (Episcopal), $23,878
Bradley S. Hauff

St. Peter – First Lutheran Church (ELCA), $44,004
Alan C. Bray

Montana

Billings – American Lutheran Church (ELCA), $44,790
Timothy A.Tostengard and Kay Marie Tostengard

(more)

Polson – Good Shepherd Lutheran Church (ELCA), $43,183
Paul L. Rowold

Nebraska

Omaha – St. Thomas Lutheran Church (ELCA), $45,000
David A. Nordstrand

New Hampshire

Alstead – Third Congregational Church (UCC), $45,000
Janice V. Howe

Brentwood – Pilgrim United Church of Christ, $44,975
Kimberly S. McKerley

New Jersey

Merchantville – First Presbyterian Church (PCUSA), $45,000
William W. Gaskill

Newark – Clinton Avenue Presbyterian Church (PCUSA), $43,000
Alfred B. Johnson

Oaklyn – Oaklyn Baptist Church (ABC), $25,563
Eric J. Hoheisel

Somerset – Church of St. Matthias (Catholic), $45,000
Douglas J. Haefner

New Mexico

Santa Fe – Holy Trinity Antiochian Orthodox Christian Church, $45,000
John Bethancourt

New York

Fairport – Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Catholic), $43,300
Edward L. Palumbos

(more)

Jamaica – St. Albans Congregational Church (UCC), $25,735
Henry T. Simmons

New York – All Angels Episcopal Church, $45,000
Milind Sojwal

Watervliet – Grace Fellowship Church (nondenominational), $45,000
Rex Keener

West Seneca – St. Peter's United Church of Christ, $45,000
Hope D.J. Harle-Mould

North Carolina

Greensboro – St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, $38,656
Wendy W. Billingslea

Kinston – St. Mary's Episcopal Church, $45,000
A. Michael Singer

Locust – Mission Baptist Church (Cooperative Baptist Fellowship), $43,934
Ronald L. Russell

Whitsett – Springwood Presbyterian Church (PCUSA), $45,000
Donald R. Kerns III

North Dakota

Fargo – Knollbrook Covenant Church (Evangelical Covenant Church), $43,363
Gregory A. Fullerton

Ohio

Berlin Heights – First Congregational Church (UCC), $45,000
Joyce E. Schroer

Columbus – St. Dominic Catholic Church, $45,000
James L. Colopy Jr.

Dayton – Epiphany Lutheran Church (ELCA), $43,832
Fredrick Wiese

(more)

Kettering – Sugar Creek Presbyterian Church (PCUSA), $45,000
Julia K. Wharff

Marion – Emanuel Lutheran Church (ELCA), $42,080
J. Weston Jones

North Lima – Mount Olivet United Church of Christ, $41,234
Melinda Lacefield

Powell – New Hope Reformed Church (RCA), $39,130
Stephen M. Norden

Oklahoma

Tulsa – First Presbyterian Church (PCUSA), $45,000
James D. Miller

Tulsa – Trinity Episcopal Church, $40,440
Stephen L. McKee

Oregon

Clackamas – Eastridge Covenant Church (Evangelical Covenant Church), $45,000
Dwain Tissell

Pennsylvania

Aliquippa – Prince of Peace Episcopal Church, $44,000
John M. Heidengren

Allentown – Grace Episcopal Church, $44,555
Patrick L. Malloy

Dillsburg – Monaghan Presbyterian Church (PCUSA), $33,685
Charles W. Best

Mechanicsburg – St. Joseph Church (Catholic), $34,946
Chester P. Snyder

Pittsburgh – Bellevue United Presbyterian Church (PCUSA), $42,920
Catherine J.S. Purves

(more)

Waynesboro – Fairview Avenue Brethren in Christ, $45,000
John D. Fickett

South Carolina

Greenville – Earle Street Baptist Church (SBC), $42,040
James G. Wooten

South Dakota

Sioux Falls – Central Baptist Church, $42,269
James S. Petersen

Texas

Denton – St. Andrew Presbyterian Church (PCUSA), $44,100
Stephen W. Plunkett

Nacogdoches – Westminster Presbyterian Church (PCUSA), $40,470
Stephen E. Newton

Round Rock – Round Rock Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), $30,500
Larry W. Cowan

San Antonio – Shearer Hills Baptist Church (SBC), $44,008
Joe D. Loftis Jr.

Vermont

Londonderry – Second Congregational Church (UCC), $30,538
Laurie S. Krooss

Manchester – First Congregational Church (UCC), $45,000
Steven E. Berry

White River Junction – St. Paul's Episcopal Church, $44,916
Nancy A. Gorman Vogele

Virginia

Reston – St. Anne's Episcopal Church, $41,500
James A. Papile

(more)

Richmond – Mount Carmel Baptist Church (ABC), $45,000
Stephen A. Howard

Winchester – First Presbyterian Church (PCUSA), $35,915
Dan Macey McCoig Jr.

Woodbridge – First United Presbyterian Church (PCUSA), $28,032
Robert A. Edmunds

Washington

Deer Park – St. Mary's Presentation Catholic Church, $33,125
Albert G. Grasher Jr.

Port Townsend – First Presbyterian Church (PCUSA), $40,134
Robert E. Slater

Puyallup – First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), $43,170
Nancy G. Johnson

Seattle – Central Lutheran Church (ELCA), $21,856
Shannon K. Anderson

Seattle – Church of the Ascension (Episcopal), $38,340
Dorian L. Mulvey

Seattle – St. John the Baptist Episcopal Church, $41,245
Peter J. DeVeau

Seattle – Wallingford Presbyterian Church (PCUSA), $44,995
Deborah Hannay Sunoo and Ken Kyung Sunoo

Wisconsin

Baraboo – St. Paul's English Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA), $39,879
Steven Ohrtman and Deborah Ohrtman

Milwaukee – St. Hyacinth Congregation (PCUSA), $31,980
Robert X. Stiefvater