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Lilly Endowment Makes Grants to Address Economic Challenges Facing Pastoral Leaders Nationwide

INDIANAPOLIS – Lilly Endowment Inc. has made grants to benefit 28 organizations totaling more than \$28 million in its National Initiative to Address Economic Challenges Facing Pastoral Leaders. These grants are to a variety of organizations across the nation that will help pastoral leaders develop stronger financial literacy skills and provide direct aid to help them reduce or eliminate education debt, participate in pension programs, pay off extraordinary medical bills, and to address other financial challenges.

“Pastors, especially those just beginning in ministry, accept low salaries as part of their commitment to God and to church. Many enter ministry with significant educational debt from their undergraduate and seminary years and often have little financial resiliency when financial emergencies arise,” said Dr. Christopher L. Coble, vice president for religion at the Endowment.

The grants support a variety of church-related institutions: denominational pension and benefits boards; local and regional denomination judicatories, such as synods and dioceses; and denominational foundations. The institutions represent diverse Christian traditions, including Baptist, Catholic, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Church of God (Anderson), Episcopal, Independent Christian Churches/Churches of Christ, Lutheran, Mennonite, United Methodist, Presbyterian, Reformed and Wesleyan churches, as well as nondenominational and historic African-American Christian communities.

“These organizations understand that these kinds of financial challenges can impair the ability of pastors to lead their congregations effectively. They recognize the importance of the financial well-being of pastors and the implications for the congregations they serve,” Coble added.

Each program is customized to the needs of pastoral leaders in each religious tradition, but the programs have much in common as they:

- provide incentives for clergy to take part in personal financial education

- offer low-cost or no-cost financial planning and counseling for pastors and their families
- match contributions for pastors and congregations that enroll in pension savings programs
- help pastors create emergency funds
- develop strategies that help young pastors pay down or eliminate educational debt
- create new scholarships so that seminarians borrow less while in school

An additional grant to the Indianapolis Center for Congregations will establish a coordination program for the initiative that will help the Endowment track success. It will bring together leaders of the diverse programs to foster mutual learning and support and help build a network of organizations committed to supporting the financial well-being of pastors and their congregations.

The initiative is part of the Endowment’s commitment to support and strengthen pastoral leadership in Christian congregations across the United States.

For nearly two decades, the Endowment has been funding efforts that help religious organizations understand the economic challenges facing pastors and begin to address them. In 2007, the Endowment launched the Initiative to Address Economic Challenges Facing Indiana Pastors. Grants to regional denominational offices serving congregations led to the development of Ministerial Excellence Funds to help alleviate financial stress on pastors. In addition, the grants inspired judicatories to create financial planning and counseling programs for clergy and education offerings to help pastors better understand financial management issues.

In 2012, the Endowment made grants to 67 seminaries across the country to help the schools reduce educational debt and promote financial literacy among students preparing for ministry. Many seminaries have devised programs to lessen the educational debt of seminarians. In addition, the schools are raising awareness about the financial cost of preparing a new generation of outstanding pastoral leaders.

“The National Initiative to Address Economic Challenges Facing Pastoral Leaders will build on the momentum of these earlier initiatives,” Coble said. “It is our hope that it will generate a larger national movement among church-related organizations to address the significant economic barriers that discourage young people from pursuing calls to pastoral leadership and weaken the ability of pastors to lead congregations effectively.”

The Endowment has made grants to the following organizations in connection with the National Initiative to Address Economic Challenges Facing Pastoral Leaders:

American Baptist Home Missions, Valley Forge, PA

Catholic Archdiocese of Indianapolis, Indianapolis, IN

Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (USA), Philadelphia, PA

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana, Indianapolis, IN

Church of God Ministries Inc., Anderson, IN

Cincinnati Christian University, Cincinnati, OH

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Inc., Decatur, GA

Episcopal Church Foundation, New York, NY

Episcopal Diocese of Indianapolis, Indianapolis, IN

Evangelical Covenant Church, Chicago, IL

Evangelical Council on Financial Accountability, Winchester, VA

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Chicago, IL

General Board of Pension and Health Benefits of the United Methodist Church,
Glenview, IL

General Synod Council of the Reformed Church in America, Grand Rapids, MI

Indiana University Foundation (for the Lake Institute on Faith & Giving),
Indianapolis, IN

Indianapolis Center for Congregations, Indianapolis, IN

Leadership Network, Dallas, TX

Mennonite Foundation Inc., Goshen, IN

Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board of the American Baptist Churches, USA,
New York, NY

Missouri United Methodist Foundation Inc., Columbia, MO

National Association of Evangelicals, Washington, D.C.

National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management, Washington, DC

Pension Fund of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Indianapolis, IN

Presbyterian Church (USA) Foundation, Jeffersonville, IN

Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference Inc., Chicago, IL

**Southwestern Minnesota Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,
(in cooperation with the New Jersey Synod), Redwood Falls, MN**

Wesleyan Church, Fishers, IN

About Lilly Endowment Inc.

Lilly Endowment Inc. is an Indianapolis-based private philanthropic foundation created in 1937 by three members of the Lilly family - J.K. Lilly Sr. and sons J.K. Jr. and Eli - through gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical business, Eli Lilly & Company. The Endowment exists to support the causes of religion, education and community development. Lilly Endowment's religion grantmaking is designed to deepen and enrich the religious lives of American Christians. It does this largely through initiatives to enhance and sustain the quality of ministry in American congregations and parishes.