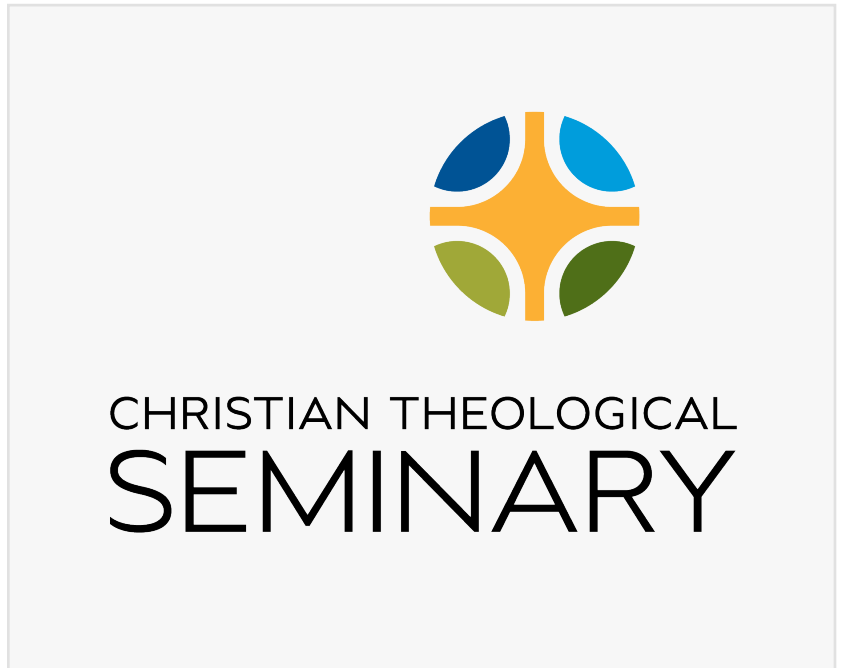


Christian Theological Seminary Receives Grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. to Nurture and Form Ministry Leaders

Christian Theological Seminary Receives Grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. to Help Establish Bible Storytelling Program to Nurture and Form Ministry Leaders

INDIANAPOLIS, IN, UNITED STATES, October 16, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Christian Theological Seminary has received a \$909,871 grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. to help establish Growing in God's Word: A Child-Centered Bible Storytelling Initiative. This praxis-oriented certificate program is designed to nurture and form ministry leaders – both lay and professional - committed to creating opportunities for theologically sound, creative, and meaningful Bible storytelling.



The program is funded through Lilly Endowment's Nurturing Children Through Worship and Prayer Initiative, a national initiative designed to help Christian congregations more fully and intentionally engage children in intergenerational corporate worship and prayer practices.

Through the Nurturing Children Through Worship and Prayer Initiative, Lilly Endowment has committed to supporting little children to come to know and love God through Jesus. Ultimately, however, it is not sufficient for children alone to come closer to God in their worship life. Jesus' call and the church's mission is for all of God's children—young and old. Support for children to live into Christ's call to care for God's Kingdom requires adults to understand children at the center of Christian ministry and worship life. To achieve this, a paradigm shift is necessary to put little children at the center of each Christian community's proclamation. It is our strong belief that such a shift will strengthen and reignite the kind of multigenerational faith to which Jesus was calling his disciples.

As an ecumenically minded and biblically rooted seminary, Christian Theological Seminary is uniquely suited to lead this paradigm shift. Our related Schools of Theology and Counseling already train students to attend to the whole lives of people—including the physical,



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Christopher L. Coble, Lilly Endowment Inc.

developmental, emotional, and spiritual growth of children.

We are therefore excited to to nurture and form ministers committed to creating opportunities for theologically sound, creative, and meaningful Bible storytelling. Although great care is often taken in the theological education of older youth and adults, too frequently children’s Bible stories for the youngest Christians are chosen for their sensorial appeal rather than substantive content or spiritual development. As an alternative, we have developed a praxis-oriented certificate program in Child-Centered Biblical Storytelling for both ministry

leaders—both lay and professional—who are committed to nurturing children in their faith.

Relying on proven cohort-based learning strategies, this program seeks to increase the confidence and competency of faith leaders in selecting and presenting Bible stories to children. At the conclusion of the cohort-based workshops, the program will connect these same leaders with ministry mentors to implement a child-centered biblical storytelling practice that is contextually and theologically appropriate to their primary service of worship. By integrating children more fully into the central worship life of their faith communities, this program hopes to achieve the flourishing of multigenerational faith relationships and spiritual growth.

“I’m excited about this program because it gives us an exciting opportunity to really use our resources as a seminary in a new way to benefit the excellent ministry going on in churches for and with children,” shares Rev. Amy Lindeman Allen, PhD, who was integral in developing the initiative and will serve as program leader at CTS. “Supporting the faith lives of children through solid biblical and theological praxis is an ongoing passion of mine. There is such joy when I get to experience a child hearing the Gospel for the first time, and even more joy when I get to experience them reading and living the same Gospel. Lilly Endowment’s generosity will help us to harness these passions and excitements as we support faith communities and their leaders in living into Christ’s call not only to welcome the little children, but to come alongside them with the care and reverence due to all co-creators in God’s inclusive realm.”

Christian Theological Seminary is one of 91 organizations receiving funding through the latest round of the initiative. The recipients represent and serve congregations in a broad spectrum of Christian traditions, including Catholic, mainline Protestant, evangelical, Orthodox, Anabaptist and Pentecostal faith communities. Several organizations are rooted in Black Church and Hispanic and Asian American Christian traditions.

“Congregational worship and prayer play a critical role in the spiritual growth of children and offer settings for children to acquire the language of faith, learn their faith traditions and

experience the love of God as part of a supportive community,” said Christopher L. Coble, Lilly Endowment’s vice president for religion. “These programs will help congregations give greater attention to children and how they can more intentionally nurture the faith of children, as well as adults, through worship and prayer.”

[About Lilly Endowment Inc.](#)

Lilly Endowment Inc. is a private philanthropic foundation created in 1937 by J.K. Lilly Sr. and his sons Eli and J.K. Jr. through gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical business, Eli Lilly and Company. While those gifts remain the financial bedrock of the Endowment, it is a separate entity from the company, with a distinct governing board, staff and location. In keeping with the founders’ wishes, the Endowment supports the causes of community development, education and religion and maintains a special commitment to its hometown, Indianapolis, and home state, Indiana. The principal aim of the Endowment’s religion grantmaking is to deepen and enrich the lives of Christians in the United States, primarily by seeking out and supporting efforts that enhance the vitality of congregations and strengthen the pastoral and lay leadership of Christian communities. The Endowment also seeks to improve public understanding of diverse religious traditions by supporting fair and accurate portrayals of the role religion plays in the United States and across the globe.

[About Christian Theological Seminary](#)

Christian Theological Seminary (CTS) – a fully-accredited ecumenical graduate school open to all with historic roots in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) – celebrates its 100th anniversary during the 2024-2025 academic year. Throughout the last century, CTS has dedicated itself to theological and counseling education, social justice, and community leadership. CTS offers graduate degree programs through its School of Theology and School of Counseling, accessible mental health services through the Counseling Center, and collaboration to address systemic social justice issues through the Faith & Action Project. Through four centennial events this year, CTS will continue to bear witness to God’s liberative, restorative, and life-affirming message.

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