

# Christian Theological Seminary Announces 233 Congregations Awarded Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Program Grants in 2025

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*Grants help congregations honor and support pastors by enabling them to experience period of renewal and revitalization.*

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These grants help congregations honor their pastors for extraordinary service...”

*Christopher L. Coble, Lilly Endowment*

Theological Seminary, an ecumenical seminary based in Indianapolis, today announces 233 congregations from across the United States have been selected to receive grants through the Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Program for Indiana Congregations and the Lilly Endowment National Clergy Renewal Program. The grants help congregations honor and support their pastors by enabling them to experience either one extended period or multiple shorter periods of renewal and revitalization.

The clergy who benefit from these grants pursue activities unique to their interests that encourage them to refresh and experience deep joy through travel, scholarly research, or immersive experiences with different cultures and traditions.

“Pastors play such important roles in nurturing the spiritual lives of individuals and families and guiding the ministries of congregations,” said Christopher L. Coble, Lilly Endowment’s vice president for religion. “Yet the demands of ministry can seem relentless. We hope that these grants help congregations honor their pastors for their extraordinary service and support them with the time and other resources to step away for rest and renewal so they can return to their congregations reenergized.”

Congregations in the 2025 programs represent the broad spectrum of Christian traditions, including Roman Catholic and Orthodox parishes and congregations from 28 Protestant denominations. In harmony with the spirit of these programs, congregations and their pastors collaborated to craft plans designed to renew pastors physically and spiritually and energize them in their ministry.

Pastors plan to use grant funds in support of domestic and international travel. For example, one pastor will worship in European churches with historical significance in Geneva, Barcelona,

and Monserrat. Another pastor will travel with their spouse and children to India to reconnect with family, nurture their creative life, and learn about furniture painting. Yet another pastor will take their family on a road trip across the United States via motor home to explore iconic landmarks and meaningful cities, plan projects together, and enjoy the journey at a leisurely pace.

In addition to travel as a form of renewal, some pastors will use time away from their congregations to engage in new spiritual disciplines, focus on time with loved ones, begin exercise and other new health regimens, engage in creative work, and explore topics that spark excitement for preaching, worship, and congregational life. Grants will also fund renewal activities for congregations while their pastors are away. These include opportunities to learn from local indigenous leaders around stewardship of regional waterways, to experience working with international students and an early immigrant settlement program, as well as to craft a family retreat focused on the life and work of Martin Luther.

Dr. Robert Saler, Director of the Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Programs at Christian Theological Seminary, noted that interest in the grant programs has grown significantly in recent years, with higher numbers of proposals leading to increased competitiveness.

"In these challenging and exciting times, we're watching the applicants and awardees of these programs expand the definition of what sabbatical can mean. Some pastors are stepping away to rest, while others are stepping away to devote themselves to other aspects of their ministry and their being. Our goal is that these programs supply congregations with the means to express appreciation for their leaders and actively invest in what reenergizes their pastors for long-term ministry," Saler said.

Since Lilly Endowment introduced the Clergy Renewal Program for Indiana Congregations and the National Clergy Renewal Program in 1999 and 2000 respectively, more than 4,526 congregations throughout the United States and in Puerto Rico have received grants in support of renewal experiences for their pastors.

In 2025, the combined Clergy Renewal Programs awarded grants totaling more than \$13 million. Congregations were invited to propose grants of up to \$60,000. The application process encourages active engagement between congregations and their pastors in designing and developing the renewal experiences. As part of the programs, pastors can include their families in the renewal experience. Congregations may budget up to \$20,000 of the maximum grant toward expenses for interim pastoral leadership, send-off and return celebrations, as well as activities designed for congregational renewal.

Christian Theological Seminary has administered the Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Programs since 2012. "Amidst all the rigors of ministry in a changing world, these grants enable pastors and their congregations to actively partake in the gifts of renewal and revitalization that are so needed today," Saler said.

Please download the [full list of recipients](#) or visit [www.lillyendowment.org](http://www.lillyendowment.org).

#### About Lilly Endowment Inc.

Lilly Endowment Inc. is a private 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. Although the Endowment funds programs throughout the United States, especially in the field of religion, it maintains a special commitment to its founders' hometown, Indianapolis, and home state, Indiana. A 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. Additional information about Lilly Endowment is available at [lillyendowment.org](http://lillyendowment.org).

#### 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), celebrated its 100th anniversary during the 2024-2025 academic year. CTS offers masters and doctoral 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.

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