

Christian Theological Seminary Announces 255 Congregations Awarded Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Program Grants

More than 250 congregations across the United States selected to receive grants through the Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Program

INDIANAPOLIS, IN, UNITED STATES, October 28, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Christian Theological Seminary, an ecumenical seminary based in Indianapolis, today announces 255 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.

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“The pastors who lead congregations throughout the nation play important roles in guiding the ministries of their faith communities and in nurturing the spiritual lives of individuals and families, but the demands of ministry can seem never ending,” said Christopher L. Coble, Lilly Endowment’s vice president for religion. “We hope that these grants to congregations will help them honor their pastors for exemplary service and provide them with the time and other resources for renewal and rest so they can come home to their congregations reenergized.”

Congregations in the 2026 programs represent the broad spectrum of Christian traditions, including Roman Catholic and Orthodox parishes, congregations from 28 Protestant denominations, as well as independent and non-denominational congregations. 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 hike and cycle with family in Denali National Park as well as in Japan. Another pastor will travel with family to a parent's country of origin in Argentina, visiting with extended family, connecting with heritage, and participating in a language immersion camp. Yet another pastor will take family camping in some of the United States' national parks, disconnecting from distractions and reconnecting with each other.

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 deepen practices of shared leadership and mutual care, participate in intentional community engagement experiences along the Tijuana/San Diego border, and craft activities exploring spiritual heritage and supporting intergenerational connection.

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.

"We are deeply aware that every application we receive not only represents a pastor seeking renewal, but a congregation ready to support its pastor in this way. We find that very encouraging," 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 4,781 congregations throughout the United States and in Puerto Rico have received grants in support of renewal experiences for their pastors.

In 2026, the combined Clergy Renewal Programs awarded grants totaling more than \$14 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.

For a complete list of recipients, visit: <https://www.cts.edu/category/clergy-renewal-program/> or 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.

[About Christian Theological Seminary](#)

Christian Theological Seminary (CTS) is an ecumenical seminary rooted in the Christian tradition and committed to developing leaders for the church and society. Through theological education, counseling, community engagement, and innovative initiatives, CTS equips individuals and communities to address the pressing challenges of the world with faith, wisdom, and courage.

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