



Contact: Gretchen Wolfram
317/916-7304
317/255-2640 (home)

Embargoed for release
until Tuesday, Nov. 25, 2003

117 congregations receive Lilly Endowment grants in National Clergy Renewal Program

More than 100 congregations across the United States will receive grants that will allow them to support their pastors' sabbatical programs – and improve their congregational life at the same time. The 117 congregations and their pastors are participants in the 2003 National Clergy Renewal Program funded by Indianapolis-based Lilly Endowment Inc. With grants ranging from \$11,694 to \$45,000, the total amount of the awards is \$4,492,316.

“This is the fourth round of this program, and we are more than pleased with the results,” said Craig Dykstra, the Endowment vice president for religion. “Pastors and congregations from previous years have let us know how much these sabbaticals have meant to them and their congregations. They give pastors – many of whom have never had a sabbatical – time to take an extended leave to explore scholarly pursuits, strengthen family ties, see the sites of early Christianity, experience totally new environments, visit other churches, write, read, and renew neglected spiritual disciplines.

“Meanwhile the congregations back home are engaged in activities that often mirror their pastor's work, such as learning more about their own denomination, studying

(more)

National Clergy Renewal Program
Add 1

how similar congregations have overcome challenges they may be facing, and concentrating on building their spiritual life. The activities are as varied as the churches themselves,” Dykstra said.

The congregations represent 16 denominations scattered across 33 states and the District of Columbia. California has the most, with 12. Two states – Hawaii and Nevada – make their debut in the program with this round. (The Endowment administers a separate program for Indiana congregations.) In the program each congregation may apply for as much as \$45,000, up to \$15,000 of which may be used to help the congregation to fulfill pastoral duties during the pastor’s absence and support programs aimed at congregational renewal.

The size of the congregations ranges from the 51 members of the Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Shoreview, Minn., to the 5,800-member St. Joseph’s Catholic Church in Babylon, N.Y.

“Many people do not realize how intense a pastor’s life can be,” Dykstra said. “He or she fills many roles – preacher and worship leader, confidant, friend, counselor, spiritual guide, personnel director, community leader, fund-raiser – that can become overwhelming. These sabbaticals are intended to be planned, focused times away that will help them renew their spirits and energy so they can return to the church reinvigorated mentally and physically. The renewal programs offer them a chance to reconnect with the spiritual wellsprings that led them to the ministry in the first place. Their congregations, of course, are the beneficiaries of that renewed energy. Indeed, the congregations – while the pastors are away – eagerly step up to the plate and ‘fill in’ whenever and wherever they are needed. They are genuinely fond of their pastors and want to keep them around.”

Far-away places – Bahir Dar and Lake Tana, Dejen, Gonder, Addis Ababa, Fasil Ghebbi, Church of Debre Birhan Selassie, Simiens Mountains National Park, Axum,

(more)

National Clergy Renewal Program
Add 2

Lalibela (all in Ethiopia) and Mumbai, Kochi, Mattancherry, Allepey, Kumarakom, Thekkady, Munnar, Periyar Lake, Kottayam, Thiruvananthapuram, Madurai, Tiruchirapalli, Bangladore, Chennai (all in India) – await the arrival of the Rev. Eric E. Elnes, pastor of the Scottsdale (Ariz.) Congregational United Church of Christ, and his family.

Elnes chose such locales because he wishes to experience Christian worship and spiritual practices in two very different, non-Western contexts: northern Ethiopia and southern India. He hopes to gain a broader and deeper perspective on the nature of worship itself, as well as the disciplines of prayer and meditation.

Upon their return to the U.S. and before returning to their home and work, Elnes and his family will spend three weeks together at a family cabin in Oregon – no telephones, no video games, no television, no newspapers – to rest and reflect on and absorb all they have seen and learned.

In his 8-year tenure at Scottsdale Congregational, worship for Elnes' 286-member congregation has expanded to two services, one even more "traditional" than before and one called "the Studio," which has gained recognition for its use of the arts and digital media to create a special worship that is at once ancient and contemporary. Educational programs for all ages have grown, five "oasis groups" (a small-group ministry) have grown to 20, and they have started a jazz coffeehouse ministry. Like the other ministers in the clergy renewal program, Elnes believes his plans will provide him with a fresh perspective to maintain his own energy and the enthusiasm of his vibrant congregation.

The Rev. James F. Hurlbert is pastor of St. Alphonsus Church, a 1,600-family parish in Chicago. Since he arrived in 1999, the parish has grown and developed at "breakneck speed," increased staff and completed a major capital stewardship campaign to restore the 177-year-old church. The mission of the parish school has emerged as a Catholic "magnet school," with a focus on the fine arts. He also has overseen a major

(more)

National Clergy Renewal Program
Add 3

renovation of the rectory and parish center and spearheaded a complicated purchase of property for more parking.

Hurlbert, with the fulsome blessing of his congregation, plans a European trip next summer and early fall, starting with a two-week retreat at a Jesuit retreat house in La Coruna, Spain. He will make the famous pilgrimage to Santiago (St. James is his patron saint) and spend a month at a Spanish language school in Seville. He celebrates the Spanish Mass at St. Alphonsus, but wants to improve his skills in the language.

After Spain comes Germany – Essen, Erlangen and Munich – to renew friendships from when he studied in Erlangen in the 1980s. (Hurlbert also presides at a weekly German Mass at St. Alphonsus, the only Catholic parish in the archdiocese that offers one.) Then it's down to southern Italy to visit Naples, home of St. Alphonsus Ligouri, who founded the Redemptorist religious order in 1732 to minister to those “left behind.” He trusts the visit will enable him to tell his parishioners more about the life of the parish's namesake. He will return in October to visit family members in Detroit and reflect on his experiences before returning to his pastoral duties.

Discerning the meaning of the word “neighbor” and the biblical charge to “love thy neighbor” will attract the attention of the Rev. LaVerne McCain Gill and her 200-member congregation at the Webster United Church of Christ in Dexter, Mich. When McGill arrived at the Webster church in 1999, she was the first woman and African American to lead this church in a town near Ann Arbor that is rapidly becoming suburbanized.

Her congregation sees this renewal period as time to learn how to understand “neighbor” in this post-9/11 world, what it means to welcome the “neighbor” into the church and what it means to love the “neighbor.” Gill will also enjoy the three-month hiatus as a time for renewing family ties with her husband, a professor in the Washington, D.C., area. He and Gill have endured a “bi-state” marriage since she came to Dexter.

(more)

National Clergy Renewal Program
Add 4

They will take the first month to be together out of the country – at the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, Switzerland. She will participate in two seminars, one on music and worship and another on race and racism. She also will go on a directed spiritual retreat.

The second month will find the couple in Princeton, N.J. She received her master of divinity degree at Princeton Seminary, and he is a member of the Institute for Advanced Studies, which is also located there. Gill will work with her former homiletics professor on a research project as she transcribes selected sermons from her five-year Webster ministry. (One result might be a monograph on cross-cultural preaching.) The Gills will return to the family home in Reston, Va., for the third sabbatical month – a time to reconnect with friends, colleagues and family and ponder with new insights the meaning of “neighbor.”

In Henderson, Ky., the Rev. Gordon L. Morrison and his wife, Lynda, are putting the final touches on their plans for a 2 1/2-month renewal experience supported by St. Paul's Episcopal Church. The 410-member congregation of the 200-year-old church believes that it may become a model for positive relations among Christians and Muslims. The 9/11 experience proved to be a catalyst for Morrison and his congregation to learn more about Islam and their Muslim neighbors. Groups from the congregation have supported an Arab restaurateur and helped women of the Islamic Center sell their international cookbook to raise funds.

Early in the summer, Morrison will spend a week in Washington at the National Islamic Center, then travel to the United Kingdom where his wife will join him. They will be in Bosnia together for a week, and then travel to Syria for a 10-day stay with their son who lives in Damascus. They will head from there to Singapore and Australia and return to the U.S. with a stop in Los Angeles. Before returning to Henderson, they will pause for four days at St. Mary's Convent in Sewanee, Tenn.

(more)

National Clergy Renewal Program
Add 5

Neither of the Morrisons is a stranger to the Middle East. After graduating from college, both were Peace Corps volunteers. After they were married, they went to Iran as Episcopal lay missionaries and served the church in short-term situations in the Persian Gulf.

The 113 other stories in the National Clergy Renewal Program are just as intriguing as these four. All share a well-thought-out strategy to renew themselves and their congregations through travel, reflection, study and recreation. All share the active support of their congregations who anticipate receiving periodic e-mails from their roving, reflecting, reenergizing ministers.

The “Class of 2003” joins 382 predecessors in the program. “Every class reports wonderful stories to us,” said Dykstra. “The pastors and their families have cherished these opportunities for renewal, refreshment and creative new experiences. And the congregations learn that they have the talent and ability to step up in their pastor’s absence. It makes for a very nice win-win situation.

“The Endowment’s major goal is to honor and support the work that America’s pastors and their congregations accomplish day in and day out. In our religion grantmaking, we hope to strengthen the efforts of today’s excellent pastors, because we know that renewed pastors are more likely to lead healthy and vibrant congregations,” Dykstra said.

Addendum: Complete list of recipients in the 2003 National Clergy Renewal Program.

National Clergy Renewal Program/2003

117 Grants

Alabama

Birmingham – Southside Baptist Church, \$35,862
James Stephen Jones

Arizona

Holbrook – St. George's Episcopal Church, \$29,743
Samuel O. Hosler

Scottsdale – Scottsdale Congregational United Church of Christ, \$45,000
Eric Eugene Elnes

California

Carmel – Unitarian Universalist Church of the Monterey Peninsula, \$39,522
Elizabeth L. Miller

Carmel Valley – Carmel Valley Community Chapel (United Church of Christ),
\$45,000
Rick A. Yramategui

Downey – First Baptist Church of Downey (American Baptist Church), \$44,995
Donald Dean Burgess

Fremont – Centerville Presbyterian Church (PCUSA), \$44,932
Greg A. Roth

North Hollywood – St. Patrick Roman Catholic Parish, \$29,563
Gregory C. King

Redlands – Bethany Reformed Church of Redlands, California (Reformed Church
in America), \$35,805
Leon Royce Fikse

Redlands – Trinity Evangelical Free Church, \$11,694
Richard Langer

San Carlos – Trinity Presbyterian Church (PCUSA), \$44,865
Mary Gail Graves

San Diego – Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America [ELCA]), \$31,702
David C. Nagler

Santa Cruz – Holy Cross Catholic Church, \$44,980
Mark Stetz

Trabuco Canyon – Trabuco Presbyterian Church (PCUSA), \$45,000
Craig Sinclair Williams

Walnut Creek – Shell Ridge Community Church (American Baptist Community Church), \$37,044
Gregory H. Ledbetter

Colorado

Colorado Springs – First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), \$42,868
Gaylord Eugene Hatler

Golden – Calvary Episcopal Church, \$37,481
John H. Wengrovius

Connecticut

Salisbury – St. John's Episcopal Church, \$37,848
John Franklin Carter

District of Columbia

Washington – St. James' Episcopal Church, \$31,977
Richard E. Downing

Florida

Fernandina Beach – St. Peter's Episcopal Church, \$33,995
George D. Young III

Fort Myers – Iona-Hope Episcopal Church, \$31,920
John Stuart Adler

Jacksonville – Episcopal Church of Our Saviour, \$40,134
John R. Polarine

Lecanto – St. Michael the Archangel Greek Orthodox Church, \$41,440
Nicholas Samaras

Marco Island – St. Mark's Episcopal Church, \$44,025
John Fleming McCard

Hawaii

Honolulu – Church of the Crossroads (United Church of Christ), \$37,187
Donald Neal MacPherson

Illinois

Chicago – Church of Our Saviour (Episcopal), \$26,988
Linda A. Packard

Chicago – Queen of All Saints Basilica (Roman Catholic), \$44,945
Wayne F. Prist

Chicago – St. Alphonsus Church (Roman Catholic), \$44,560
James F. Hurlbert

Chicago – St. Nicholas of Tolentine Parish (Roman Catholic), \$39,967
Stanley G. Rataj

Evanston – Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA), \$35,000
Frank Colvin Senn

Evanston – St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, \$45,000
Jane P. Henderson

Lombard – Lombard Mennonite Church, \$32,540
Todd Friesen

Pekin – First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), \$34,605
Robert N. Brite Jr.

Iowa

Marion – Marion Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), \$35,488
Robert A. Kunz

Kansas

Manhattan – First Baptist Church (American Baptist Church), \$38,526
Alan Dee Selig and Karen Ann Selig

Parsons – First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), \$43,327
Mark W. Young

Kentucky

Henderson – St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, \$42,955
Gordon Lee Morrison

Louisville – Central Presbyterian Church (PCUSA), \$44,835
Ann Jolene Deibert

Louisville – Highland Baptist Church (Kentucky Baptist Convention), \$27,647
Joseph Owen Phelps

Louisville – St. Rita Church—Hispanic Ministry of the Archdiocese of
Louisville, Ky. (Roman Catholic), \$44,495
Thomas A. Smith

Louisiana

Mandeville – St. Michael’s Episcopal Church, \$39,115
Roy G. Pollina

Maine

Camden – St. Thomas’ Episcopal Church, \$36,145
Michael Gordon Rowe

Kennebunk – St. David’s Episcopal Church, \$20,965
Daniel John Riggall

Maryland

Silver Spring – Church of the Good Shepherd (Episcopal), \$38,029
Patricia Steinecke Downing

Timonium – Vestry of Epiphany Church, Dulaney Valley (Episcopal), \$39,035
Kathryn Annemarie Reardon Wajda

Massachusetts

Acton – Church of the Good Shepherd (Episcopal), \$45,000
Elisabeth Gale Davis Morris

Amherst – First Congregational Church of Amherst (United Church of Christ),
\$33,852
Margaret Stearn

Holliston – St. Michael's Episcopal Church, \$36,969
Christine Ruth Whittaker

Wellesley – Wellesley Congregational Church (United Church of Christ), \$44,870
Martin B. Copenhaver

West Barnstable – West Parish of Barnstable (United Church of Christ), \$39,777
Robert Reed Baer

West Boxford – Second Congregational Church of Boxford (United Church of
Christ), \$28,386
Jeanne Wynne Marechal

Michigan

Battle Creek – Central Christian Church (Independent Christian), \$32,316
Gordon W. Pippin

Dexter – Webster United Church of Christ, \$44,474
LaVerne McCain Gill

Grand Rapids – First United Methodist Church, \$44,669
Gary Thomas Haller

Grand Rapids – Thornapple Community Church (Reformed Church in America),
\$31,723
Paul David Wesselink

Kalamazoo – First United Methodist Church, \$42,611
Douglas Wendell Vernon

Minnesota

Brooklyn Center – Korean Presbyterian Church, \$45,000
Jin Sung Kim

Detroit Lakes – First Lutheran Church (ELCA), \$26,532
David Gordon Peterson

Mankato – St. Joseph the Worker Church and Holy Family Parish (Roman Catholic), \$37,896
John Patrick Wilmot

Minneapolis – Grace University Lutheran Church (ELCA), \$32,345
Mary Ruth Halvorson

Shoreview – Emmanuel Mennonite Church, \$42,975
Mathew Swora

Stillwater – Our Savior's Lutheran Church (ELCA), \$34,786
Steven H. Molin

Missouri

Florissant – Zion United Church of Christ, \$39,887
Mark M. Milligan

Kansas City – Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church (PCUSA), \$45,000
James Edward Gordon

Kansas City – Westport Presbyterian Church (PCUSA), \$39,539
Scott W. Myers

Webster Groves – Cornerstone Evangelical Free Church, \$44,189
John Wesley Richardson

Nebraska

Omaha – First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), \$40,732
Richard W. Jensen

Nevada

Carson City – St. Peter's Church & Parish (Episcopal), \$45,000
Jeffrey Donald Paul

New Jersey

Collingswood – Collingswood Church of Christ (Independent Christian), \$41,452
Mark Kevin Finn

Point Pleasant Beach – Point Pleasant Presbyterian Church (PCUSA), \$27,323
Carlos E. Wilton

New York

Babylon – St. Joseph’s Church (Roman Catholic), \$33,400
John J. Barrett

Elmhurst – New Life Fellowship, Iglesia Nueva Vida (Christian and Missionary Alliance), \$42,610
Peter Louis Scazzero

Grand Island – St. Martin-in-the-Fields Episcopal Church, \$15,493
Earle Cochran King Jr.

Hyde Park – St. James’ Episcopal Church, \$29,460
Charles E. Kramer

Schenectady – St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church, \$43,756
James Ross Brooks-McDonald

Scotia – Scotia United Methodist Church, \$37,479
Janice McClary Rowell

North Carolina

Charlotte – First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), \$44,895
Jolin Rai Wilks

Durham – Calvary United Methodist Church, \$45,000
Laurie Hays Coffman

Fletcher – Calvary Episcopal Church, \$36,820
Victor C. Mansfield

Goldsboro – First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), \$45,000
Frederick William Clarke

Greenville – Oakmont Baptist Church (Cooperative Baptist Fellowship), \$40,977
Gregory Paul Rogers

Raleigh – St. Michael’s Episcopal Church, \$40,716
Claudia A. Dickson

Weaverville – First Baptist Church, \$30,666
James L. McCoy Jr.

Wilmington – First Baptist Church of Wilmington (Cooperative Baptist Fellowship), \$35,340
Michael G. Queen

North Dakota

Williston – Church of St. Joseph-Williston (Reformed Church in America), \$24,605
John G. Guthrie

Ohio

Cincinnati – York Street United Methodist Church, \$45,000
Vanessa K. Allen-Brown

Columbus – First Congregational Church (United Church of Christ), \$44,888
Timothy C. Ahrens

Mount Vernon – First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), \$44,988
James N. Gump Jr.

South Charleston – Plattsburg United Church of Christ, \$39,080
Jacoba Margaret Koppert

Sylvania – Sylvania United Church of Christ, \$41,175
William H. Chidester

West Chester – St. Anne Episcopal Church, \$44,050
James Thomas Wray

Oregon

Dallas – Dallas United Methodist Church, \$42,800
Gwendolyn Muriel Drake

Salem – Our Savior's Lutheran Church (ELCA), \$40,900
Thomas Jack Hux

Pennsylvania

Hatboro – Church of the Advent (Episcopal), \$41,469
Robin Pierce Martin

Lancaster – First Presbyterian Church (PCUSA), \$36,590
Randolph T. Riggs

Latrobe – Christ United Church of Christ, \$40,215
Wayne D. Sautter

Moon Township – St. Philip’s Episcopal Church, \$45,000
Eric Jon Taylor

Norristown – Calvary Baptist Church (American Baptist Church), \$43,103
L. Kim Egolf-Fox

Philadelphia – Presbyterian Church of Chestnut Hill (PCUSA), \$39,510
Cynthia Ann Jarvis

Spring Grove – St. Peter’s Lischey’s United Church of Christ, \$45,000
Wilbur Arthur Grahe

Rhode Island

Providence – Mathewson Street United Methodist Church, \$36,550
Jonathan Ralston Almond

Tennessee

Memphis – Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception (Roman Catholic), \$44,970
Valentine N. Handwerker

Texas

Granbury – Our Savior Lutheran Church (Lutheran Church/Missouri Synod),
\$44,980
John R. Austin

Lewisville – Round Grove United Church, United Church of Christ, \$31,530
Byron Stephen Wells

McAllen – First United Methodist Church, \$43,295
Robert C. Schnase

San Antonio – Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church (Lutheran Church/Missouri
Synod), \$43,372
Daniel G. Mueller

Virginia

Alexandria – Church of the Resurrection (Episcopal), \$31,604
Anne Gavin Ritchie

Alexandria – St. Aidan's Episcopal Church, \$42,379
John Marcus Baker

Fairfax Station – St. Peter's in the Woods Episcopal Church, \$20,232
Robert Douglas Koth

Waynesboro – Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA), \$45,000
Robert Flynn Humphrey

Washington

Chelan – Lake Chelan Lutheran Church (ELCA), \$43,215
Paul Kevin Palumbo

Federal Way – Community of Christ at St. Luke's (Lutheran Church/Missouri Synod), \$44,810
Victor Hippe

Lynnwood – Trinity Lutheran Church (ELCA), \$45,000
Mark H. Reitan

Vancouver – Messiah Lutheran Church (ELCA), \$36,861
Peter Charles Braafladt and Kathleen Marie Braafladt

Wisconsin

Brookfield – Ridgewood Baptist Church (North American Baptist Conference), \$36,990
Michael D. DeLong

Madison – Orchard Ridge United Church of Christ, \$40,215
Winton P.C. Boyd

Monticello – Zwingli United Church of Christ, \$17,648
Lawrence Howard Balleine