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Contact: Judith Cebula
317.916.7327 | cebulaj@lei.org

Lilly Endowment Launches National Initiative to Help Clergy Thrive in Congregational Ministry

INDIANAPOLIS – Lilly Endowment Inc. is inviting organizations that support clergy to participate in a national competitive initiative to help pastors thrive as congregational leaders and in doing so enhance the vitality of the churches they serve.

The Thriving in Ministry Initiative is designed to encourage organizations to create or strengthen programs that support pastors by helping them build relationships with other clergy who can serve as role models and mentors and guide them through key leadership challenges in congregational ministry.

“Through our grantmaking, we often hear from pastors about the complex demands of congregational leadership,” said Christopher L. Coble, the Endowment’s vice president for religion. “Many of these pastors express a longing for wise colleagues, mentors and role models who can offer guidance and support during challenging transitions in ministry. We hope that the Thriving in Ministry Initiative will support new efforts to help clergy grow stronger in ministry so they can lead their congregations more effectively.”

Interested charitable organizations in the United States may submit proposals for up to \$1 million that may be used for up to a five-year period to plan and implement programs that help pastors thrive in their pastoral leadership of congregations. The Endowment anticipates making approximately 30 grants through this national competitive initiative.

These grants will build on an earlier round of grants to 24 organizations across the nation. This competitive round is intended to expand the number of organizations striving to help clergy in congregational ministry.

While the Endowment is interested in supporting a variety of approaches through the initiative, it is especially interested in supporting efforts that: 1) attend to the key professional transitions in a pastor’s career, and/or 2) focus on challenges posed by particular ministry contexts. These could include programs for new pastors in their first

few years of ministry; programs for mid-career pastors moving into new ministry contexts for the first time; or programs for pastors facing unique challenges that arise within their specific congregational settings, such as pastors starting new churches or clergy moving from an urban church to a rural church.

“We are looking to organizations that understand the demands placed on pastors today and are in touch with the concerns that keep pastors awake at night,” Coble said. “We look forward to hearing from organizations whose leaders are committed to strengthening pastoral leadership.”

The Endowment anticipates receiving proposals from a variety of charitable organizations that are committed to supporting pastors who work in congregations, including – but not limited to – seminaries, colleges and universities, retreat centers, denominational judicatories, faith-based agencies, and other religious organizations.

The Thriving in Ministry Initiative builds upon recent studies that have examined the importance of colleagues and mentors who help pastors face and overcome common professional and personal challenges. These studies include research from the Endowment-funded Flourishing in Ministry project, directed by Matt Bloom at the University of Notre Dame.

The [Request for Proposals](http://www.lillyendowment.org/religion/thrivinginministry.html) and more information about the initiative is available at www.lillyendowment.org/religion/thrivinginministry.html

Strengthening pastoral leadership in Christian congregations has been a grantmaking priority of the Endowment for nearly 25 years. Endowment-funded programs and initiatives have helped pastors make the critical transition from seminary student to pastoral leader; encouraged pastors to form peer learning groups for ongoing professional development and personal support; supported theological schools in their efforts to prepare seminarians to lead congregations; and provided grants to congregations to enable pastors to step away from the daily demands of pastoral leadership for a period of renewal.

About Lilly Endowment Inc.

Lilly Endowment Inc. is an Indianapolis-based, private philanthropic foundation created in 1937 by J. K. Lilly and his sons, J.K. Jr. and Eli, through gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical business, Eli Lilly and Company. While those gifts remain the financial bedrock of the Endowment, the Endowment 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.