



Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ

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The Illinois Conference UCC Receives Grant from Lilly Endowment, Inc.

It is with great excitement that we announce that the Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ has received a grant of \$1 million during five years to help establish a new program entitled “Thriving Pastors in Revitalizing Congregations.” It is part of Lilly Endowment Inc.’s Thriving in Ministry, an initiative that supports a variety of religious organizations across the nation as they create or strengthen programs that help pastors build relationships with experienced clergy who can serve as mentors and guide them through key leadership challenges in congregational ministry. The Endowment is making nearly \$70 million in grants through the Thriving in Ministry initiative.

The Illinois Conference’s new program focuses on pastors who fit one of three categories: new to ministry, bi-vocational, or serving a declining congregation. The program, designed for 45 selected pastors, will pair the pastors with trained coaches and provide participation in a Clergy Community of Practice group. In addition, 3 or 4 of the pastors’ lay leaders will also be involved to provide support and participate with the pastors in annual Summit Learning Events and cohort groups.

Not only will the 45 pastors and their churches be strengthened, the program provides for the training of the coaches and facilitators of the Clergy Community of Practice groups. The program will have an impact on many people! The program will begin in January 2019, at which time pastors and churches will receive further information about this special program and how to apply to participate.

“We know that pastors in congregations are faced with ever-increasing expectations of skills to assist congregations. Therefore, we are grateful for the generosity of Lilly Endowment that will allow us to impact ministry of pastors, allowing them to thrive and therefore encouraging the revitalization of their churches,” noted Acting Conference Minister, Rev. Char Burch.

The Illinois Conference is one of 78 organizations located in 29 states that is taking part in the initiative. The organizations reflect diverse Christian traditions: mainline and evangelical Protestant, Roman Catholic and Orthodox.

Thriving in Ministry is part of Lilly Endowment’s grantmaking to strengthen pastoral leadership in Christian congregations in the United States. This has been a grantmaking priority at Lilly Endowment for nearly 25 years.

“Leading a congregation today is multi-faceted and exceptionally demanding,” said Christopher L. Coble, Lilly Endowment’s vice president for religion. “When pastors have opportunities to build meaningful relationships with experienced colleagues, they are able to negotiate the challenges of ministry and their leadership thrives. These promising programs will help pastors develop these kinds of relationships, especially when they are in the midst of significant professional transitions.”

Lilly Endowment Inc. is an Indianapolis-based private philanthropic foundation created in 1937 by three members of the Lilly family - J.K. Lilly Sr. and sons Eli and J.K. Jr. - through gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical business, Eli Lilly & 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. The Endowment maintains a special commitment to its hometown, Indianapolis, and its home state Indiana. Its grantmaking in religion focuses on supporting efforts to strengthen the leadership and vitality of Christian congregations throughout the country and to increase the public’s understanding of the role of religion in public life.

God is Still Speaking 