

\$8 million grant renews, expands work of the Louisville Institute

Grant of \$8 million advances work with North American pastoral leaders, theological educators, religion scholars, seminaries and churches to foster vibrant and faithful Christian communities.

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Lilly Endowment Inc. has awarded a grant of almost \$8 million to Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary to continue the work of the Louisville Institute through 2015, as it begins a new phase of its mission. Generously supported by the Endowment since 1990, the Institute has been a national leader in the study of religion and support of pastors and church leaders in North America.

News of the grant was announced by Dr. Michael Jenkins, President of Louisville Seminary, and Dr. James Lewis, Executive Director of the Louisville Institute.

"This generous grant from Lilly Endowment will enable the Louisville Institute to build on its past strong work with pastors and academics in order to contribute in creative new ways to the vitality of theological education and church life in North America. Over the past twenty years, the Institute has supported a great deal of outstanding and influential religious scholarship. In the coming years, we will build on that legacy by deepening and extending collaboration among a growing network of scholars and pastors in order to enrich the lives of faith communities," stated Jenkins.

With renewed support, the Institute will connect theologically reflective pastors and ecclesially engaged academics to foster and nurture vibrant, faithful Christian communities. In particular, the grant will enable the Institute to:

- facilitate communities of sustained conversation and collaborative inquiry involving both pastors and academics;
- nurture a new generation of theologically reflective pastoral leaders; and
- identify and support a new generation of ecclesially engaged scholars for theological schools and colleges.

Two new initiatives will enhance the Institute's work beginning in 2013. First, building on its longstanding work at the intersection of church and academy, the new **Vocation of the Theological Educator Project** will initiate a partnership with seminaries and graduate schools to support sustained conversation, collegiality and companionship among new theological educators, senior scholar-educators and wise pastors. As a formation program for emerging seminary faculty, the Vocation of the Theological Educator Project will identify and nurture groups of advanced doctoral students and recent graduates who wish to develop their vocations as theological educators. Among other features, it will include a two-year postdoctoral fellowship program that will provide particularly promising recent graduates a two-year teaching internship in a theological school.

"Since the Louisville Institute has served in that creative space between the academy and the church for many years, we are eager to launch the Vocation of the Theological Educator Project. We believe it will become essential to the future of both," said Institute Board member Verity Jones, Director of the New Media Project at Union Theological Seminary.

Second, the Institute will support several 8-10 person **Collaborative Inquiry Teams** involving both scholars and pastors, who will undertake a three-year study project of importance for the church and the Christian way of life. By involving both groups at the outset, the Collaborative Inquiry Teams will make it possible for pastors and academics to bring their distinctive sensibilities and capacities to bear in a genuinely collegial way on an important common inquiry.

Because of the grant, “the Louisville Institute is able to continue providing support to pastors and scholars engaged in serious study for the sake of the church. And it can expand this commitment further by engaging young scholars in their early formation as theological educators. This will certainly help to close the gap between the seminary and the congregation,” added Board member Kathleen Cahalan, professor at St. John’s University’s School of Theology-Seminary.

Alongside these new initiatives, the Louisville Institute will continue to support pastors and ecclesially engaged scholars by means of a targeted program of grantmaking. The First Book Grant Program for Minority Scholars will assist pre-tenured minority scholars in seminaries and colleges, and the Dissertation Fellowship Program will support the final stage of doctoral work for even newer scholars. For academics and pastors engaged in serious scholarly inquiry of importance to the church, the Institute will offer its Project Grants and Sabbatical Grants for Researchers programs. In addition, the Institute will expand sharply the number of its Pastoral Study Project grants, enabling more grantees to share their wisdom on important issues concerning Christian life and practice.

According to Dr. Craig Dykstra, Lilly Endowment’s senior vice president for religion, “Seminaries and the churches need just the kind of new scholar-teachers the Louisville Institute proposes to convene and support in the years ahead. Both very much need the kind of collaboration the Institute encourages among talented pastors and scholar-teachers who care deeply about the church and the Christian way of life. Thus the Institute’s combined efforts constitute an invaluable resource for America’s churches.”

“The church in North America is living through one of the most complex and exciting periods in its history. To live as responsible disciples of Christ in the world, the church needs robust intellectual thinkers, teachers and preachers who can assist their communities in discerning what will expand and deepen our understanding of the gospel. Thanks to Lilly Endowment’s grant, the Louisville Institute will continue in its firm commitment to strengthening academic and ecclesial leaders in the church and to nurture a new generation of pastoral leaders and scholars who are addressing some of the most important dimensions of religious life today,” added Jinkins.

To learn more about the Louisville Institute or to receive information, please see the website: www.louisville-institute.org.

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