

The Louisville Institute Supports Pastoral Study and Collaborative Inquiry

September 21, 2011

Beginning in 2012 the Louisville Institute will expand its **Pastoral Study Project (PSP)** program from 15 to 24 grants per year. "Study projects may be independent or collaborative," notes Don Richter, the Institute's Associate Director. "With adequate time and support, scholarly pastors can develop and share their distinctive wisdom on important issues for Christian life and practice and thus extend their leadership in ways that can benefit the broader church and culture."

The PSP program complements the Institute's other research grant programs, which are often situated within academic contexts and calendars. Equally rigorous, the PSP privileges pastoral perspectives and rhythms, honoring grassroots research conducted by skilled, working clergy. PSP grantees may take their study leave as a single block of time or weave shorter periods of study into their normal schedule. The next application deadline for PSP proposals is September 1, 2012.

The Pastoral Study Project program continues the Louisville Institute's long-standing support for pastoral renewal through study. Through various grant initiatives, the Institute has encouraged pastors to cultivate their own scholarly voices in their own ministry contexts. The Institute is keenly interested in how pastors think, what they think about, and what their concerns are: How do pastors cultivate wisdom for sustaining a flourishing ministry? In what ways is the well-lived pastoral life nurtured through ongoing encounter with scripture, theology, tradition, and culture?

Fruitful study often requires collaboration, a community of practitioners encouraging and challenging one another, colleagues who engage in mutual exploration and sustained conversation. In the new grant period, the Institute also will support several 8-10 person **Collaborative Inquiry Teams** of pastors and academic scholars who together will undertake a three-year study project of importance for the church and for Christian discipleship. Participants in this learning cohort will sharpen one another's guiding questions, research methodologies, and bibliography. Just as pastors will grow in their capacity to view their situation "through disciplinary eyes," academics will gain perspective by viewing situations "through pastoral eyes." Additional details of this new program will be announced in 2012.

In the light of the above programs emphasizing pastoral study and collaboration, the Louisville Institute will discontinue the **Sabbatical Grants for Pastoral Leaders** program after 2011. Since 1994 the Institute has awarded 600 grants for a total of \$7 million through this program, raising national awareness about the value of pastoral sabbatical leaves – for the parish as well as the pastor. Many congregations now include a sabbatical plan in their terms of call for pastors. Other institutions that support sabbaticals for clergy renewal include:

- Lilly Endowment National Clergy Renewal Program: <http://www.clergyrenewal.org>
- Resource Center for Pastoral Excellence (Samford University): <http://www.samford.edu/rcpe/Default.aspx?id=2147499030>

- Wheat Ridge Ministries (for Lutheran pastors): <http://www.wheatridge.org/programs/grants>

The Louisville Institute is confident that many pastors yearn for vocational renewal through study. “Scholarly pastors are reflective practitioners who read widely and think deeply about Christian faith, the contemporary world, and the challenge of pastoral ministry,” observes Richter. “For such pastors, grants can mobilize their attention, galvanize their thinking, validate their questions, and support their research. We are privileged to offer them this opportunity.”