

Lilly puts \$31 million toward clergy programs: Largest amount to pastoral excellence programs

News in the [January 13, 2004](#) issue

In separate annual programs to give pastors sabbatical time and to reward programs that seek to sustain pastoral excellence, the Lilly Endowment has announced more than \$31 million in grants to congregations and religiously affiliated organizations.

The biggest amount, \$26.1 million, goes to 16 organizations with proposals to encourage men and women in ministry. Lilly grants in this second year of “pastoral excellence” programs recently brought cheers, for instance, from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Christian Church (Disciples).

- The theology and worship office of the PCUSA was awarded two grants totaling \$2.9 million. The larger grant, nearly \$2 million for a five-year initiative, brings together pastors, seminary faculty and church officials for intensive collaborative work in theology. The second program will help to create a churchwide system of mentors for seminarians and clergy in their first three years in pastoral ministry.
- The Nebraska regional bodies of the Disciples and the United Church of Christ will receive more than \$1.3 million to fund a five-year joint project of financial incentives allowing pastors at often isolated, small churches to pursue educational opportunities despite being far from learning centers.

Peer group learning—small groups of pastors who meet regularly for several years for ongoing renewal and mutual support—forms the basis for most projects, said a Lilly press release.

The clergy sabbatical program—now in its fourth year—announced nearly \$4.5 million in grants to 117 congregations and their pastors. The clergy recipients have considerable leeway in their choice of study and refreshment, but parts of those individual grants also go to their congregations to compensate for the pastors’

absence and to experience a renewal of their own. Congregations in 16 different denominations benefited.

The Indianapolis-based private foundation also announced that it will award up to 120 grants in 2004 as its National Clergy Renewal Program enters its fifth year.