



Contact: Lisa Notter, Vice President for Advancement

Phone: 773.896.2431

Email: lisa.notter@ctschicago.edu

CTS Receives Lilly Endowment Funding for Thriving in Ministry Initiative

CHICAGO – October 11, 2018 – Chicago Theological Seminary (CTS) has received a grant of \$1 million over five years to help establish Thriving in Ministry at CTS. This initiative 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.

Lilly Endowment is making nearly \$70 million in grants through the Thriving in Ministry initiative.

CTS's Thriving in Ministry program will provide a full ecology of support for congregational leaders from and serving under-resourced and marginalized communities. Black, female, and/or LGBTQ pastors, who are marginalized by their identities and lived experiences, and/or those serving in marginalized congregational settings will participate in a cohort experience designed to deliver the time, space, and resources for self-care, reflection, and renewal. Together, participating pastors will address the personal and professional challenges of bi-vocational ministry, and strengthen pastoral administrative leadership skills in the context of under-resourced congregations and bi-vocational service.

This program will give particular attention to first appointments, especially those serving as solo-senior ministers and those serving bi-vocationally. This initiative closely aligns with the seminary's long-standing vision, mission, and commitment to the development of religious leaders who can transform the world towards greater justice and mercy. The ecology of support is a natural extension of CTS's formation and education efforts, specifically its best-in-class online/in-person hybrid education model and engaged network of alumni. This initiative seeks to enable these pastors to see a vision of hope and lead transformation in their congregations and communities.

"The generosity of Lilly Endowment will allow us to provide support and intervention during the critical early years of ministry, a time when we lose so many talented leaders. The grant will help us to not only teach and shape future leaders of #TheNext, but also provide the ongoing support they will need for the work of transformation that has a lasting impact on their communities and our world," noted CTS President Stephen G. Ray Jr.

CTS 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.

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“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, including Thriving in Ministry at CTS, 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.

ABOUT CHICAGO THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Based on Chicago’s Southside, Chicago Theological Seminary is committed to creating leaders for the next generation at religious leadership...whatever that may be. A leader in social justice, CTS is committed to LGBTQ and gender issues, interreligious understanding, and racial justice.

CTS is an affiliated seminary of the United Church of Christ. Since its founding in 1855, CTS has pushed at the growing boundaries of the church in order to make faith more relevant and transform society towards greater justice and mercy. The student body now represents more than 40 different faith traditions, perspectives, and denominations.



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