

For Immediate Release

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University of Dubuque Theological Seminary Receives Nearly \$1 Million Grant

DUBUQUE, Iowa –University of Dubuque Theological Seminary (UDTS) has received a \$936,102 grant to help support the Clergy Coaching in Community and Context initiative. The grant 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.

“We are very excited about this grant from Lilly Endowment, as it represents the culmination of several years of transformative effort on behalf of our Seminary faculty and staff colleagues, and it affirms their leadership and our direction in this new era of theological education,” said Jeffrey F. Bullock, PhD, president of the University of Dubuque.

Lilly Endowment is making nearly \$70 million in grants through the Thriving in Ministry initiative. The grant UDTS received is a five-year grant.

The new Clergy Coaching in Community and Context initiative will launch January 2019. Sparked by a high-performance endurance sports coaching framework used by Elmer Colyer, PhD, professor of systematic theology at UDTS, the initiative aims to equip pastoral leaders with a community of support in which to develop skills, form habits, and articulate a personal vision for a thriving ministry. The program will be implemented in three communities of pastoral leaders who share common connections and contextual experiences: new pastors, mid-career pastors, and pastors engaged in innovative ministry. Each community will be led by an experienced pastor/coach who will provide both directive and non-directive facilitation.

“Participants in each of the three initiatives will come away having formed sustaining relationships with a community of fellow practitioners and mentors, demonstrated growth in essential leadership skills, new habits that contribute to long-term thriving in ministry, and a fresh theological vision of Christian leadership that places their work within God’s larger mission,” said Christopher James, PhD, assistant professor of evangelism and missional Christianity at UDTS, and one of the authors of the proposal.

Colyer developed the framework for Clergy Coaching in Community and Context in consultation with ministry practitioners and is refining it with a group of experienced pastors enrolled in a Doctor of Ministry program at UDTS.

“We see parallels between what pastoral leaders need and what high performance athletes need. A bicycle racer seeking faster race times wants a directive coach who knows what habits and skills matter and has

the experience to suggest actions that will lead to improved performance. This racer also wants the unconditional positive regard and encouraging feedback of non-directive coaching to empower the racer to achieve self-selected goals. The racer needs acceptance within a community of fellow racers who share a passion for the sport and role models or mentors who provide images of the ideal racer the person wants to become,” Colyer said.

UDTS is one of 78 organizations in 29 states that are taking part in the Thriving in Ministry initiative. Those 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, including University of Dubuque Theological Seminary’s Clergy Coaching in Community and Context initiative, 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.

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