

PILGRIM CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AWARDED  
2025 NATIONAL CLERGY RENEWAL PROGRAM GRANT

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**Pilgrim Congregational Church Awarded National Clergy Renewal Grant**

Pilgrim Congregational Church has received a grant of \$58,375 to enable our Senior Minister, Reverend Colin Knapp, to participate in the *2025 National Clergy Renewal Program*. Pilgrim is one of only 200 congregations nationwide selected for this competitive program, which is funded by Lilly Endowment Inc. and administered by Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis.

Established in 2000, the program provides Christian congregations with resources to offer their pastors the gift of extended time away from daily responsibilities for renewal and revitalization. Rooted in the concept of Sabbath rest, these sabbaticals allow ministers to step away from the relentless pace of ministry for travel, study, prayer, rest, and creative or cultural engagement.

Through the program, congregations may apply for grants of up to \$60,000 to support experiences designed collaboratively between pastor and congregation. Recognizing that ministry affects not only pastors but also their families and congregations, the program allows up to \$20,000 of the grant to be used for interim pastoral leadership and congregational renewal activities while the pastor is away. Since its inception, more than 4,500 congregations across the United States and Puerto Rico have participated.

Rev. Knapp began his ministry at Pilgrim on the first Sunday of the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020. He provided steady leadership and deep pastoral care during a time when worship was recorded without a gathered congregation and when relationships had to be nurtured across screens. In the years since, he has guided Pilgrim through a season of growth and outreach. He has also led the Community of Congregations for the past two years, working closely with our Village President and Board to help coordinate care for 200 migrants who had arrived in our community.

The congregation wholeheartedly supports Rev. Knapp's need for a season of rest and renewal. His sabbatical plans include a wilderness retreat in the Cascade Mountains, time in Australia – where he was once an exchange student during a formative stage of his spiritual life – and an extended family trip in Hawaii.

While Rev. Knapp is away, Pilgrim Congregational Church will focus on our own renewal. We plan to engage a sabbatical pastor to lead worship and coordinate ministry, while also offering opportunities for congregational rest – such as workshops on meditation, restorative conversations, and shared meals to deepen our fellowship.

“Pastors play such important roles in nurturing the spiritual lives of individuals and families,” said Christopher L. Coble, Lilly Endowment’s vice president for religion. “Yet the demands of ministry can seem relentless. We hope these grants help congregations honor their pastors for their extraordinary service and support them with the time and resources to step away for rest and renewal so they can return reenergized.”

Dr. Robert Saler, Director of the Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Programs at Christian Theological Seminary, added, “In these challenging and exciting times, pastors are expanding what sabbatical can mean. Some step away to rest; others to rediscover their calling. These programs help congregations invest in what reenergizes their pastors for long-term ministry.”