

Background Information

Lilly Endowment, Inc. National Initiative and Southwestern Minnesota Synod ELCA

Lilly Endowment, Inc. National Initiative to Address Economic Challenges Facing Pastoral Leaders. Lilly Endowment, Inc. is giving \$28 million in grants through its National Initiative to Address Economic Challenges Facing Pastoral Leaders. The grants are part of the Endowment's commitment to supporting the pastoral leadership development of clergy serving in congregations across the United States.

The Southwestern Minnesota Synod and the New Jersey Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), with diverse rural and urban settings, had been selected earlier to receive planning grants that allowed them to document major challenges facing both congregations and pastors in relation to large post-seminary educational loans facing new pastors, inadequate retirement resources facing senior pastors, and medical and insurance costs facing pastors and congregations.

The Southwestern Minnesota and New Jersey Synods of the ELCA are among twenty-seven organizations taking part in the Lilly Endowment initiative. Each program is customized to the needs of pastoral leaders in each religious tradition, but the programs have much in common as they: provide incentives for clergy to take part in personal finance education; offer low-or no-cost financial planning and counseling; match contributions for pastors and congregations that enroll in pension savings programs; help pastors create emergency funds; develop strategies that help young pastors pay down or eliminate educational debt; and create new scholarships so that seminarians borrow less while in school.

"Pastors, especially those just beginning in ministry, accept low salaries as part of their commitment to God and to church. Many enter ministry with significant debt from their undergraduate and seminary years and often have little financial resiliency when financial emergencies arise," said Dr. Christopher L. Coble, vice president for religion at the Endowment. "These organizations understand the importance of the financial wellbeing of pastors and the implications for the congregations they serve."

Southwestern Minnesota Synod ELCA. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is composed of 65 synods. The Southwestern Minnesota Synod includes more than 240 congregations in 29 counties in the southwestern portion of on Minnesota. It's mission statement is: "God places us in cities, farms and towns under one prairie sky. The Risen Christ surprises us with opportunities to plant God's Word in the world. Walking together in confidence, we cultivate life-giving congregations, nurture partner ministries, and cooperate in the life of the ELCA. By God's grace we have what we need." The Synod is governed by an annual assembly that elects a Bishop (every six years) and a Synod Council (with rotating membership) to provide ongoing oversight and leadership.



Southwestern Minnesota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.