Clergy Renewal Grant and Hope Lutheran Church Press Release

Hope Lutheran Church and Pastor Kristin one of 210 congregations across the United States selected to participate in this competitive grant program, which is funded by Lilly Endowment Inc. and administered by Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis. Established by the Endowment in 2000, the program's grants allow Christian congregations to support their pastors with the gift of extended time away from their ministerial duties and responsibilities. Ministers whose congregations are awarded the grants use their time away from the demands of daily ministry to pursue renewal and revitalization. The approach respects the "Sabbath time" concept, offering ministers a carefully considered respite that may include travel, study, rest, prayer and immersive arts and cultural experiences.

Since the inception of the National Clergy Renewal Program and the parallel Clergy Renewal Program for Indiana Congregations, more than 4,781 congregations throughout the United States and in Puerto Rico have participated in the program, including the 210 congregations receiving grants in 2026.

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

Dr. Robert Saler, Director of the Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Programs at Christian Theological Seminary, noted that interest in the grant programs has grown significantly in recent years, with higher numbers of applications leading to increased competitiveness. "In these challenging and exciting times, we're watching the applicants and awardees of these programs expand the definition of what sabbatical can mean. Some pastors are stepping away to rest, while others are stepping away to devote themselves to other aspects of their ministry and their being. Our goal is that these programs supply congregations with the means to express appreciation for their leaders and actively invest in what reenergizes their pastors for long-term ministry," Saler said.