

# Marquette University: Receives \$1 million Lilly Endowment grant to support congregational vitality

Posted on Thursday, Oct 15, 2020

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

MILWAUKEE —Marquette University has received a \$1 million grant as a part of Lilly Endowment Inc.'s Thriving Congregations Initiative to help establish "The Examen(ed) Church," which will assist churches in drawing on Ignatian spiritual practices to identify ministry opportunities and deepen congregational vitality.

Through "The Examen(ed) Church," congregations will learn and practice elements of Ignatian spirituality, particularly the Ignatian Examen, which will provide a framework for reflection on experience and discernment which leads to action and response.

"We are extremely appreciative of Lilly Endowment for this opportunity," said Dr. Stephen Jenks, director of the Pastoral Leadership in a Cultural Context program. "The hopes for Thriving Congregations echo the mission and values statements expressed here at Marquette through its commitment to its Catholic, Jesuit guiding values. Congregations and pastors are facing unforeseen challenges during the coronavirus pandemic, which makes this the perfect time to support them with a creative and supportive program that helps refocus and reimagine congregational life. With the grace of God, our faith communities will thrive in a new way."

The Examen(ed) Church will begin by shepherding approximately 20 Thrive Team congregations from a variety of Christian denominations and urban, suburban, multicultural and homogenous parishes. A larger outreach to Christian congregations will follow through workshops, seminars, and retreats, connecting them with the many resources found in the Marquette faculty and staff communities and civic and business leadership in southeast Wisconsin.

Lilly Endowment awarded more than 90 grants to strengthen Christian congregations to help people deepen their relationships with God, build strong relationships with each other and contribute to the flourishing of local communities and the world. The grants totaling nearly \$93 million were made through the Endowment's Thriving Congregations Initiative.

"In the midst of a rapidly changing world, Christian congregations are grappling with how they can best carry forward their ministries," said Christopher Coble, the endowment's vice president for religion. "These grants will help congregations assess their ministries and draw on practices in their theological traditions to address new challenges and better nurture the spiritual vitality of the people they serve."

Lilly Endowment Inc. is an Indianapolis-based private philanthropic foundation created in 1937 by J.K. Lilly, Sr. and his sons Eli and J.K. Jr. through gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical business, Eli Lilly and Company. The Endowment funds significant programs throughout the United States, especially in the field of religion. The principal aim of the Endowment's grantmaking in religion is to deepen and enrich the lives of Christian in the United States, primarily by seeking out and supporting efforts that enhance the vitality of congregations and strengthen the pastoral and lay leadership of Christian communities.

Lilly Endowment has helped fund other Marquette efforts to strengthen Christian communities, including the Office of Mission and Ministry's programs, Pastoral Leadership in Cultural Context and Companions in Ministry.

The Pastoral Leadership in a Cultural Context program at Marquette is a cohort-based pastoral leadership program for early career clergy and pastoral ministers that focuses on the intersection of faith and culture. PLCC is a two-year program which seeks to address both the personal faith formation and support of clergy and other pastoral ministers, and their vocations as leaders of leaders in the wider community where faith and culture often collide.

Companions in Ministry is an ecumenical support program that brings together Christian pastors and ordained deacons from diverse denominations, ethnicities, cultures, ages, and socio-economic backgrounds. The program provides opportunities for pastors to build peer relationships and accompany one another in their ministries. The program also aims to improve a sense of well-being spiritually and professionally, and to foster a supportive, ecumenical ministry network in

southeast Wisconsin.