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Lilly Endowment Inc. Grant Establishes Sacred Roots Program at Taylor University

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Taylor University has received a grant of \$991,928 to help establish *Sacred Roots: Thriving in Ministry* Ñan initiative Taylor officials say is designed to develop and grow peer groups of congregational leaders and encourage leaders serving in under-resourced and rural, urban and incarcerated communities. It 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.

Lilly Endowment is making nearly \$70 million in grants through the Thriving in Ministry initiative.

According to Dr. Hank Voss, Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies at Taylor and the program's director, the *Sacred Roots* initiative will bring together 15 Taylor University faculty and staff, research teams of undergraduate students, and faculty and staff from nearly 20 other evangelical universities and ministries with the goal of research and resource development aimed at equipping and

empowering leaders serving in challenging ministry contexts and ultimately help them thrive for a lifetime of faithful and fruitful ministry.

“We believe this program will not only enhance ministry and outreach for congregational leaders, but also provide these leaders with needed support and mentoring that will help to grow their faith and enhance their ministries. At the same time, it will contribute to positive, long-term transformation in their respective communities,” said Voss. “We are grateful to Lilly Endowment for its generous support of Taylor University’s *Sacred Roots: Thriving in Ministry* project.”

Taylor is one of 78 organizations located in 29 states that is taking part in the initiative. The 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 *Sacred Roots: Thriving in Ministry*, 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.

About Taylor University: Founded in 1846, Taylor University is an interdenominational liberal arts university of evangelical faith located in Upland, Ind. The 2019 *U.S. News & World Report* survey *America’s Best Colleges* ranked Taylor the number one Midwest University in the category *Best Regional Colleges*. It marked Taylor’s 11th number one ranking and marked the 22nd straight year to be ranked in the region’s top three.

Taylor University is a member of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU).