

PRESS RELEASE: First Congregational United Church of Christ is a grant recipient for the 2022 Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Program for Indiana Congregations

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First Congregational United Church of Christ has received a grant of \$50,000 to enable its minister, the Rev. Dr. Sarah Griffith Lund, to participate in the 2022 Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Program for Indiana Congregations.

First Congregational United Church of Christ is one of 30 congregations in Indiana selected to participate in this competitive program, which is funded by Lilly Endowment Inc. and administered by Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis. During the summer of 2023, the Rev. Dr. Sarah Griffith Lund will engage upon her sabbatical focusing on the theme “Joy to the World,” a theme chosen communally by the minister and her congregation.

Ministers whose congregations are awarded the grants use their renewal experiences to engage in reflection and renewal. 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.

Congregational needs during the minister’s renewal experience also are considered. The grant will also create the support and finances needed to fund an interim pastor, as well as for renewal activities within the congregation. “Pastors play an important role in nourishing the spiritual lives of individuals and in guiding the work of the Christian congregations they serve,” said Christopher L. Coble, the Endowment’s vice president for religion. “Through these grants, we seek to honor pastors for their extraordinary service and enable them to engage in a brief period of rest and renewal. We have learned that such experiences invigorate the leadership of pastors and bring new vitality to their congregations as well.”

Dr. Robert Saler, director of the Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Programs, noted that the Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Program for Indiana Congregations integrates key attributes of healthy congregations, including a mutual respect for the renewal needs of both ministers and the congregations they serve.

“The program provides an opportunity for congregations to express appreciation for their ministers’ service and leadership,” Saler said. “At a time when leaders are often praised for their pace of innovation and productivity, the Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Program for Indiana Congregations pays homage to the timeless wisdom embedded in the practice of reflection and renewal.”