



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF CENTRAL FLORIDA
1017 E. ROBINSON ST., ORLANDO, FL 32801 | 407-423-3567
www.cfdiocese.org

For immediate release

Contact: Erik Guzman
Phone: 407-423-3567 x312
Email: eguzman@cfdiocese.org

**DIOCESE OF CENTRAL FLORIDA AWARDED MILLION-DOLLAR LILLY ENDOWMENT INC. GRANT
FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

(Orlando, Florida, Dec. 4, 2020) The Diocese of Central Florida has been awarded a \$1 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. to support leadership development as a part of its nationally-competitive Thriving in Ministry Initiative.

The grant funds the vision of The Rt. Rev. Gregory O. Brewer, diocesan bishop, for the raising up of new leaders and for helping existing leaders to grow and thrive. This grant supplements and expands the diocese's current programs and initiatives. "We are fostering leadership and are committed to doing so with time as well as finances for both clergy and laity," Brewer said.

The primary aim of the Thriving in Ministry Initiative "is to help pastors thrive in congregational leadership and thus enhance the vitality of the congregations they serve," according to Lilly Endowment. Within the Diocese of Central Florida, funds from the grant will be used to expand the diocesan residency program, which trains and supports new priests in a manner akin to a medical residency; provide support for shared outreach events at the deanery level; and fund training such as clergy conferences, workshops and retreats, also at the deanery level.

Brewer has designated The Rev. Canon Dr. Justin S. Holcomb, canon for vocations and writer of the grant proposal, and Ellen Ceely, Holcomb's administrative assistant, as administrators of the grant. "Bishop Brewer's vision to strengthen clergy and ministry development is my guide as canon for vocations," Holcomb said. "This generous grant from the Lilly Endowment Inc. bolsters that vision and propels us towards its realization."

In May 2020, Lilly Endowment Inc. awarded the Diocese of Central Florida a \$50,000 planning grant, which enabled effective discussion of clergy needs and provided a pathway toward the new grant.

“We are delighted at the way God has blessed our efforts in leadership development through the receipt of this grant,” Brewer said. “We are strengthening our relationships with one another, becoming even more deeply a diocesan family.”

[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. Although the gifts of stock remain a financial bedrock of the Endowment, it 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 funds significant programs throughout the United States, especially in the field of religion.

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The Episcopal Diocese of Central Florida comprises 85 congregations divided into five deaneries across 15 counties in Central Florida. It includes over 200 active priests, approximately 100 active deacons and over 27,000 parishioners. The diocese is one of a few of the 110 domestic dioceses in The Episcopal Church that have grown in recent years while most are declining.