



For Immediate Release:

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The United Methodist Health Ministry Fund (Health Fund) in Hutchinson, Kansas has received a grant of \$999,058 from Lilly Endowment Inc. to help expand its Healthy Congregations Program in partnership with the Neighboring Movement in Wichita, Kansas.

The program is funded through Lilly Endowment's Thriving Congregations Initiative. The aim of the national initiative is to strengthen Christian congregations so they can help people deepen their relationships with God, build strong relationships with each other, and contribute to the flourishing of local communities and the world.

Lilly Endowment is making nearly \$93 million in grants through the initiative. The grants will support organizations as they work directly with congregations and help them gain clarity about their values and missions, explore and understand better the communities in which they serve, and draw upon their theological traditions as they adapt ministries to meet changing needs.

The Health Fund is a 33-year-old, \$55 million health philanthropy. Our mission is to improve the health of Kansans through cooperative and strategic philanthropy guided by Christian values. The Health Fund focuses on three strategic areas to accomplish this mission: access to care, early childhood development, and the Healthy Congregations program. Healthy Congregations addresses community health by providing Great Plains United Methodist Church congregations in Kansas and Nebraska with learning experiences, training, and grant opportunities. One such opportunity is the Good Neighbor Experiment (GNE).

Created and led by The Neighboring Movement, the GNE is a nine-month-long learning cohort in which congregations gather for three training workshops, implement the Good Neighboring Experiment's small group curriculum that connects asset-based community development (ABCD) with time-honored Christian practices, and take actionable steps toward practicing the learned skills of community neighboring.

Since 2017, the Neighboring Movement team has companioned 50 congregations in Kansas, Nebraska, and Texas through this material. Grant funding will expand that reach to 280 congregations over the five-year term, with a capacity for 100 congregations each year by 2026. This grant allows the Health Fund to further integrate the GNE within the Healthy Congregations program, create a framework to expand Healthy Congregations and the GNE to more congregations in and outside of the Great Plains Conference, and research the GNE's impact on congregations and the social determinants of health within communities.

"As congregations struggle with social isolation and health challenges, this grant and our partnership with the Neighboring Movement will help us equip churches with the strengths and skills to improve the health of their congregation and community as well as strengthen their ministry," said David Jordan, President and CEO of the United Methodist Health Ministry Fund.

Adam Barlow-Thompson, Executive Director of the Neighboring Movement, shared this reflection upon receiving the award, "This grant will allow us to partner with fabulous organizations and we couldn't be more excited. Every day, the need for good neighboring and

strong communities becomes more apparent. We can't wait to join with people of faith to lead the effort to restore social fabric through relationship, abundance, and joy."

The Health Fund is one of 92 organizations taking part in the initiative. They represent and serve churches in a broad spectrum of Christian traditions, including Anabaptist, Baptist, Episcopal, Evangelical, Lutheran, Methodist, Mennonite, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, Reformed, Restoration, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox, as well as congregations that describe themselves as nondenominational. Several organizations serve congregations in Black, Hispanic, and Asian-American traditions.

"In the midst of a rapidly changing world, Christian congregations are grappling with how they can best carry forward their ministries," said Christopher Coble, Lilly 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 launched the Thriving Congregations Initiative in 2019 as part of its commitment to support efforts that enhance the vitality of Christian congregations.

About Lilly Endowment Inc.

Lilly Endowment Inc. is an Indianapolis-based private philanthropic foundation created in 1937 by J.K. Lilly Sr. and sons Eli and J.K. Jr. through gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical business, Eli Lilly & 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 exists to support the causes of religion, education, and community development. The Endowment funds significant programs throughout the United States, especially in the field of religion. However, it maintains a special commitment to its hometown, Indianapolis, and home state, Indiana. The principal aim of the Endowment's grantmaking in religion is to deepen and enrich the lives of Christians in the United States, primarily by seeking out and supporting efforts that enhance the vitality of congregations and strengthen their pastoral and lay leadership.