

**Local Congregations Awarded “Cultures of Call” Grants
To Strengthen Future Church Leadership**

FTE grants invest in next generation of gifted pastors for local churches

ATLANTA, July 13, 2009 – To help develop a new generation of gifted young leaders for local congregations across denominations, The Fund for Theological Education (FTE) is awarding nearly \$90,000 in “Cultures of Call” grants.

Selected from applicants nationwide, eight congregations representing seven different denominations will each receive funding for innovative local programs to be implemented over the next 18 months. The awards are part of FTE’s Calling Congregations initiative to equip churches and church-related organizations to play a leading role in the vocational discernment of young men and women—and to support gifted young people considering ordained ministry as a profession. Congregations across North America seek talented leaders, and fewer than seven percent of clergy in most denominations are under age 35.

FTE launched the grant program with funding from Lilly Endowment Inc. in 2007 and will award a total of \$350,000 in “Cultures of Call” grants through 2009. The deadline for submission of letters of intent for the next grant cycle for interested congregations and other groups is September 1, 2009.

“Every community depends on strong local churches, and congregations need highly capable leaders to serve growing needs,” said Jim Goodmann, FTE Calling Congregations Regional Director and Grant Program Administrator. “These grants enable congregations to move further into their role as nurturers of the next generation of leaders. Their work of identifying talented and faithful young people who aspire to serve others and to explore the call to ministry builds a network of engaged congregations who will help shape the life of the church by revitalizing its leadership.”

Congregations selected to receive 2009 Cultures of Call grants are:

- **Church of the Lakes United Methodist, Canton, Ohio—\$10,000 for the *Faith, Family and Call Program***, focused on creating an environment where an understanding of call, the language of vocation and regular communication about faith formation issues between generations are commonplace.
- **First Baptist Church, Henderson, N.C.—\$ 15,000 for *Vocational Mystagogy***. This summer-long program for high school, college and seminary students will expand exploration of vocation and pastoral ministry through an Early Church teaching model situated in common worship and supplemented by service in the community.
- **The First Congregational Church of Western Springs, Ill.—\$ 6,950 for the *Summer Experience in Ministry Project***, involves both young people and second-career adults

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in the experience of ministry in a congregational context. This offers an opportunity for interns and congregation members to consider their own calls through testimony and reflection.

- **Fourth Presbyterian Church, Greenville, S.C.—\$ 11,000 for *Called Fourth***, an initiative to honor *vocational listening* through exploration of seven “callings” grounded in Biblical reflection and as experienced in the lives of the church’s members. Scripture study, story-telling, mentoring and mission service around the seven callings is the program’s structure.
- **Glide Memorial United Methodist Church, San Francisco, Calif.—\$ 13,960 for *Empowerment 2.0***, an immersion experience for three seminarians, will involve congregation members in vocational exploration through social service and theological reflection.
- **Park Street Church, Boston, Mass.—\$ 12,040 for *Exploring Vocation and Vocational Ministry***, engages young adult members in exploration of vocation through small groups and an in-depth immersion in ministry. Park Street, a 200-year-old congregation, will work to further its mission as a “sending congregation” for vocational ministry and the life of committed discipleship.
- **Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, Cleveland, Ohio—\$ 15,000 for *Living the Baptismal Covenant***, a program that supports discernment in the lives of young people and the intentional ministry of both lay and ordained people to foster young peoples’ discernment.
- **The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles, Calif.—\$ 3,300 for *Young Adult Ministry Formation for the Next Generation***, a program that will enable young adults in congregations throughout the Archdiocese to explore their roles as leaders and educators of other young people.

For more information about Cultures of Call grants, visit www.thefund.org/programs/calling. Information about what previous grant recipients are doing can be found at www.thefund.org/programs/congregations_map.

Calling Congregations seeks to establish a national network of 500 congregational and church-related partners. It offers regional workshops; a national conference; teaching tools; Web-based resources and up to 40 fellowships annually which match a congregation’s financial support toward tuition and expenses for a young church member’s first year of seminary.

The Fund for Theological Education supports the next generation of leaders among pastors and scholars, providing more than \$1.5 million annually in fellowships and a network of support to gifted young people from all denominations and racial/ethnic backgrounds. For more information, visit www.thefund.org.

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