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LAY MINISTRY FOUNDATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAM receives a Vital Worship Grant from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship

The Lay Ministry Foundational Training Program has received a Vital Worship Grant from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship (CICW) in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The grant will fund a year-long project in which **the Lay Ministry Foundational Training Program** will provide quality, ecumenical, affordable on line educational courses for a cohort of qualified students seeking to lead small congregations in meaningful worship and mission. It is one of 28 grants totaling more than \$350,000 awarded for 2016 by CICW to churches and schools across North America.

“We learn a tremendous amount from these programs,” said CICW director John Witvliet, “from the wisdom demonstrated in designing them and the insights gleaned from implementing and adapting them as they unfold. We look forward to sharing insights from these projects with a larger audience in our future programming over the next several years.”

Local leaders of the Michigan Conference of the United Church of Christ, the Christian Church Michigan Region, the North/West Lower Michigan Synod ELCA are grateful for their grant and eager to get started with their project.

“Because we see an emerging, critical shortage of ordained worship leadership in small congregations across denominations*, we hope to implement a program that will train qualified laity to lead these small congregations in meaningful worship and mission,” Rev. Dr. Dennis Smith, Project Administrator.

The CICW’s Worship Grants program (formerly known as the Worship Renewal Grants Program) is now in its 17th year and has seen more than 750 projects funded since its inception.

“This year,” said Kathy Smith, leader of the Vital Worship Grants Team, “CICW approved proposals from 17 denominations, 14 states and one Canadian province, 20 congregations and church plants, 4 regional church bodies, and 4 college and seminary communities.” An advisory board of pastors and teachers from a variety of backgrounds gave valuable assistance in the grant selection process.

For the 2016 grant recipients, learning will begin in earnest this June when project directors for all the new grants gather on Calvin’s campus to dialogue not only with CICW staff, but also with the recipients of the 2015 grants, who will come to campus to share the results of their year-long projects.

“We are intrigued that so many projects relate to storytelling in worship,” said Smith, “and we look forward to a collaborative time of worshipping and learning together and sharing those stories to encourage one another.”

The Vital Worship Grants Program is generously supported by Indianapolis-based Lilly Endowment Inc. Founded in 1937, the Endowment’s major areas of concern are community development, education, and religion.

For more information on the grants program, including a complete list of this year’s grants recipients, please see: worship.calvin.edu/grants.