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Assembly of Bishops' Inter-Parish Association Program Receives Major Grant From the Lilly Endowment Inc.



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The Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America has received a \$1,250,000 grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. to help establish and develop Inter-Parish Associations.

The project is being funded through Lilly Endowment's Thriving Congregations Initiative. The aim of the initiative to encourage the flourishing of congregations by helping them deepen their relationships with God, enhance their connections with each other, and contribute to the vitality of their communities and the world.

The Assembly's Enhancing Congregations through Inter-Parish Associations program will invite cohorts of congregations in selected regions across the nation to: (1) name their own, individual culture of origin and tell their story, (2) research and understand their current social and cultural context, (3) articulate their values and mission as individual congregations, (4) create a collaborative vision within their IPA, and (5) create and implement outreach ministries. The Program Director will guide and support the IPAs to gain a more robust understanding of themselves—both their cultural uniqueness and their unity with their sister parishes. Through a collaborative learning process, parishes will be empowered to thrive by serving their neighbors and offering Christian witness and service to the world.

The Chair of the Assembly of Bishops, Archbishop Elpidophoros, stated: "through the Inter-Parish Associations, we hope to guide our congregations toward a unified - that is singular in faith yet prolific in ethnic heritage - witness of Christian ethos in modern society. Our goal is for our parishes to coordinate their efforts to be church in their local contexts. By sharing Christ's love with their neighbors, our parishes will truly thrive and flourish!"

The Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America is one of 105 organizations that has received grants through a competitive round of the Thriving Congregations Initiative. Reflecting a wide variety of Christian traditions, the organizations represent mainline Protestant, evangelical, Catholic, Orthodox, peace church and Pentecostal faith communities.

"Congregations play an essential role in deepening the faith of individuals and contributing to the vitality of communities," said Christopher L. Coble, Lilly Endowment's vice president for religion. "We hope that these programs will nurture the vibrancy and spark the creativity of congregations, helping them imagine new ways to share God's love in their communities and across the globe."

About Lilly Endowment Inc.

Lilly Endowment Inc. is a private 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. While those gifts remain the 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 and maintains a special commitment to its hometown, Indianapolis, and home state, Indiana. A principal aim of the Endowment's religion grantmaking 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 the pastoral and lay leadership of Christian communities. The Endowment also seeks to improve public understanding of diverse religious traditions by supporting fair and accurate portrayals of the role religion plays in the United States and across the globe.

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