

For Immediate Release: December 1, 2021

LILLY ENDOWMENT – PATHWAYS FOR TOMORROW INITIATIVE

VANCOUVER, BC. December 1, 2021. The **Vancouver School of Theology** has received a grant of \$1.0 million USD from Lilly Endowment Inc. to help advance its work in **theological field education**.

The project is being funded through Lilly Endowment's Pathways for Tomorrow Initiative. It is a three-phase initiative designed to help theological schools across the United States and Canada as they prioritize and respond to the most pressing challenges they face as they prepare pastoral leaders for Christian congregations both now and into the future.

Theological Field Education (TFE) at VST has, for many years, been a mutual experience in which students, mentors in various areas of practice, and the school's faculty have established a teaching and learning network. TFE has a central place in the school's core mission to "prepare thoughtful, engaged and generous Christian leaders", in conversation with other faith traditions and the Indigenous church. This funding enables VST to develop further its teaching, mentoring and learning practices so that they are even more responsive to the challenges of ministry. It will work closely with its denominational partners, leading churches and effective clergy mentors to deliver TFE experiences that form students for faithful and relevant ministry.

"The Vancouver School of Theology is thrilled at this grant. It will make possible the development and implementation of a stellar program of theological field education through a network of experienced practitioners that will prepare and inspire students for ministry in our time."

Richard Topping, VST President

"At the core of Theological Field Education is reflection on actions in ministry and leadership. This grant – coming in this critical almost-post-pandemic moment - will provide VST with an extraordinary opportunity to reflectively engage with partners around the strengthening of mentoring and the preparation, support and encouragement of leaders for the emerging future."

Steven Chambers, VST Interim Director – Theological Field Education

The Vancouver School of Theology is one of 84 theological schools that are receiving a total of more than \$82 million in grants through the second phase of the Pathways initiative. Together, the schools represent evangelical, mainline Protestant, nondenominational, Pentecostal, Roman Catholic and Black church and historic peace church traditions (e.g., Church of the Brethren, Mennonite, Quakers). Many schools also serve students and pastors from Black, Latino, Korean American, Chinese American, and recent immigrant Christian communities.

"Theological schools have long played a pivotal role in preparing pastoral leaders for churches," said Christopher L. Coble, the Endowment's vice president for religion. "Today, these schools find themselves in a period of rapid and profound change. Through the Pathways Initiative, theological schools will take deliberate steps to address the challenges they have identified in ways that make the most sense to them. We believe that their efforts are critical to ensuring that Christian congregations continue to have a steady stream of pastoral leaders who are well-prepared to lead the churches of tomorrow."

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Lilly Endowment launched the Pathways initiative in January 2021 because of its longstanding interest in supporting efforts to enhance and sustain the vitality of Christian congregations by strengthening the leadership capacities of pastors and congregational lay leaders.

About Lilly Endowment Inc.

[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](#) and maintains a special commitment to its founders' hometown, Indianapolis, and home state, Indiana. The primary aim of its grantmaking in religion, which is national in scope, focuses on strengthening the leadership and vitality of Christian congregations in the United States. The Endowment also seeks to foster public understanding about religion and lift up in fair, accurate and balanced ways the contributions that people of all faiths and religious communities make to our greater civic well-being.

About VST

VST's core mandate is to educate and form thoughtful, engaged and generous Christian leaders for the church in the 21st century. Among theological schools, VST is viewed as a change agent and an innovator for the church. As an affiliated college of the University of British Columbia, VST is now ranked in the top 50 schools globally and in the top 10 of most improved theological schools. In 2020 VST was identified by In Trust Magazine as instituting bold transformative change for the renewal of theological education. VST is accredited by the Government of British Columbia, and in North America by ATS (Association of Theological Schools).

The Vancouver School of Theology welcomes students from many Christian communions, other faith traditions and Indigenous communities, while celebrating its core relationships with the Anglican Church of Canada, Presbyterian Church in Canada, and United Church of Canada. The Indigenous Studies Program at VST is central to the school's identity and commitments. The Vancouver School of Theology celebrates its 50th Anniversary this year as a leader in theological education.

The Vancouver School of Theology acknowledges that the land on which they are located is the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam) People.

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