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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Wesley Theological Seminary, in Partnership with SMU Perkins School of Theology, Receives \$5 Million Lilly Endowment Grant to Create New Educational Pathways for Ministry**

Washington, D.C., September 26, 2022—Wesley Theological Seminary, in collaboration with SMU Perkins School of Theology, is developing new non-degree courses and certificates for pastors with the support of a \$5 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc.

The grant to Wesley, part of the third and final phase of Lilly's Pathways for Tomorrow Initiative, will enable both schools to develop a business model to better support comprehensive theological education: layered and articulated courses and programs that reach and serve pastors and lay ministers throughout their ministries and across many contexts.

"I am grateful Lilly Endowment has trusted Wesley over the last few years with a series of grants to fund research toward a hopeful future for churches and pastors. The Pathways 3 grant will allow us to integrate what we have learned as we continue to innovate, to seek new markets for theological education, and to offer new products to existing markets," said Wesley President, The Rev. Dr. David McAllister-Wilson. Leading the program will be The Rev. Dr. F. Douglas Powe, Jr., Director of Wesley's Lewis Center for Church Leadership, who said, "One of our goals is to expand the reach of theological education to those who may have an interest but cannot commit to pursuing a traditional degree. The non-degree and certificate offerings will enable them to deepen their theological knowledge and to gain expertise in practical areas of ministry."

At the same time, Wesley is committed to partnering with Perkins School of Theology to steward our collective resources to maintain the highest theological education standards for all called to ministry.

SMU Perkins School of Theology Dean, The Rev. Dr. Craig Hill said, "As Wesley leaders engaged with us at Perkins, we began sharing what each of us had been learning. Through these conversations, we discovered a remarkable convergence of both ideas and spirit. Perkins looks forward to partnering with Wesley to make theological education accessible to current and prospective congregational leaders for whom it might otherwise be unavailable."

This is the third Pathways grant Wesley has received. The first \$50,000 planning grant underwrote extensive research as Wesley convened groups of denominational leaders, pastors, and laity across many traditions and contexts to hear what resources were available and needed. Wesley particularly focused on multi-vocational clergy and contexts traditionally under-represented in Wesley's master's level student body. With the \$1 million Phase Two grant from Lilly Endowment, Wesley is focusing on expanding access to master's level education, including creating more "on-ramps" for students and strengthening online and hybrid pathways. Wesley's initiatives are guided by the work of the Religious Workforce Project, also funded by Lilly Endowment, which is identifying an increasingly diverse pastoral

workforce that needs more support to not only weather rapid religious and cultural changes but to build and lead.

Like Wesley Theological Seminary, Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University is one of thirteen seminaries related to the United Methodist Church and one of five such schools embedded within a university. The two schools anticipate building on the strengths of each institution to create a business model that is adaptable for more theological education institutions, whether free-standing or university-related, and a platform that can engage more pastors and partners across the country and around the world. Among the strengths Perkins brings to the collaboration is a long history of working with Hispanic populations and has developed innovative certificate programs in practical ministry.

Together, Wesley and Perkins will develop a ministry certificate in English and Spanish that will serve those not able to pursue a traditional degree. The partnership includes working with the Puerto Rico Methodist Church to expand non-degree and certificate offerings to their constituents. As United Methodist seminaries, we look forward to the ongoing relationships with bishops, conferences, and general agencies in developing appropriate educational opportunities. These partnerships are even more critical as the denomination undergoes a transformation in the next few years. The Pathways 3 grant will allow Wesley and Perkins to strengthen current connections and build new ones throughout the denomination.

Wesley Theological Seminary, in partnership with Perkins School of Theology, is one of 16 theological schools that has received grants to fund large-scale, highly collaborative programs through the Pathways initiative. Lilly Endowment believes these programs have the potential to become models for other schools as they seek to strengthen the way they educate pastors and other congregational leaders.

“Theological schools play an essential role in ensuring that Christian congregations have a steady stream of well-prepared leaders to guide their ministries,” said Christopher L. Coble, the Endowment’s vice president for religion. “Many theological schools believe that their paths to the future depend on their abilities to form strategic partnerships with other schools and church agencies. These grants will help seminaries develop innovative and collaborative approaches to theological education that we believe will strengthen their efforts to prepare and support excellent leaders for Christian communities into the future.”

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 a 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. While those gifts remain the financial bedrock of the Endowment, the Endowment 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. The principal aim of the Endowment’s religion grantmaking is to deepen and enrich the lives of American Christians, 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.

### **About Wesley Theological Seminary**

*Seated in the nation's capital and centered in Christian faith, [Wesley Theological Seminary](#) annually prepares more than 1,000 students, representing more than 30 denominations, to become exemplary teachers, preachers, and leaders in the world today. Wesley graduates are in ministry in all 50 states and in 20 countries as leaders of churches and service organizations. The mission of Wesley Theological Seminary is to prepare Christians for leadership in the church and the world, to advance theological scholarship, and to model a prophetic voice in the public square.*

### **About The Lewis Center for Church Leadership**

*The [Lewis Center for Church Leadership](#) of Wesley Theological Seminary seeks to advance the understanding of Christian leadership and promote the effective and faithful practice of Christian leadership in the church and the world. The center is building a new vision for church leadership grounded in faith, informed by knowledge and exercised in effective practice. The center seeks a holistic understanding of leadership that brings together theology and management, scholarship and practice, research and application. The Lewis Center serves as a resource for clergy and lay leaders, congregations and denominational leaders. Through teaching, research, publications and resources, the center supports visionary spiritual leaders and addresses key leadership issues crucial to the church's faithful witness.*

### **About Perkins School of Theology/SMU**

*[Perkins School of Theology](#), founded in 1911, is one of five official University-related schools of theology of [The United Methodist Church](#). Degree programs include the Master of Divinity, Master of Sacred Music, Master of Theological Studies, Master of Arts in Ministry, Master of Theology, Doctor of Ministry, and Doctor of Pastoral Music as well as the Ph.D., in cooperation with [The Graduate Program in Religious Studies](#) at Southern Methodist University's [Dedman College](#) of Humanities and Sciences.*

*[SMU](#) is the nationally ranked global research university in the dynamic city of Dallas. SMU's alumni, faculty and more than 12,000 students in eight degree-granting schools demonstrate an entrepreneurial spirit as they lead change in their professions, communities and the world.*

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