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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Wesley Theological Seminary Receives \$1.25 Million Grant from Lilly Endowment Inc.**

**Washington, DC**—Wesley Theological Seminary has received a grant of \$1.25 million from Lilly Endowment Inc. to help congregations expand faith formation with diverse children and their parents and caregivers.

The project is being funded through Lilly Endowment’s Christian Parenting and Caregiving Initiative. The aim of the initiative to help parents and caregivers share their faith and values with their children.

The project, coordinated by the Wesley Innovation Hub, will center diverse children’s spiritual experiences and insights, particularly those who are neurodiverse, racially and ethnically diverse, and/or identifying as LGBTQIA. Cohorts of selected congregations will experiment with building intergenerational community, integrating contemplative spiritual practices for kids and their parents/caregivers, and centering children’s voices in child advocacy and activism. At the end of the program, each congregation will be invited to create or refine a resource that can be shared with other families and churches and to host a congregation or neighborhood-wide celebration to share what has been learned.

“We are excited to learn with diverse congregations, families, and children about how to center and promote children’s faith formation,” said Beth Ludlum, Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and co-director of the Wesley Innovation Hub. “This opportunity capitalizes on existing Wesley Innovation Hub projects that engage deep listening, thoughtful design, bold experimentation, and effective measurement as means of following the Holy Spirit in new ways.”

Wesley Theological Seminary is one of 77 organizations that are receiving grants through this competitive round of the Christian Parenting initiative. Reflecting the diversity of Christianity in the United States, the organizations are affiliated with mainline Protestant, evangelical, Catholic, Orthodox Christian and Pentecostal faith communities. Many of the organizations are rooted in Black church, Hispanic and Asian Christian traditions.

“We’ve heard from many parents who are seeking to nurture the spiritual lives of their children, especially in their daily activities, and looking to churches and other faith-based organizations for support,” said Christopher L. Coble, Lilly Endowment’s vice president for religion. “These thoughtful, creative and collaborative organizations embrace the important role that families have in shaping the religious development of children and are launching programs to assist parents and caregivers with this task.” President David McAllister-Wilson says, “Wesley is guided by the words of Jesus about children: “Do not hinder them.””

Lilly Endowment launched the Christian Parenting and Caregiving Initiative in 2022 because of its interest in supporting efforts to help individuals and families from diverse Christian communities draw more fully on the wisdom of Christian practices to live out their faith fully and well passing on a vibrant faith to a new generation.



### **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.

### **About Wesley Theological Seminary**

Founded in 1882, Wesley Theological Seminary is seated in the nation's capital and centered in the Christian faith; it 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 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.

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