Green Lake Conference Center

Green Lake, Wisconsin

In 2007, Green Lake Conference Center was granted $1 million from Lilly Endowment for its Center for Excellence in Congregational Leadership℠ (CECL℠) program. The grant funded its fifth and sixth classes, extending the program (which began in 2003) through 2010 -- bringing Lilly's total investment to $3,000,000. The grant continued an effort from Lilly to focus on identifying, nurturing and educating a talented new generation of pastors and recognizing and supporting the excellent ones we have.

CECL℠ was multi-denominational with 40% of the participants from the American Baptist Churches USA, and the remainder from 16 other denominations from Baptist General Conference, Southern Baptist, Conservative Baptist, Evangelical Free, Methodist, Evangelical Lutheran Churches of America to Vineyard denominations.

CECL℠ helped almost 200 pastors realize God's dreams for them, their families and their churches. The program trained classes of 40-60 pastors in five one-week sessions over two years. CECL℠ pastors and their leadership teams are leading their churches to an outward focus and health, while finding great personal and shared joy. They experienced growth through close relationships in pastor peer groups, personal coaching and accountability, leading-edge speakers, balance of family and ministry, spiritual growth, energized physical and emotional health, and awe of the Creation in a beautiful conference setting.

Believing that healthy, engaged, thoughtful, dedicated ministers usually go hand in hand with healthy, vibrant and effective congregations, Lilly followed grant recipients after the program ended. The results were impressive. Pastors reported a 37% decrease in "my potential for burnout" and a 38% increase on "the congregational team is cooperating with me to bring about change." Worship attendance grew at CECL℠ churches. CECL℠ churches have launched community ministries to give away cars to single parents, provide a day care center with meals for homeless families, and help with aid and building re-construction in Louisiana. Pastor Karen Gygax Rodriguez of the Federated Church in Green Lake was a pioneer in the preaching component led by Dr. Lori Carrell.

Green Lake Conference Center is the spiritual home for American Baptists. We continue the founders' broad vision of welcoming people from all parts of the Christian family and the diversity of non profits to this very special place to convene and grow. As we enter our 76th year in 2020 and beyond, we continue to be the historic place and space of ReCreation for Christian groups to discover God's better version of themselves and their world and for nonprofit, educational and government groups to discover a better version of themselves and their world.