

History

Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Grant Program

Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE) was a grant program created by [Lilly Endowment Inc.](#) to enable a broad spectrum of institutions to honor and support pastoral leaders. From 2002 to 2011, the Endowment awarded funds to more than 60 grantee organizations, including seminaries, denominational offices, retreat centers and other educational institutions, to develop programs and conduct research to sustain clergy for effective ministry. Representing many major Christian traditions, the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence projects sought to help ministers create peer groups and other environments for ongoing biblical study, theological reflection and spiritual renewal; hone pastoral leadership skills; develop sustained friendships and networks of mutual support; and gain access to opportunities for sabbaticals and ministry coaching.



Scope of the projects

As of 2010:

- More than 15,000 pastoral leaders have taken part in a pastoral peer group
- More than 30,000 pastoral leaders have taken part in an SPE-sponsored program
- These pastoral leaders serve more than 33,000 congregations, nearly 10 percent of all places of worship nationwide

[View a map of SPE's scope](#)

For an in-depth summary of the grant program, see the [Sustaining Pastoral Excellence](#) report written by Holly G. Miller on behalf of Lilly Endowment Inc.
