

# Compelling Preaching Initiative At a Glance



## AN INTRODUCTION FOR GRANTEE INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS

The Compelling Preaching Initiative is a nationwide program funded by Lilly Endowment Inc. to support organizations in cultivating practices that help aspiring and active preachers proclaim the Christian gospel to diverse audiences in more engaging and effective ways.

## The Grantees

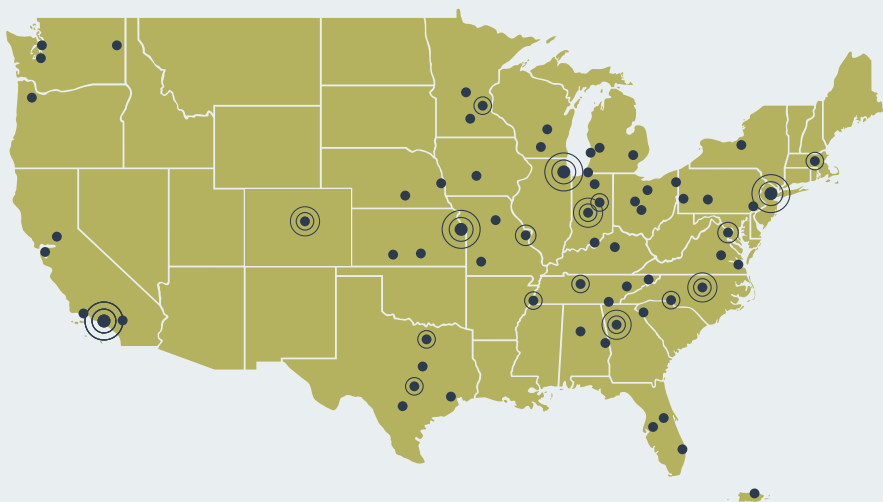
The Compelling Preaching Initiative supports 142 organizations that represent a broad spectrum of Christian traditions in the United States—including mainline Protestant, evangelical, Catholic, Orthodox, Anabaptist, and Pentecostal faith communities. Many organizations are rooted in the Black Church and in Hispanic and Asian American Christian traditions.

Multi-year grants were awarded in 2022, 2023, and 2024. See the full list of grantees on pages 3-4.

*“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news...”*

ISAIAH 52:7

## Overview of Grantee Organizations



52 seminaries, divinity schools, and Bible colleges/institutes

31 denominations, judicatories, and religious orders

30 parachurch organizations and other religious nonprofits

29 colleges and universities

142 total grantee organizations from across the United States, including Puerto Rico

# Grant Activities

## Programming

Grantees are engaged in a variety of program activities, including:

- Producing resources
- Organizing gatherings, conferences, retreats, etc.
- Sponsoring peer groups or cohorts
- Providing coaching, training, or webinars
- Training/equipping lay preachers
- Fostering dialogue between preachers and listeners

## Topics

Across all traditions and institution types, these have emerged as the top program topics:

- Contextual preaching
- Cultural/multicultural competency in preaching
- Soul care, mental health, or spiritual formation of the preacher
- Effective use of technology or digital media
- Fostering dialogue between preachers and listeners
- Trauma-informed preaching; preaching as pastoral care

## Audiences

Some Compelling Preaching projects serve constituencies in a given city or region. Others have a national reach. Regardless of geography, grantees often shape their programs for specific audiences, including:

- Lay leaders, lay preachers
- People who are disaffiliated or unchurched
- Youth, young adults, or young pastors
- Specific communities of color: Black, Latinx, Asian American, Haitian, and more
- People who speak languages other than English
- Women in ministry



Grantees gather each spring to build connections and share learnings.

# Key Learnings

Twice a year, grant program directors reflect on their programs' strengths, obstacles, adaptations, and learnings via a survey. Survey results to date have revealed the importance of the following themes. We're eager to see additional themes emerge as the work unfolds.

1. **Internal and external connections.**  
Grantees benefit from collaborating with other grant programs and with institutional partners.
2. **Diversity of participants and audiences.**  
Many grant programs are focused on helping preachers reach diverse audiences.
3. **Authenticity, humanity, and relevance.**  
Congregants long for authenticity and vulnerability in their preachers.
4. **Participatory preaching.**  
Compelling preaching often involves conversation, community, feedback, and the work of the people.
5. **The listener's context.**  
Good preaching starts with good listening. When preachers understand the nuances of their hearers' lives, the message is more compelling.



Significant themes also emerged in a word cloud generated during the 2024 Compelling Preaching gathering. Grant team members' answers to the question "What topic or theme stood out as particularly inspiring or challenging for you during our time together?" are shown above.

# Grantees by State

## ALABAMA

- Samford University

## ARKANSAS

- United Methodist Foundation for Arkansas

## CALIFORNIA

- Allen Temple Leadership Institute
- America Evangelical University
- Archdiocese of Los Angeles
- Azusa Pacific University
- Fuller Theological Seminary
- Latin American Bible Institute College
- Life Pacific University
- Logos Evangelical Seminary
- National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference
- Pepperdine University
- Presbyterian Theological Seminary in America
- University of Redlands – San Francisco Theological Seminary & Center for Faith and Justice
- University of Southern California – Center for Religion and Civic Culture
- Westmont College
- World Mission University

## COLORADO

- Denver Seminary
- Mountain Sky Conference of the United Methodist Church
- Young Life

## FLORIDA

- Florida Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church
- Garrett–Evangelical Theological School & Association for Hispanic Theological Education
- Palm Beach Atlantic University

## GEORGIA

- Alliance for Christian Media (Day1)
- Columbia Theological Seminary
- Georgia Central University
- Macedonian Ministry Foundation
- Point University
- St. Luke's Episcopal Church & Church Anew

## ILLINOIS

- Archdiocese of Chicago
- Catholic Extension Society
- Catholic Theological Union at Chicago
- Center for Pastor Theologians
- Charles Simeon Trust
- Chicago Theological Seminary & Nevertheless She Preached & The Gathering
- Christianity Today
- Evangelical Covenant Church
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
- McCormick Theological Seminary
- Moody Bible Institute of Chicago
- University of Chicago
- Wheaton College – Billy Graham Center

## INDIANA

- Anderson University (IN)
- Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
- Christian Theological Seminary
- Grace College – Grace Theological Seminary
- Marian University
- Taylor University
- University of Indianapolis – Lantz Center for Christian Vocation
- University of Notre Dame – McGrath Institute for Church Life

## IOWA

- Grand View University

## KANSAS

- Barclay College
- Church of the Nazarene
- Made to Flourish
- Mahibere Kidusan Coordinating Center in North America
- NEXT Church
- Saint Paul School of Theology

## KENTUCKY

- Lexington Theological Seminary & Creation Justice Ministries & The BTS Center
- Pentecostal Churches of the Apostolic Faith International Inc.

## MASSACHUSETTS

- common cathedral
- Emmanuel Gospel Center
- Hellenic College – Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology
- Massachusetts Council of Churches
- Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ
- Theology of Work Project

## MICHIGAN

- Calvin Theological Seminary
- Synod of the Covenant Presbyterian Church USA
- Western Theological Seminary & Hope College & Pillar Church

## MINNESOTA

- Gustavus Adolphus College
- Luther Seminary
- North Central University
- Saint John's University

## MISSOURI

- Aquinas Institute of Theology
- Assemblies of God Theological School
- Central Christian College of the Bible
- Covenant Theological Seminary
- Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

## NEBRASKA

- Hastings College
- Omaha Presbyterian Seminary Foundation

## NEW JERSEY

- Episcopal Preaching Foundation
- Greater New Jersey Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church
- Seton Hall University – Immaculate Conception Seminary and School of Theology

## NEW YORK

- America Media
- City Seminary of New York
- Corazon Puro
- Metropolitan New York Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
- Passionist Missionaries & Sunday to Sunday
- Redeemer City to City
- St. Nersess Armenian Seminary
- St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary
- Union Theological Seminary
- Upper New York Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church

## NORTH CAROLINA

- African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
- Baptist Women in Ministry of North Carolina
- Duke University – Duke Divinity School
- General Baptist State Convention of North Carolina
- North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church
- Saint Thomas More Catholic Community & Discerning Deacons
- Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

## OHIO

- Ashland University
- Christian and Missionary Alliance
- Methodist Theological School in Ohio & WomanPreach!

## OREGON

- George Fox University & The Leadership Center & Religion for Her

## PENNSYLVANIA

- Allegheny Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
- Eastern University – Palmer Theological Seminary
- Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
- Presbytery of Philadelphia
- Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary

## PUERTO RICO

- Universidad Teologica del Caribe

## SOUTH CAROLINA

- Anderson University (SC) – Clamp Divinity School

## TENNESSEE

- African Methodist Episcopal Church
- Belmont University
- Board of Discipleship of the United Methodist Church
- Christian Methodist Episcopal Church & Phillips School of Theology
- Every Nation Churches & Ministries
- Johnson University
- Lee University
- Milligan University
- Ministry Council of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church
- Trevecca Nazarene University

## TEXAS

- Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary
- Baptist University of the Americas
- Baylor University
- Episcopal Diocese of Texas
- Insight for Living
- University of Dallas – Institute for Homiletics
- Wesleyan Impact Partners

## VIRGINIA

- Center for Public Justice
- Global Impact & Urban Strategies
- Hampton University
- Union Presbyterian Seminary
- Virginia Theological Seminary
- Virginia Union University

## WASHINGTON

- Ignatian Spirituality Center
- Seattle School of Theology and Psychology
- Street Psalms
- Whitworth University

## WASHINGTON, DC

- Catholic University of America
- Howard University – Howard University School of Divinity
- Progressive National Baptist Convention

## WISCONSIN

- American Baptist Assembly (Green Lake Conference Center)
- InterVarsity Christian Fellowship – USA

# Become a Compelling Preaching Ally

As a colleague of a Compelling Preaching Initiative grant team, you can play a role in the success of your organization's grant program. Take an interest in their work. When appropriate, facilitate their requests, attend their events, support their initiatives. And if a member of the Compelling Preaching Coordination team visits your organization, take the opportunity to meet with them.

Published by the Compelling Preaching Coordination Program, which promotes mutual learning among grantees through events, communications, and the services of a consulting team. The Lilly Endowment-funded coordination program is housed at the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship on the campus of Calvin University.

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