



Press Release

MC receives Lilly grant to establish new youth theology program

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Maryville College recently received a grant of \$433,152 to establish Maryville College Adventures in Studying Theology (MAST), a program that aims to cultivate youth leaders for the church and world by helping them discover and embrace the traditions of Christian faith, put their faith into practice, and explore – through the lenses of Bible study and theology – important questions of our time.

The grant is part of Lilly Endowment Inc.'s High School Youth Theology Institutes initiative, which seeks to encourage young people to explore theological traditions, ask questions about the moral dimensions of contemporary issues and examine how their faith calls them to lives of service.

The MAST program has a number of components, with the College's weeklong summer youth theology program, Horizons, as its centerpiece. Horizons gives rising 10th, 11th and 12th graders an opportunity to explore their faith, plunge into service, build friendships and gain confidence – all with the end goal of preparing future leaders for the Church. The grant allows for an expanded program that includes a thematic approach to studying theology and introducing students to academically informed reflections on the Christian tradition, with Maryville College religion faculty serving as partners in the programming. [Registration is now open for this year's Horizons program](#), which is scheduled for June 12-17 on the Maryville College campus.

Since Maryville College is a three-hour drive from the closest theological seminaries, the larger mission of MAST will be to serve as a year-round resource for theological education and

youth ministry in the East Tennessee area. The program will include fall and spring youth retreats for Horizons participants and other interested youth, as well as continuing education opportunities for youth leaders.

“We are so grateful to Lilly Endowment, for its commitment to help young people explore, grow and embrace a complex faith for a complex world – and to those who work with youth in the Presbytery of East Tennessee, whose enthusiasm and willingness to try new approaches is making this work possible,” said the Rev. Dr. Anne McKee, Maryville College campus minister and MAST program director. “We look forward to expanding our own horizons of understanding through the MAST program, so that we can help equip a new generation of leaders.”

The grant also allows for the hiring of a new full-time program administrator, who will serve as the chief organizer of the program.

While the program is open to high school students of all religious backgrounds, Maryville College has a particular partnership with the Presbytery of East Tennessee to support youth ministry initiatives and leadership training with the Presbytery’s Youth Council, with the hope of expanding to other church bodies.

“The Presbytery of East Tennessee is thrilled to partner with Maryville College and develop the MAST program,” said Barbara Adamcik, moderator of the Presbytery of East Tennessee EQUIP team. “Maryville College has a wonderful legacy of developing thoughtful and passionate leaders. In previous years, their Horizons program has been a transformative experience for our youth. We know this will be a unique opportunity for all to explore on a deeper level, develop leadership techniques and broaden their theological experiences.”

High School Youth Theology Institutes Initiative

Maryville College is one of 82 schools participating in the initiative. The schools are located in 29 states and the District of Columbia. Although some schools are independent, many reflect the religious heritage of their founding traditions. These traditions include Baptist, Brethren, Lutheran, Mennonite, Methodist, Presbyterian and Reformed churches, as well as Roman Catholic, non-denominational, Pentecostal and historic African-American Christian communities.

“These colleges and universities are well-positioned to reach out to high school students in this way,” said Dr. Christopher L. Coble, vice president for religion at the Endowment. “They have outstanding faculty in theology and religion who know how to help young people explore the wisdom of religious traditions and apply these insights to contemporary challenges.”

The Endowment is giving \$44.5 million in grants to help a select group of private four-year colleges and universities around the nation to create the institutes. The grants are part of the Endowment’s commitment to identify and cultivate a cadre of theologically minded youth who will become leaders in church and society.

An additional grant to the Forum for Theological Exploration will establish a program that will bring together leaders of the high school youth theology institutes to foster mutual learning and support.

For more information about the MAST program at Maryville College, please contact Kathleen Farnham, director of church relations, at 865.981.8217 or kathleen.farnham@maryvillecollege.edu.

Lilly Endowment Inc. is an Indianapolis-based private philanthropic foundation created in 1937 by three members of the Lilly family - J.K. Lilly Sr. and sons J.K. Jr. and Eli - through gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical business, Eli Lilly & Company. The Endowment exists to support the causes of religion, education and community development. Lilly Endowment’s religion grantmaking is designed to deepen and enrich the religious lives of American Christians. It does this largely through initiatives to enhance and sustain the quality of ministry in American congregations and parishes.

Maryville College is ideally situated in Maryville, Tenn., between the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and Knoxville, the state's third largest city. Founded in 1819, it is the 12th oldest institution of higher learning in the South and maintains an affiliation with the Presbyterian Church (USA). Known for its academic rigor and its focus on the liberal arts, Maryville is where students come to stretch their minds, stretch themselves and learn how to make a difference in the world. Total enrollment for the fall 2015 semester is 1,213.