FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Kimberly Macdonald
Marketing & Communications Manager
617-358-1858
kmacd@bu.edu

BOSTON UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY CENTER FOR PRACTICAL THEOLOGY AWARDED LILLY ENDOWMENT GRANT FOR INNOVATION HUB

Boston, MA – January 29, 2018 – Boston University School of Theology (BUSTH) is pleased to announce Lilly Endowment Inc. has awarded BUSTH a $1.5 million five-year grant to create an innovation hub to foster creative vocational reflection in congregations today. This hub will focus on the important BUSTH constituency of mainline New England Protestant congregations. BUSTH officials intend to share resulting research with others across the United States.

The grant awarded to BUSTH is one of 13 grants Lilly Endowment is making through Called to Lives of Meaning and Purpose, a $20 million national initiative. The initiative is designed to help US-based organizations as they work with congregations to build new ministries and lift up practices of discernment of vocation in Christian traditions. At BUSTH, the Center for Practical Theology will be the locus of the grant project.

The BUSTH innovation hub will support the launching, testing, and refining of innovative ministries designed to support lives of meaning and purpose. A collaborative effort involving faculty across several disciplines, it will focus on both communal and personal dimensions of calling.

“We are excited to embark on this work as a partnership with congregations. While the language of vocation has deep roots in Christian traditions, contemporary contexts raise new questions about how to creatively imagine, articulate, discern, and embody vocations,” said Dr. Claire Wolfteich, Professor of Practical Theology and Spirituality Studies, and principal investigator and project director for the grant. “Our hope is that the project will have a transformative impact on congregations and communities while also bringing distinctive contributions to scholarship and to the ways in which we help form religious leaders here at BUSTH.”

The innovation hub will connect congregations and Boston University School of Theology faculty for mutual learning, support, and accountability over time, with the following objectives:

1. To foster theological reflection, articulation, contextual exploration, and study of Christian calling within and among congregations, with attention to individual and congregational calling;
2. To develop effective means of naming the pressing vocational questions, challenges, and
aspirations in particular congregational contexts and analyzing those in light of related social, cultural, political, and economic forces/structures;

3. To create a generative, contemplative, and collaborative space for envisioning new and creative ministries that support vocational discernment and living, individually and communally;

4. To support the launching, testing, and refining of such ministries and to maximize the learning gained from such initiatives for the benefit of other congregations;

5. To integrate the work of the innovation hub in faculty research and publications, thereby increasing the practical impact of the work and making a scholarly practical theological contribution to existing literature on vocation, congregational studies, and church renewal;

6. To inform the teaching and formation of new pastoral leaders and theological educators through curricular innovation and mentoring shaped by the emerging wisdom of the innovation hub.

The resulting research of the innovation hub will be concurrently integrated in BUSTH faculty research and publications, thereby increasing the distribution of the work and making a defined scholarly contribution to existing literature on vocation, spirituality, congregational studies, and church renewal.

“We are very grateful to Lilly Endowment and to leaders in BUSTH for making this significant project possible,” said Rev. Dr. Mary Elizabeth Moore, Dean of the Boston University School of Theology. “By joining congregations and teacher-scholars, we seek to foster practices of vocational discernment and meaning-making, and to deepen our collective understanding of Christian vocation and the mission of the church. At a time when churches and individual Christians seek renewal, the project promises to bear abundant fruit.”

###

Since 1839, Boston University School of Theology has been preparing leaders to do good. A seminary of the United Methodist Church, Boston University School of Theology is a robustly ecumenical institution that welcomes students from diverse faith traditions who are pursuing a wide range of vocations – parish ministry, conflict transformation, chaplaincy, campus ministry, administration, non-profit management, social work, teaching, justice advocacy, peacemaking, interfaith dialogue, and more. Our world-renowned faculty and strong heritage help students nurture their academic goals and realize any ministry imaginable. For more information, please visit www.bu.edu/sth.

Lilly Endowment Inc. is a national 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 and Co. While those gifts remain the financial bedrock of the Endowment, the Endowment 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.