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The Alban Institute Releases Special Report on Transition into Ministry

Becoming a Pastor: Reflections on the Transition into Ministry

Washington, D.C. (August 22, 2008)—For years religious leaders have debated the strategies for effectively preparing seminary students for ministry. Even though congregational (or clinical) work in pastoral ministry is widely regarded as invaluable to pastoral formation, academic study and established curricula remain the primary context for thinking about the teaching and learning of ministry.

A new report from the Alban Institute in Washington, D.C. calls attention to a promising set of recent experiments conducted by the Fund for Theological Education's Transition into Ministry Program (TiM). Began in 1999 through funding from Lilly Foundation Inc., the TiM initiative seeks to reshape the preparation of pastors for the challenges of 21st century ministry by supplementing the seminary training received in the M.Div. program with a focused apprenticeship in a "community of practice."

In 2005 the Alban Institute, which has worked on this challenge of helping new pastors make the transition from seminary to pastoral leadership since the 1980's, was invited by Lilly Endowment Inc. to look over the shoulders of more than more than 30 project teams, 700 beginning pastors, a variety of denominational and judicatory leaders, several seminaries, thousands of congregation members, clergy and staff, evaluators, and program coordinators involved in this initiative to learn more about this effort and to share early discoveries with religious leaders.

Based on the assumption that pastors will be better prepared to lead congregations when they have had the opportunity to become reflective participants in a local community of practice, the TiM studies seek to counter a two-centuries-long trend of viewing pastoral preparation as something that is largely completed upon graduating from seminary.

This Alban Institute's special report, *Becoming a Pastor—Reflections on the Transition into Ministry*, written by James P. Wind and David J. Wood identifies some of the motivating concerns that gave rise to this effort and highlights significant discoveries that can lay the groundwork for long-term, systemic change in the way people are prepared for practical pastoral leadership.

Building Up Congregations and Their Leaders
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About the Transition into Ministry Initiative

The Transition into Ministry initiative is funded by Lilly Endowment Inc. and coordinated through the Fund for Theological Education. Visit www.transitionintoministry.org to learn more about the individual Transition into Ministry programs and explore resources that support new pastors and their mentors.

About the Alban Institute

The Alban Institute builds up congregations and their leaders to be agents of grace and transformation to shape and heal the world. We do that by acting as an independent center of learning and innovation. Alban interprets, synthesizes, and generates knowledge and makes it available to congregational leaders in ways that are accessible and motivating. We are a trusted voice with valued approaches to learning and leadership development. As a safe place to do vital work and help people make connections with peers and learning facilitators, Alban helps create vibrant learning communities.

www.alban.org

Authors

Reverend Dr. James P. Wind is president of the Alban Institute and a prominent voice in the wider conversation about the role of religion in America and the value of congregations. Dr. Wind has served as president of the Alban Institute since 1995. He also serves on the board of directors of the Indianapolis Center for Congregations, the board of the Cathedral College of Washington National Cathedral, and the advisory board of *Religion & Ethics News Weekly*, the PBS weekly news program that premiered the fall of 1997. He is an ordained minister in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

David J. Wood has been the coordinator of the Fund for Theological Education's Transition into Ministry Program since January 2002 after completing a three-year term as associate director of the Louisville Institute, a Lilly Endowment program for the study of American religion based at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. An American Baptist pastor, David has served as youth minister, associate minister, college chaplain and senior pastor in a variety of settings, including a year on the ministerial staff of The American Church of Paris, France.

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