

“Church and Science Working Together to Cultivate Resilience in the Face of Suffering”

Multnomah Biblical Seminary/Jessup University

More Detailed Information of SECF Grant Initiative

Multnomah Biblical Seminary of Jessup University has been awarded a grant from the American Association for the Advancement of Science’s (AAAS) Dialogue on Science, Ethics, and Religion (DoSER) program* under the “Science Engagement for Congregational Flourishing” (SECF) project. SECF is funded with support from Lilly Endowment Inc.** through its Thriving Congregations Initiative. The title of the seminary’s grant initiative is “Church and Science Working Together to Cultivate Resilience in the Face of Suffering.” Its aim is to equip pastoral leaders to cultivate resilience in the face of suffering and trauma in their personal and ecclesial settings. We will also be partnering with The Institute for Cultural Engagement: New Wine, New Wineskins; Science for the Church; and members of the scientific community.

Many pastors are experiencing a “mental health crisis” manifesting “alarming rates of post-traumatic stress disorder level symptoms” (www.christiancentury.org/review/features/clergy-mental-health-crisis). Key questions we will address include: with the help of science, how might pastoral leaders be better equipped to understand the impact suffering and trauma have on them and on their congregations mentally and emotionally? And, how can they cultivate resilience to address these challenges?

Two cohorts will work simultaneously during the project: one at Jessup University’s Rocklin, California campus and the other at Multnomah Biblical Seminary’s campus in Portland, Oregon. Eight to twelve pastoral leaders will comprise each cohort. The members in each cohort will meet in person a total of six times over two years for participation in webinars with guest instructors, conversations with science advisors, and sustained interaction with designated mental health colleagues assisting them in their ministry contexts. They will also have access to Science for the Church and AAAS DoSER resources. Each meeting will feature forefront science and how that knowledge can help address suffering, trauma, and resilience. During the six meetings, cohort participants will also share what each member has learned and applied through the grant.

We will introduce the two cohorts at a conference on holistic health in the autumn of 2025 and conclude the grant with an event reflecting on the findings. We hope to expand the model and its impact to other pastoral leaders and congregations through development of a graduate certificate program at the seminary and textbook.

Dr. Paul Louis Metzger, Professor of Christian Theology & Theology of Culture, and Dr. David Timms, Dean and Professor of New Testament, are leading this exciting seminary

initiative. Pastoral leaders interested in participating in one of the two cohorts are encouraged to contact the grant team at secf@jessup.edu.

*[The American Association for the Advancement of Science \(AAAS\)](#) is the world's largest general scientific society and publisher of the [Science](#) family of journals. The nonprofit is open to all and fulfills its mission to "advance science and serve society" through initiatives in science policy, international programs, science education, public engagement, and more. Building upon its mission, AAAS established the [Dialogue on Science, Ethics, and Religion \(DoSER\)](#) program in 1995 to facilitate communication between scientific and religious communities. For the latest information and news about AAAS DoSER and the Science Engagement for Congregational Flourishing project, visit ScienceReligionDialogue.org, ScienceforSeminaries.org, and AAAS.org/DoSER.

**The Science Engagement for Congregational Flourishing project is being funded with support from Lilly Endowment Inc. through its [Thriving Congregations Initiative](#), which aims to encourage the flourishing of Christian congregations by helping them deepen their relationship with their faith, enhance their connections with each other, and contribute positively to their communities and the world.