

BRINGING, GROWING, AND CHANGING CONGREGATIONS AND COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

A LILLY ENDOWMENT, INC. GRANT

Rev. Dr. Leo Whitaker
Executive Minister

Rev. Dr. Linwood Blizzard, II
Co-Director of Grant



Lilly Endowment Inc.

A private foundation since 1937



BGCVA'S THEMATIC FOCUS

We Are **BGC**...
Bringing People Together,
Growing Churches, &
Changing Communities

Act 1:8; Matthew 9:35-38; Mark 10:13-16

BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

“LET US MAKE HUMANKIND IN OUR IMAGE,” (GEN 1:26, NRSV) IS BOTH AN INITIATIVE OF THE HOLY AND AN INVITATION FOR HUMANITY TO BECOME HOLY. THE SPIRIT OF THE TRINITY REQUIRES BELIEVERS TO COME TOGETHER FOR THE CAUSE OF CHRIST SO THE KINGDOM OF GOD CAN BE UNITED. THE CHURCH IS NOT ONLY THE VISIBLE PRESENCE OF GOD’S KINGDOM, IT IS ALSO THE LIVING HOLY ORGANISM CALLED THE BODY OF CHRIST. ACTS 1:8 RECORDS THE SAVIOUR’S COMMISSION THAT WE BE WITNESSES IN ALL THE EARTH. THEREFORE, WE SHOULD USE EVERY HUMAN EFFORT TO BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER INTO THE BODY OF CHRIST. BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER IS THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH.

GROWING CHURCHES

PRAYER TO GOD, FAITH IN JESUS, AND THE AID OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS HOW WE GROW. CHILDREN NEED OUR NURTURING CARE TO GUIDE THEM IN LIFE AND TO GROW IN FAITH AS REFLECTED IN MARK 10:13-169, NRSV. CHILDREN AND YOUTH ARE WRESTLING WITH ISSUES AND CHALLENGES THAT THE CHURCH CAN CREATIVELY ADDRESS WITHOUT JUDGMENT OR CRITIQUE. THE CHURCH IS ABSENT IN MANY OF THE DEVELOPMENTAL YEARS OF YOUNG ADULTS. ADULTS SEEK SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE IN LIFE BUT OFTEN AS A LAST RESORT. MIDDLE ADULTS AND SENIORS ARE THE MAJORITY MEMBERS OF OUR CHURCHES, ASSOCIATIONS, AND CONVENTION. HOWEVER, THE MEMBERSHIP OF EACH WILL CONTINUE TO DECREASE IF WE ARE NOT ENGAGED IN BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER AND GROWING CHURCHES.

CHANGING COMMUNITIES

WHENEVER THE CHURCH WORKS IN UNITY AND SERVICE, COMMUNITIES ARE IMPACTED. THE CHANGE OF THE COMMUNITY IS DIRECTLY LINKED TO THE CHANGES THAT ARE OVERDUE AND NECESSARY IN THE CHURCH. IN THE MINISTRY OF JESUS, THE MARGINALIZED ARE INCLUDED IN THE FAITH AND THE RELIGIOUS ARE INSTRUCTED TO SERVE ALL IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH. IN MATTHEW 9:35-38, NRSV, JESUS GOES TO THE NEEDY AND MINISTERS. WE CAN BE THE CHANGE THAT WE SEEK IN OUR NEIGHBORHOODS, COMMUNITIES, COUNTIES, CITIES, STATES, NATIONS, AND WORLD. OUR COMMISSION IS WORLD-WIDE, AND WE MUST SEE OURSELVES IN CHANGING THE WORLD.

Acts 1:8 NRSV

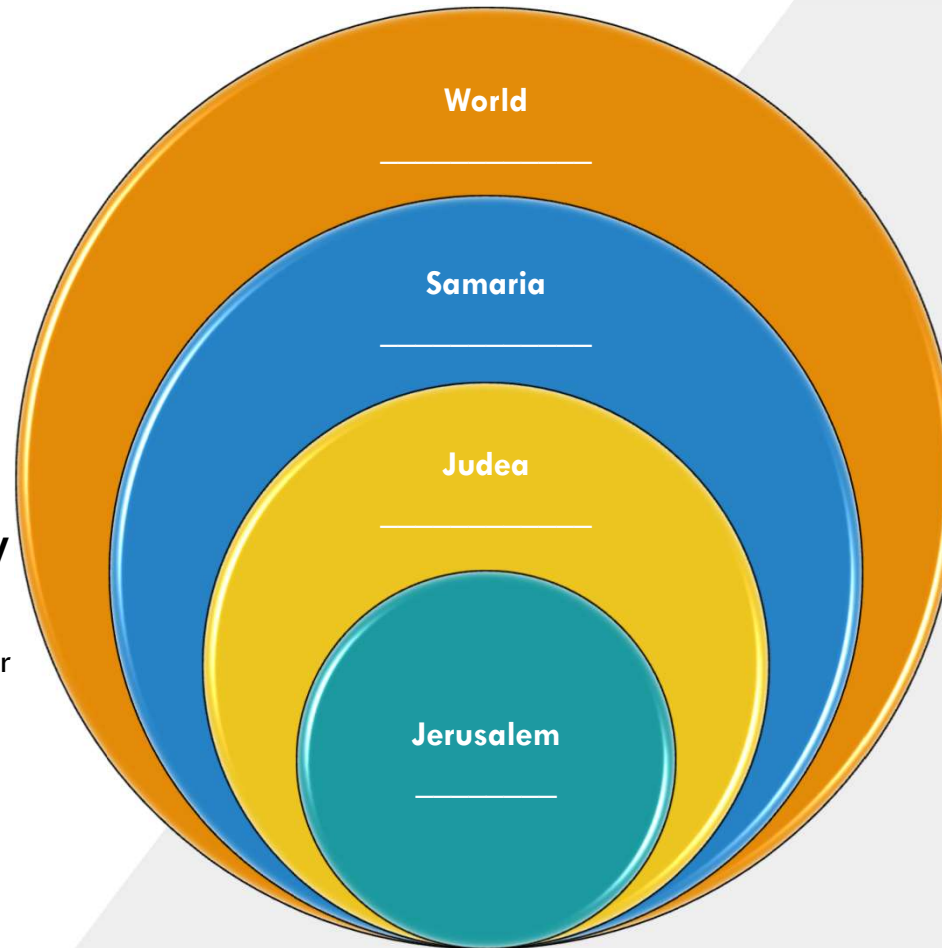
Acts 1:8 NRSV

⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Mark 10: 13 & 16 NRSV

¹³ People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them.

¹⁶ And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.



Matthew 9:35-38 NRSV

Matthew 9:35-38 NRSV

The Harvest Is Great, the Laborers Few

³⁵ Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸ therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

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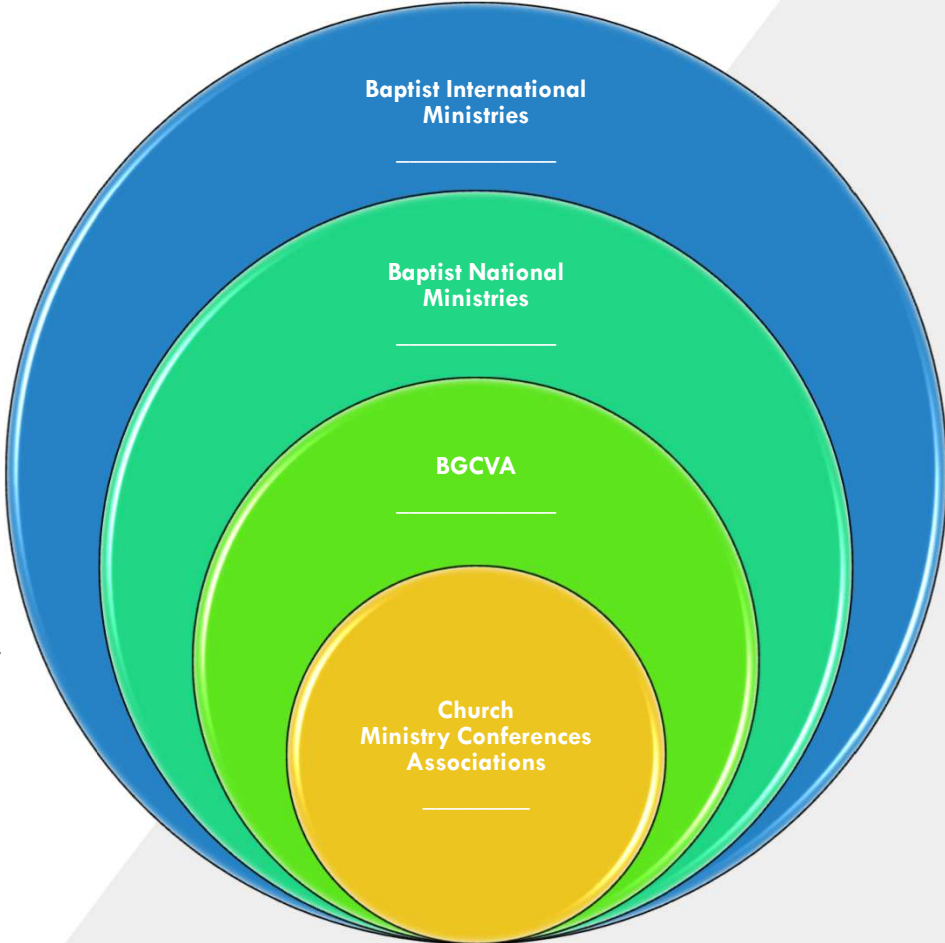
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We Are BGC...

Bringing People Together, Growing Churches, and Changing Communities

How are we Bringing People Together?

- Who is involved in the ministry?
- Who is missing that we should reach out to?

How are we Growing Churches?

- What are the different ways we can think about spiritual growth?

How are we Changing Communities?

- What change do we hope to see in the world?
- How will people's lives be changed?



AFRICAN AMERICAN CHRISTIANS WHO ARE BAPTIST



Building, Growing, and Changing Congregations and Communities Together

PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- What is The Lilly Endowment, Inc.?
- The Grant Application Process
- BGCVA and the Grant
 - The Purpose
 - The Impact
 - The Timing
 - The Staffing
 - The Access
 - The Funding
 - The Accountability (Programmatic and Fiscal)



Building, Growing, and Changing Congregations and Communities Together

WHAT IS THE LILLY ENDOWMENT, INC.?

- Built from the wealth of the Lilly family, with major initial investments from Eli Lilly and Company (pharmaceuticals)
- Endowment gave \$1.31 billion in grants in 2022 and has assets exceeding \$32 billion
- The focus of their grants are community development, education, and religion
- Visit www.lillyendowment.org for more information on their history and their past grant recipients



Building, Growing, and Changing Congregations and Communities Together

BGCVA AND THE GRANT

The Grant Application Process

- June 2023 – Team from BGCVA authored a grant application for \$ 1.25 million
 - Rev. Dr. Leo Whitaker
 - Rev. Dr. Mary Young
 - Rev. Dr. Linwood Blizzard, II
 - Rev. Dr. Eugene Quarles
- June 22, 2023 – Submitted the grant to the Lilly Endowment, Inc.
- October/November 2023 – Preliminary indication of grant award.
- November 20, 2023 – Grant approval received.
- December 21, 2023 – Lilly Endowment, Inc. approves press release.
- December 22, 2023 – Notification given to the Board of Directors of BGCVA.



Building, Growing, and Changing Congregations and Communities Together

BGCVA AND THE GRANT

The Purpose

- The grant is designed to create a new space for congregations to reflect on who they are in today's POST-COVID religious environment in rethinking:
 - How the congregation connects with God?
 - How the congregation connects with each other?
 - How the congregation connects with community?
- The BGCVA has five (5) regions: Northern, Eastern, Western, Southern, and Central that each will have a cohort of churches. This grant will serve each region.



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BGCVA AND THE GRANT

The Purpose

- A cohort is originally composed of 10 churches from each region
- Annually, 10 churches will be added to each regional cohort that will learn and share together
- The grant will assess the gaps and challenges that exist within congregations and develop “wrap-around services” at both the regional and state level for congregations
 - Wrap-around services is a spiritual approach that offers assistance to churches to fully maximize their gifts and talents to bring people together, grow churches and change communities



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BGCVA AND THE GRANT

The Impact

- The grant will enable at least \$1.25 million to be expensed on improving the lives of our congregations and communities across Virginia over a period of five (5) years.
- 250 congregations will participate within cohorts over the grant period.
- 50 congregations will be eligible to receive a share of the \$75,000 grant to address community and congregational needs.
- The grant will be housed at the BGCVA Headquarters, namely Suite 2. There will be upgrades for improving communications of needs of congregations across Virginia back to the office of BGCVA and a greater ability to dispatch resources, partnerships, and capacity building.
- Communication and technology upgrades of Suite 2 will assist BGCVA in centralizing this new point of service.
- The grant will enhance ministries to support some of the ongoing work of BGCVA.



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BGCVA AND THE GRANT

The Timing – The First Year (2024)

- January 2024: Staffing of Directors, Administrative Assistant, and Coordinator of Faith Formation
- March 2024
 - Regionalization model and coordinators and leaders selected
 - Onboarding consultants
 - Curriculum development
- April 2024: Churches apply for cohorts
- May 2024: Selection of churches for cohort
- June – October 2024: Cohorts gather for three (3) sessions
- October 2024: Regional Meetings
- November 2024: Annual gathering and Grant application and selection
- November – December 2024: Survey and data analysis by team



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The Timing – Annually After First Year (2025 – 2028)

- January: Refining process tools from prior year(s)
- February: Churches apply for cohorts
- March: Selection of churches for cohort
- May – September: Cohorts gather for three (3) sessions
- October: Regional Meetings
- November: Annual gathering and Grant application and selection
- November – December: Survey and data analysis by team



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The Staffing

- Current
 - Rev. Dr. Leo Whitaker, as Executive Minister of BGCVA, will serve a role of Co-Director
 - Rev. Dr. Linwood Blizzard II will serve as Co-Director
 - Rev. Dr. Mary Young will serve as a Consultant
- Forthcoming
 - Supplemental Administrative Assistant
 - Coordinator of Christian Faith Formation
 - Five (5) Regional Coordinators overseeing wraparound services
 - Ten (10) Regional Leaders assisting Regional Coordinator with wraparound services
 - Consultants as determined and needed



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BGCVA AND THE GRANT

The Access

- Congregations can access the grant through a congregation application to be part of the yearly cohort for the region
- Congregations can access the grant through a community and congregation grant of up to \$1,500
- Congregations can access the grant through having members of the congregation/association apply for regional coordinators or leaders for wraparound services



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BGCVA AND THE GRANT

The Funding

- \$1.25 million has been given to BGCVA for expensing over five (5) years at \$250,000 per year
- The first \$250,000 has been allocated for this year
- The remaining \$1 million has been split up into individual certificate of deposit (CD) accounts with varying lengths based on cashflow over the next four (4) years at an average rate of 5% per year, which will generate funds available for the General Fund of BGCVA
 - The amount ensures FDIC protections on the funds



Building, Growing, and Changing Congregations and Communities Together

BGCVA AND THE GRANT

The Accountability: Programmatic

- We are measuring our success
 - Number of congregations reached and participating
 - The staffing plan
 - Intentional pre and post surveys for cohort churches with appropriate interpretation
 - Use of pre and post narratives to describe the impact and the change
- Grant names Rev. Dr. Linwood Blizzard, II for programmatic accountability in providing data back to Lilly Endowment, Inc.



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BGCVA AND THE GRANT

The Accountability: Fiscal

- Fiscal accountability provided by oversight of the Financial (Commission) Ministry and the Grants Committee under the General Board under the leadership the Rev. Dr. Ricardo Brown
- Weekly discussions and monthly reporting to the General Board regarding expenses from the past month and cash-flow projections provided by the grant's co-directors.
- Quarterly and annual reports to the Lilly Endowment, Inc.
- Annual financials audited yearly.



Building, Growing, and Changing Congregations and Communities Together

BUILDING, GROWING, AND CHANGING CONGREGATIONS AND COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

The BGCVA and the Lilly Endowment, Inc.

- We seek transformation!
- We seek a renewal of congregation and denominational life in Virginia.
- We seek a greater connection between our congregations and our God.
- We seek a greater connection between our congregations internally with one another and between congregations.
- We seek a greater witness and connection with our communities.
- We see Thriving Congregations Bringing People Together, Growing Churches, and Changing Communities.!
- We are BGC!

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What Questions Do You Have?



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