



TABERNACLE BAPTIST CHURCH

(Corner of Hopper and King Streets)

Rev. Dr. Mark S. Caruana, Pastor

Rev. Daniel Htoo, Associate Pastor

Rev. Dr. James V. Davison, Pastor Emeritus

Press Release

TABERNACLE BAPTIST CHURCH RECEIVES GRANT IN THE 2012 NATIONAL CLERGY RENEWAL PROGRAM

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Tabernacle Baptist Church of Utica has received a grant of \$47,425. to enable its Pastor, the Reverend Dr. Mark S. Caruana, to participate in the 2012 National Clergy Renewal Program funded by the Indianapolis-based Lilly Endowment Inc. It is one of 147 congregations across the country that will support their ministers in the program, which allows pastors to step back from their busy lives and renew their spirits for the benefit of their ongoing ministries.

Now in its 13th year, the program invites Christian congregations and ministers to plan a period of intentional reflection and renewal. It gives ministers time to take a break from their daily obligations and gain the fresh perspective and renewed energy that a carefully considered “sabbath time” of travel, study, rest and prayer can provide.

Through this program, Christian congregations apply for grants of up to \$50,000 to support a renewal program for their pastors. Working with their congregations, the ministers design their renewal programs to fit their own needs and aspirations. Pastors are encouraged to include their families in the renewal activities. Up to \$15,000 of the grant may be used for the congregation to pay for interim pastoral leadership while the pastor is away, as well as for renewal activities within the church.



1,745 congregations have participated in the clergy renewal program since it began in 2000, including the 147 congregations in this round that received grants totaling nearly \$6.5 million.

During Dr. Caruana's thirteen year tenure, Tabernacle Baptist Church has welcomed hundreds of ethnic Karen refugees from Burma (Myanmar) into its congregation. Pastor Caruana's September – December 2013 sabbatical will provide him with the opportunity to immerse himself in the history and culture of Burma, the experience of Baptist Christians in Burma, and the experience of other Baptist congregations in the U.S. that are welcoming refugees from Burma into their fellowships. His plans include an extended visit to Burma in late 2013.

"Time and time again we hear that these renewal experiences are transformative for pastors, their families and their congregations," said N. Clay Robbins, the Endowment's president and CEO. "We intend for this program to enable pastors to live for a while at a different pace and in a new environment, in Sabbath time and space. Many pastors and their families return with a rich store of shared memories, having had large blocks of unbroken time together, uninterrupted by the 24-hour-a-day routine of the ministry.

"The wealth of imagination unleashed by this program is truly wonderful to see," he said. "We can think of no better way to honor these hardworking, faithful men and women than to help them experience personal growth and spiritual renewal in ways that they themselves design and find meaningful."