



2027 First Book Grant for Research on Minoritized Christian Communities in North America

The Louisville Institute First Book Grant for Research on Minoritized Christian Communities in North America **assists early career, pre-tenured religion scholars who have faced significant adversity in their professional lives and may lack the financial security or institutional support needed to complete book-length manuscripts.** The grant supports projects addressing studies of Christian faith and practice in the United States or Canada, examining how minoritized communities' religious beliefs, worship, leadership, and institutions are shaped by social history, migration, and cultural difference in North American contexts. Of particular interest to the Louisville Institute are projects that bridge academic scholarship and the life of the church in North America.

Grant Details

Grant Amount

Up to US\$55,000

Project Timeframe:

Academic year 2027-2028
or calendar year 2027

Application Due Date:

January 15, 2027
(11:59 p.m. ET)

Awards Announced:

April 2027

Winter Seminar:

January 2028



QUESTIONS? Please email grants@louisville-institute.org

Apply Online: [Louisville-Institute.org](https://louisville-institute.org)

Application Deadline: Jan 15, 2027



What is the First Book Grant for Research on Minoritized Christian Communities in North America?

The First Book Grant for Research on Minoritized Christian Communities in North America supports academic/sabbatical leave for early-career scholars, particularly those teaching at theological schools, who are completing the research and writing required for publication of their first scholarly book (or, when necessary for tenure or promotion, a second book). Awards are made based on scholarly merit, feasibility, and the project's contribution to the study and practice of minoritized Christianity and Christian-related institutions and social issues that bridge the North American church and academy. Preference is given to studies already underway, including manuscripts under contract or active consideration with an academic publisher.

Applicants should be pre-tenured faculty members working in full-time, tenure-track or renewable contract/continual academic positions at accredited institutions of higher education (seminary, theological school, or college/university) in the United States or Canada. The FBG typically buys academic release to enable scholars to spend a full school year devoted to the research project free from teaching, administrative, and service obligations. Grants awarded in the 2027 cycle will fund sabbaticals taking place during the 2027-2028 academic year, or during the 2027 calendar year.

You can read more about previous FBG grantees and their projects on [our website](#).

First Book grantees also attend Winter Seminar, a two-day gathering where award recipients from three different Louisville Institute programs gather to share their projects and engage in valuable collaboration together. Winter Seminar for this grant cycle will take place in January 2028. Approved travel and lodging expenses for participation in the Winter Seminar are covered by the Louisville Institute. Attending this event is a requirement for receiving a First Book Grant.

Who is eligible for a First Book Grant?

Eligible candidates:

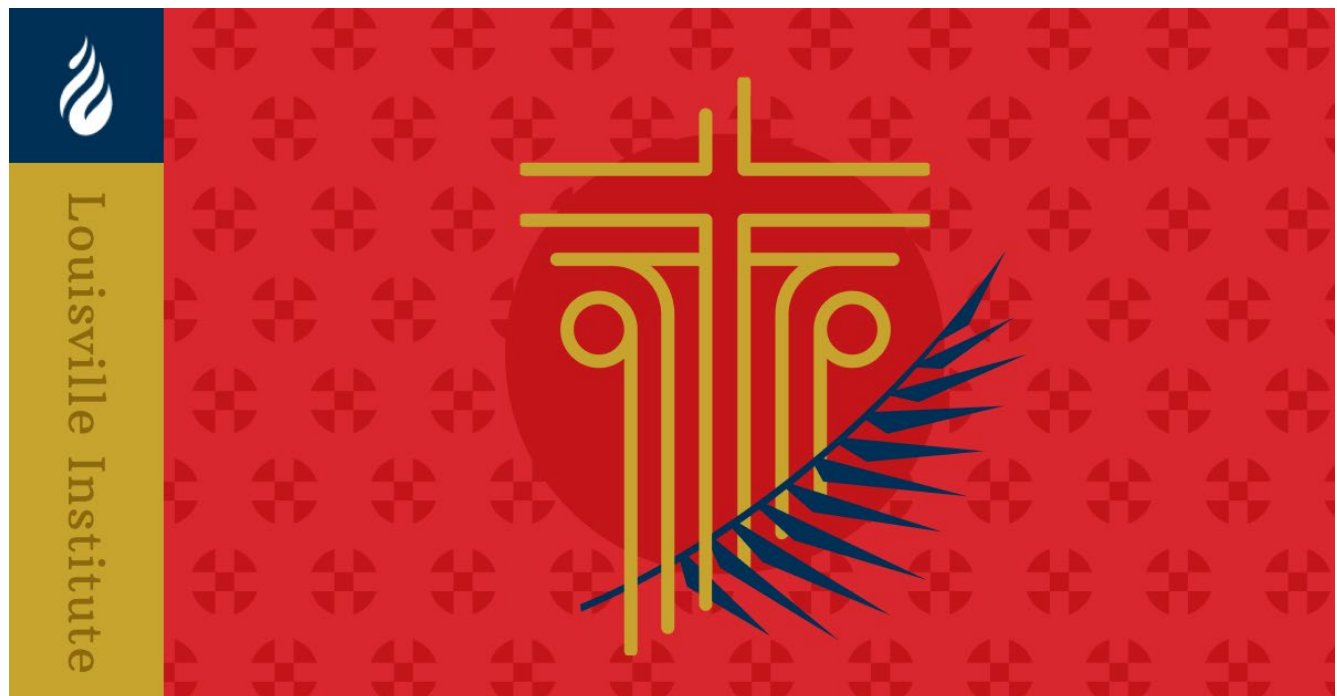
- have earned a terminal research degree, typically a Ph.D. or Th.D.
- are pre-tenured faculty members working in full-time, tenure-track or renewable contract/continual academic positions at accredited institutions of higher education (seminary, theological school, or college/university) in the United States or Canada
- have faced significant adversity in their professional lives or careers defined broadly as circumstances that create significant barriers to opportunity, stability, or well-being, e.g., experiences of discrimination, medical diagnoses or health challenges, economic/financial hardship, natural disasters or environmental crises, traumatic events
- can negotiate release time of up to a full academic year free from teaching and administrative responsibilities
- are engaged in a scholarly research project leading to publication of their first book, or a second book if necessary for tenure at their institution
- may work in various fields such as history, systematic and practical theology, social science, ethics, biblical studies, etc., or be interdisciplinary

Additional Eligibility Information:

- Doctoral students are not eligible for a First Book Grant but may be eligible for one of [our fellowship programs](#).
- Individuals may only apply for one LI grant or fellowship between June 1, 2026, and May 31, 2027.
- Any previous fellowships or grants from the Louisville Institute must be completed and final reports submitted before applying for another LI fellowship or grant.
- Members of the Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary staff, faculty, Board of Trustees, or student body or their immediate family members (parents, spouses, or children) are ineligible for Louisville Institute grants or fellowships. Members of the Louisville Institute Advisory Board and their immediate family members are also ineligible.
- Louisville Institute grantees may not simultaneously hold two individual grants from Lilly Endowment-funded organizations that together total more than US\$55,000. Individual grants are those held by the same project director, not necessarily the same institution.

How can I use First Book Grant funds?

- FBG funds typically buy release time from academic duties, usually to support a second term or semester of academic release to supplement an existing semester/term sabbatical. If you teach at an institution of higher education that does not grant sabbaticals and/or if you are in a full-time, permanent teaching position that does not include sabbatical leave, contact us to discuss your eligibility before applying for this grant at grants@louisville-institute.org.
- The total amount of a First Book Grant is typically designated for salary/benefit replacement for sabbatical/research leave. However, if you are requesting funds for research materials or assistance, travel, or other resources beyond research leave, you will need to prepare a line-item and an explanatory budget narrative (see below).
- For questions about grant proposals, please email grants@louisville-institute.org.



What makes for a strong application?

- Strong applications offer a clear and intriguing primary question and a thoughtful project plan related to that question. Selection committees want to know what makes you passionate and excited about your idea, and how you intend to dig into it.
- The most competitive projects are connected to or important for the North American church and bridge the church and the academy.
- We strongly encourage you to share your proposal with trusted colleagues – ideally those who will write your recommendation letters – to receive feedback and suggestions prior to submitting your application.

How do I apply?

- Specific requirements of the application are described below.
- All application elements are submitted online through our [application portal](#).
- Applications are due by 11:59 p.m. ET January 15, 2027, and letters of recommendation are **due from the recommenders** January 22, 2027.

What is the selection process?

- The Louisville Institute appoints a selection committee to review proposals and award First Book Grants. The selection committee meets about 8 weeks after the application due date.
- In 2027, we will award 3 First Book Grants. Previously, we have typically received approximately 20 applications each cycle. However, we received over 70 in 2026 for this highly competitive award.
- Awards will be announced publicly in April 2027.

Preparing your application

- 1. Read through all the application requirements** in this guide.
- 2. Create an online profile on our application portal.** You will be asked to provide your name, contact information, and other information about yourself. If you have previously applied for a Louisville Institute program, make sure to update your contact information.
- Once you have created your profile, **click the “Apply” button and select “First Book Grant”** to begin entering the elements of your application.
- 4. Applications are due by 11:59 p.m. ET January 15, 2027.** We recommend that you put together the application elements in time to share them with friends or colleagues for feedback before submitting them. Please do your best to provide clear, refined, and edited documents.
- 5. Recommendation letters are due from the recommenders January 22, 2027.** In the application portal you will be asked to provide contact information for your recommenders — name, email address, and phone number — and we will send them a link to upload their letters.



Application requirements

First Book Grant applications require the following elements. After you have created your online profile, you will be prompted to provide the following:

- 1. General information about your project.** Fill in the title of your project, the proposed amount in US dollars, and start and end dates. Then complete the following:
 - a) **Project core question.** In a few sentences (about 100 words/ maximum 500 characters and spaces), describe the primary question you want to explore and why it is important to you, your community, and/or the church in North America
 - b) **Project summary/abstract.** In approximately 200 words (maximum 2000 characters and spaces), give a brief overview of your project. Strong summaries are focused, well-articulated glimpses into your thinking that help our selection committee envision the project and your capacity to carry it out
 - c) **Project snapshot.** In one sentence, give an intriguing, quotable “snapshot” of your project for use on our website and in publicity materials.
 - d) **Proposal keyword tags.** Select 3-5 keyword tags that describe your project. Begin typing to select or type to enter a new word.
 - e) **Budget overview:** In rough percentages, please list how you plan to use grant funds (e.g. 50% for course buyout, 50% for research assistants and resources; 100% for an additional semester of sabbatical leave; 25% for travel, 40% for childcare, 35% for summer research leave).

- 2. Statement of significant adversity.** In a few sentences (about 100 words/maximum 500 characters and spaces), describe any significant adversity that you have encountered in your professional life or career. Include your name and page numbers on each page of the document and upload it to the application as a PDF.

3. Project Essay. Prepare an essay of about 1500 words (5-7 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font) that tells the story of your project. Include your name and page numbers on each page of the document and upload to the application as a PDF.

In the essay, please explain:

- a) The primary question you want to explore, and how you came to care about that question. Why does this project matter to you, your community, and the larger North American church? (Note: Louisville Institute is particularly interested in projects that bridge church and academy.)
- b) The importance of your project, how it connects or bridges the academy and the church, and why you are well placed to carry it out. In other words, why should the Louisville Institute fund your project at this time?
- c) The current status of the project and what work remains to be done. If you are revising your dissertation for publication, describe what additional research you plan to undertake, as well as other updates or rewriting that will be necessary. The selection committee will be looking to see how a grant will help you bring your project to completion. If you have a book proposal under revision or a book contract, include that information in your essay.
- d) A comprehensive project plan, including the following as applicable to your project:
 - Methods and approaches: What research methods will you use, and why? For example, which archives will you visit? How many people will you interview/survey, and how will they be selected? Make sure to explain why the methods and parameters make sense for your project. Even if details are not fully finalized, we want to see that you've thought through the "how" of your project.
 - Partners: Who do you hope will be involved? How will you determine your partners/participants? How will you build those relationships? How will you compensate participants and partners?
 - Analysis: How will you analyze the data you collect? How do these strategies align with your research intentions?
- e) Your project's intended impact:
 - Describe the kind of book you will write and any steps you've taken toward publication. Who is the intended audience for your project? Who do you hope will benefit from it?
 - What impact do you hope your project will have? What contribution will your project make to your field or the academy? How will your project be useful to theological or religious education, or to religious leaders or practitioners? How else will you share what you learn and discover?
- f) A timeline of the project:

- A timeline and schedule for the project, and how you intend to carry out the project within the timeline. Projects need to be conducted during the 2027-2028 academic year, or the 2027 calendar year. Please include in this timeline the semesters or terms you will be on academic or sabbatical leave for your project. If you work at an institution that does not grant sabbaticals and/or if you are in a full-time, permanent teaching position that does not include sabbatical leave, you must contact us to discuss your eligibility before applying for this grant at grants@louisville-institute.org.

4. Bibliography:

Compile a carefully-selected bibliography (max. 2–3 pages, double-spaced) that identifies the major relevant literature and other seminal resources related to your project, and that demonstrates your developing expertise with the subject matter. Include your name and page numbers on each page of the document and upload to the application as a PDF.

5. Budget Plan. Please submit one of the following (see page 12 for details):

- a) **Salary/benefit replacement that funds sabbatical leave.**
- b) **A budget proposal.**

6. Curriculum vitae or resume. Provide a current CV or resume of **no more than 4** pages, including (but not limited to):

- a) your education with dates attended and degrees earned, starting with the most recent
- b) employment starting with current/most recent
- c) publications and/or presentations
- d) professional affiliations
- e) other information that will help the selection committee get to know you, such as academic or other service, church leadership, etc.

7. Two letters of recommendation, due from recommenders on **January 22, 2027**.

In the online application portal, you will be asked to provide contact information (name, email address, and phone number) for your recommenders, and they will be sent a link by email through which they can upload letters. As soon as you submit contact information, your recommender will automatically receive that email. Make sure to contact your recommenders in advance to explain the FBG and to share your project proposal. All letters must be in PDF format.

- a) Your **first recommendation letter** should come from a **colleague** within or outside your institution who can discuss:

- your reliability and capacity to carry out the proposed project
 - how your previous work demonstrates skills needed to conduct this study and coordinate this grant
 - how the project bridges the North American church and academy.
- b) Your **second recommendation letter** should come from someone who can assess the **feasibility and significance of your project**, specifically:
- the viability and potential of your project and its plan
 - the project's broader academic and/or ecclesial significance
 - the distinctiveness of this project in light of what others are doing or have already done
 - why this proposed project matters to the North American church and/or how it bridges the church and academy.

We will notify you via email when we receive the letters from your recommenders.



7. Letter of release, due from academic dean or department chair January 22, 2027. This letter will confirm that if you receive a grant, you will be released from teaching and academic responsibilities for the grant's duration.

- a) Applicants should be in touch with their deans or chairs in advance to explain the grant and the release requirement.
- b) Make sure to follow the sabbatical leave procedures for your institution and request/apply for appropriate leave time in accordance with the timeline of the grant. If you have already requested and/or received confirmation of sabbatical leave from your institution, this information and related dates should be included in the letter.

- c) In the application portal, you will be asked to provide contact information (name, email address, and phone number) for the appropriate person to provide the release letter. We will immediately email this contact with a link to submit the document online. We will also notify you via email when the letter is received. This letter must be submitted by January 22, 2027.

Completing the application

You can edit all portions of your application until 11:59 p.m. ET January 15, 2027. Changes cannot be made after the application due date. Letters of recommendation are **due from the recommenders** January 22, 2027. Late applications will not be accepted.

In the weeks following the application due date, LI staff will process the applications to prepare them for the selection committee for adjudication. We will send you confirmation by email when your application is complete.

First Book Grant budgets

For your grant budget, you will need to submit one of the following:

- a) **Salary/benefit replacement that funds sabbatical leave.** If the total amount of your grant is designated for salary/benefit replacement for a specified period, such as for a semester sabbatical, and the grant will be made payable to your institution, a statement to this effect will suffice for your budget. See below.
- b) **A budget proposal.** If you are requesting funds for research materials, assistants, travel, or other resources beyond or in addition to salary/benefit replacement, you must provide a budget proposal that includes both a line-item budget and an explanatory budget narrative for your project. (See below.)

Salary/benefit replacement confirmation

The First Book Grant may be used for salary/benefit replacement for a specified period, and the grant made payable to the grantee's institution. For such grant proposals, simply upload a page in your application that specifies the amount of the proposed grant, the institution to whom it will be sent, and the leave period the grant will fund. For example:

The total amount of this grant, US \$55,000, is to be made payable to [Name of Institution] and used for salary/benefit replacement for Dr. [Name]'s research leave during the fall semester, September 1 – December 31, 2027.

Please note: The grant or contract office at your institution may usually require that a percentage of your grant go to "indirect costs" or overhead to administer the grant. Please note that for First Book Grants, the Louisville Institute stipulates that **the full grant amount must be used for the grantee's salary/benefits and/or project costs. We do not allow the grantee's institution to receive indirect costs for this grant.** Please be in touch with your grant or contract office before submitting your grant proposal to alert them to this Louisville Institute stipulation.

Preparing a budget proposal

If you are requesting FBG funds for research materials or assistance, travel, or other resources instead of in addition to salary/benefit replacement, your budget proposal should designate the specifics of your project and how the money will be spent.

There are two parts to your budget proposal:

- A line-item budget
- A budget narrative

In short, your line-item budget is a list of categories of expenses for your project and a dollar figure for each category. The budget narrative briefly explains each category and how it is relevant to the project. The line-item and budget narratives are described below. Most budget proposals are 2–3 pages total. Save the budget document as a single PDF with your name on each page.



Budget Guidelines

FBG funds may be used for:

- Costs associated with conducting a scholarly, academic research project, such as:
 - Compensation for research assistants, interviewees, focus group participants, consultants, and others who will work on the project
 - Tools to facilitate study, like database access, a recording device, survey or data software, transcription programs, etc.
 - Travel directly related to the project and its investigation, such as accessing archives, museums, or libraries; to interview participants or conduct focus groups or participant observation; or for experiences connected to the project (e.g., site visits)
 - Resources related to learning, such as books, trainings, or consultations
 - Childcare or other family support needed to undertake the project
 - Course buyout or salary replacement for unpaid time off
- Semester or term academic research leave (sabbaticals). Options include:
 - Adding a sabbatical semester or term to an existing planned sabbatical
 - Sabbatical funding for scholars whose institutions do not grant paid sabbaticals.
- A combination of the above elements.

FBG funds cannot be used for:

- Your regular salary to continue your current job
- New programs or staff positions in your department
- Expenses in pursuit of a degree
- Tools for your everyday work, such as an office chair, desktop computer, or cell phone

Common budget items

Below are examples of common budget items. This is not an exhaustive list, so please create a budget and categories that align with your project.

- **Administrative costs:** expenses directly related to performing the proposed grant project, such as supplies, printing, postage, Zoom or conference software, etc. Generally, such items can be grouped under one category in the line-item budget but should be explained individually in the budget narrative. However, any significant single expense should be listed as an individual line item.
- **Books and resources:** print, digital, and/or media materials that foster your learning. Specific titles do not need to be included in the budget proposal.
- **Participant compensation:** gift cards, stipends, meals, or other compensation for participants in your project, such those being interviewed or completing a survey.
- **Travel expenses:** can include flights, mileage, public transit, ride shares, etc., as well as accommodations, food, and other likely expenses. Travel expenses should be based on your organization's standard travel policies, including per diem amounts. Document your calculations and estimates and explain in your narrative essay how the travel is intrinsic to the project. SGR funds should not be used for vacation travel or general tourism.
- **Personnel:**
 - Salary replacement: salary or wages used to compensate the grantee for unpaid time off to conduct the project.
 - Fringe benefits: the amount your organization charges for benefits such as health insurance and retirement savings. This is typically a percentage of the overall compensation amount. If rates are different for different individuals, please include a summary of these amounts in the narrative budget. Sample fringe benefits table:

Sample Table	Salary	Fringe Rate	Total
Project Director	\$40,000	25%	\$10,000
Admin. Assistant	\$15,000	20%	\$3,000
Research Assistant	\$20,000	N/A	\$0
TOTAL			\$13,000

Common budget items

- **Contracted assistants or consultants:** compensation for transcription services, research assistance, etc. If you plan to hire project assistants or consultants, describe in your proposal the purpose, expected duration, and rate for the consultant's work. When you hire consultants, initiate and retain for your files a contract that includes the following:
 - consultant's name, address, and social security number
 - beginning and ending dates of engagement, and estimated number of consulting hours to complete the project
 - description of work to be performed, reports written, etc.
 - hourly rate and method of payment for work performed
 - description of any special arrangements such as hiring of secretarial/clerical assistance, renting of office space or equipment, overhead expenses, etc.
 - a termination statement noting time requirement and obligations for payment
- **Other miscellaneous costs:** items that are not easily included in another category but may be necessary to conduct the project.



Line-item budget

Your line-item budget is a table of categories in which you anticipate money being spent for your project (see sample categories above), and the anticipated costs of each. The total of these line items should equal the amount you are requesting for the grant. If you are in Canada, you may put together your line-item budget and budget narrative in Canadian dollars, but please indicate the exchange rate and show that the final amount is equal to or less than US\$55,000.

Create a table or spreadsheet that includes your proposed budget items. If grant funds will be spent over two years, include columns and amounts for each year, as well as the total amount for the two years combined. See sample budgets below.

SAMPLE BUDGET #1: Applicant Name, Project Title, Proposed Budget

	2027	2028	Total
Personnel			
Salary/benefits 2 semesters @ \$20,000 per semester)	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$40,000
Research Costs			
Books & Reference Materials	\$1,000	\$500	\$1,500
Telephone, Zoom, mailing, copies, supplies	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$6,000
Travel & Lodging	\$3,500	\$3,000	\$6,500
Total Requested	\$27,500	\$26,500	\$54,000

SAMPLE BUDGET #2: Applicant Name, Project Title, Proposed Budget

	2027	2028	Total
1. Personnel			
Salary/benefits for two semesters	\$22,000	\$22,000	\$44,000
Transcription services (140hrs @\$15/hr)	\$21,000	\$0	\$21,000
2. Equipment			
Digital Voice Reorder	\$130	0	\$130
3. Travel			
Ground transportation, 1000 miles @ \$.725/mile	\$335	\$335	\$670
Airfare to Denver, Atlanta, Dallas	\$1,050	\$1,050	\$2,100
Lodging (8 nights)	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$2,000
Meals (16 days @\$75 per diem)	\$600	\$600	\$1,200
4. Supplies			
Printing, materials, etc.	\$600	\$400	\$1,000
5. Participant Compensation			
20 church leaders for interview @\$50	\$1,000	\$0	\$1,000
6. Supplies			
Books & Reference Material	\$400	\$400	\$800
Total Requested	\$29,215	\$25,785	\$19,650

Budget Narrative

The budget narrative is essentially a series of sentences or paragraphs that illustrate your budget proposal. The budget narrative gives explanations for the items in your budget and enables us to understand your proposal fully.

To create a budget narrative, list all the items in your line-item budget and provide a brief description of and rationale for each. Specifically include:

- the budget item
- how it helps accomplish the project
- how you calculated the amount requested

Budget narrative examples:

- **Item 1: Research Assistant, \$1200.** To complete my project, I anticipate needing a research assistant for 60 hours, and we pay \$20/hour.
- **Item 2: Participant compensation, \$250.** I plan to conduct five 1-hour long interviews and will provide \$50 gift cards for each participant.

Tax Considerations

Because individual recipients of Louisville Institute grants may be liable for income taxes on funds awarded, grantees often find it more convenient to have their grants made payable to a tax-exempt nonprofit organization with a 501(c)(3) status. The Institute does not provide advice on tax matters; we advise grantees to consult their own tax advisors to determine the tax consequences of receiving grant funds.

Who We Are

With the generous support of Lilly Endowment, Inc., the Louisville Institute bridges Church and academy by awarding grants and fellowships to those who lead and study North American religious institutions, practices, and movements, and thereby promoting scholarship that strengthens Church, academy, and society, and ultimately contributes to the flourishing of the Church. To find out more:

- [Grants](#)
- [Fellowships](#)

The Institute's [Advisory Board](#) shapes mission and direction, helps review and approve grant and fellowship proposals, and evaluates initiatives and programs. Our [staff](#) guides the Institute's work on a daily basis from our offices on the campus of [Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary](#).



2026-2028 PRIORITIES

The Louisville Institute supports cutting-edge and visionary research that is significant to the North American church in all its diversity and richness. As the academy and the Christian church imagine the future at the quarter mark of the 21st century, the Louisville Institute seeks to contribute in particular ways to that future, specifically by:

- **Cultivating repair** through projects and ideas that address social injustice, trauma and healing, historical harms, restoration and reconciliation, relationships of trust, and interdependence and interconnectedness.
- **Building collaborative learning communities** that cultivate relational, supportive, and non-competitive research communities, the participatory inclusion of unheard or underrepresented voices, and gatherings of pastors and scholars for mutual learning and collaboration that strengthens and enriches wisdom and discovery.
- **Supporting purposeful risk-taking** that asks questions in new ways, brings together unconventional ideas or concepts, shows courage and ingenuity in the face of an unknown future, and combines grounded thinking with strategic purpose and lively imagination.

For more information about the Louisville Institute, contact us:

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