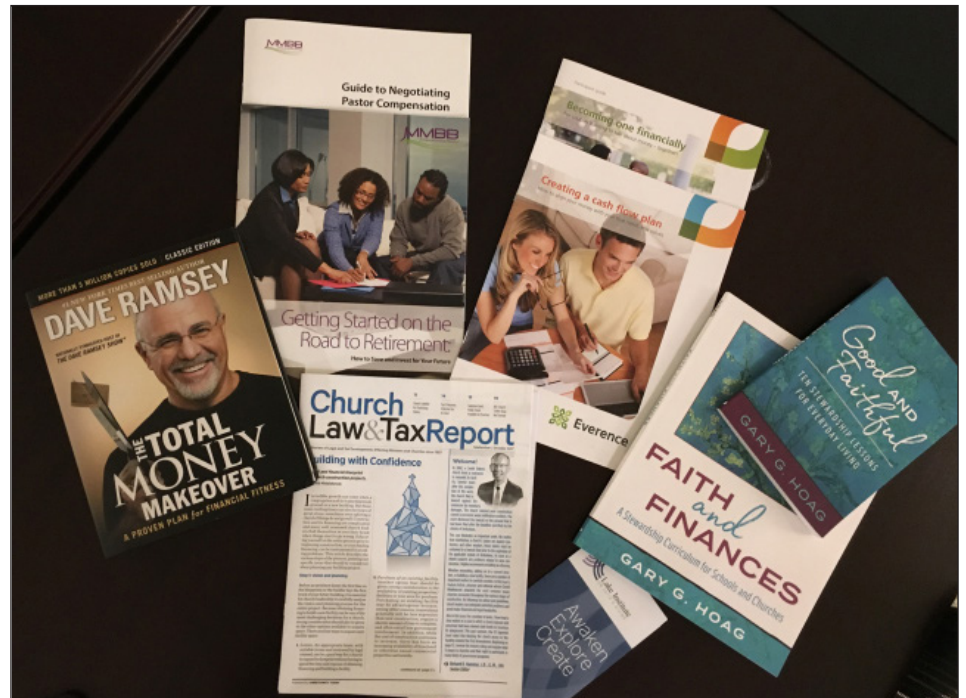


Economic Challenges Facing Future Ministers Forum showcases growing collection of resources

BY ELIZA SMTH BROWN

The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) gathered nearly 80 people from 48 schools, as well as 17 representatives from partner organizations in Pittsburgh earlier this month for the third major forum of the Economic Challenges Facing Future Ministers (ECFFM) initiative. Through plenaries and workshops, short-form videos, publications, and planning tools, the forum—themed Transformative Encounters—showcased an abundance of new resources to add to an already rich supply.



In order to build sustainability into Lilly Endowment's ECFFM project, participants from the schools were challenged from the beginning to establish "virtuous cycles of support." A virtuous cycle is envisioned as an intentional network of partnerships with key stakeholders and resources for students and schools to ensure that the progress made during the ECFFM project period can be maintained on a long-term basis. As the project enters its fifth year, the collection of resources and networks of support continues to grow.

Topics of the plenaries and break-out sessions at the forum included recent research on the work of the initiative; theological, spiritual, and cultural perspectives on finances; and shared learning among participants regarding effective practices. Issues such as bi-vocational ministry, subscription-based theological education,

crowdfunding, and the impact of debt on student life, health, and ministry prompted lively conversation rich with shared experiences and lessons learned. Many of the presentations from the forum will be made available in future issues of the Association's *Colloquy Online* newsletter and *Theological Education* journal.

[New videos](#) incorporating segments produced by participating schools punctuated the plenary sessions. The videos provided an overview of the diversity of approaches among the schools as well as the value and impact they are having both for students and at an institutional level.

In addition, illustrating a broadening scope of support outside the immediate circle of ATS and its member schools, several partner organizations attended the forum

and generously shared materials that schools and students can use to encourage and guide responsible stewardship of financial and other resources. Among them were the following:

[**Good and Faithful: Ten Stewardship Lessons for Everyday Living**](#) is produced by Gary Hoag, a visiting professor at Northern Seminary and a consultant on issues of faith and finance. The program is available in both book and video formats.

[**Faith and Finances: A Stewardship Curriculum for Schools and Churches**](#) is also produced by Gary Hoag for a collaboration of five seminary partners. This four-unit, 12-module program is designed for students at all stages of life. It is available in print and video.

[**Creating a cash flow plan**](#) and [**Becoming one financially \(for couples learning to talk about money—together!\)**](#) are two hands-on planning tools created by Everence, a financial services company rooted in biblical faith and values. It also offers resources for congregations, pastors, and other church leaders.

[**Guide to Negotiating Pastor Compensation**](#) and [**Getting Started on the Road to Retirement**](#) are two more hands-on tools created by The Ministers and Missionaries Benefits Board, offering professional money management, educational opportunities, and service for people of faith.

[**Church Finance Today**](#) (a monthly newsletter) and [**Church Law & Tax Report**](#) (a bi-monthly newsletter) are published by Christianity Today magazine to keep those who manage churches equipped with current news and advice on management of physical and financial assets and the legal pitfalls they might encounter.

[**Insights**](#) is a bi-weekly e-newsletter of the Lake Institute on Faith & Giving. The Institute is part of the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, and the newsletter provides reflections on important developments in the field of faith and giving and recommended resources as well as information about upcoming Lake Institute training programs and other events.

[**The Total Money Makeover**](#) and [**Financial Peace University**](#) by Dave Ramsey are best-selling and proven resources to help individuals put saving and investment principles into practice. Books, videos, and workbooks may be ordered online.

[**The Society for Financial Education and Professional Development \(SFE&PD\)**](#) is a national leader in the financial literacy field in the United States. SFE&PD customizes financial literacy and professional development programs.

Almost all of these partners provide on-site workshops at member schools in addition to their print and online resources.

“When we talk about finances in theological education, there is often a lot of shame and blame associated with the topic,” according to Jo Ann Deasy, ATS director, institutional initiatives and student research and director of the ECFFM Coordination Project.

“I’ve been pleasantly surprised to see how eager so many organizations are to join with theological schools to build financial wholeness in future ministers and to expand their capacities to lead financially healthy congregations.”

All of these materials add to an already rich collection of research, planning and teaching tools, student debt strategies, financial literacy programs, and information about successful partnership models. They can be accessed through the [**ECFFM page**](#) on the ATS website.



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