



Resources for Congregations' Good Work

Slate roofs that need fixing. Finding an architect who knows congregations and their particular needs. Getting demographics for the neighborhood where the new church building is locating. Designing a strategic plan for a synagogue. Ending long-term congregational strife. Attracting new people. Getting utility costs under control.

What do these all have in common? They are all issues that Indianapolis area congregations have faced in recent years – and found assistance with by working with the Indianapolis Center for Congregations.



ICC staff members stand ready to help you with your congregation's most pressing concerns.

Your congregation might want to contact the Indianapolis Center for Congregations to get help with your congregational questions. That's because our mission is to research, identify and let you know about the resources that best answer your congregation's questions.

By resources, we mean things such as books, articles, videos, organizations, research groups, consultants, web sites, publishers, software, or even other congregations and pastors. The list is almost endless.

This almost endless list can be overwhelming. "The tempting array of resources available today is like a smorgasbord," says Fred Oaks, pastor of Southport Baptist Church and part-time Center consultant. "Congregational leaders need to learn to be discerning in their use of resources. If they take on too much at once, congregations become overwhelmed, like the person who loads his plate

at a buffet and then can't finish the meal. Too few resources, on the other hand, and the congregation will lack things necessary to fulfill its mission."

So how does a congregation take advantage of the Center's resource consulting work? The first step is contacting the Center. Most calls come by telephone, though e-mail, fax, or a formal letter are also suitable. The person taking the call listens to the congregation's needs and refers the call to the appropriate staff person. Each ICC staff person does resource consulting and calls are matched to a staff person's area of expertise and interest.

The next steps vary, depending on the congregation and its needs. They generally include a meeting at the congregation between the congregation's core leadership and the ICC resource consultant. This on-site visit helps the resource consultant to learn more about real needs of the congregation and determine a resource discovery strategy. Then it's on to the work of finding the right resources. Sometimes there are more meetings (often via telephone and e-mail, as well as in person) with the pastor and other key leaders to provide feedback and help with identifying/locating proper resources. Then we recommend a resource. If there's a cost for this resource, the Center often suggests possible funding sources (perhaps even an ICC small grant). Finally comes follow-up support, including evaluating the congregation's experience with the recommended resource.

"Resource consulting is at the heart of what we do," says director John R. Wimmer. "Most congregations, when they think of consulting, think of experts who are going to come in, and diagnose and solve their problem. Our approach is considerably different. We come by invitation only and stand along side and work with a congregation to find the resources to do what the congregation wants to do."

It's a partnership of dialogue, research, learning and reflecting about resources. During this partnership, the congregation itself may discover resources that address its needs – and could prove helpful to other congregations in the future. That's one way that this partnership extends into the wider faith community and provides a "resource trust" enriching and strengthening many congregations in the greater Indianapolis area.

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"The Indianapolis Center for Congregations," says Pastor Oaks, "helps congregations choose resources wisely and develop their own capacity for the good work to

which they've been called." That's a high calling and the ICC is pleased to work with your congregation in it.

Nancy's Church Management Software Picks

Last month I featured one of our top three picks for Church Management Software (CMS) -- Logos Church Management. This month's CMS feature is Servant Keeper 5.

Sometimes software producers really get it right. That's the case with the folks at Servant PC Resources, Inc. Servant Keeper 5 is an excellent basic church management tool. It has the right balance of ease-of-use and database power that fits the needs of many congregations.

Servant Keeper 5 offers basic functions of membership, attendance and contributions. Attendance functions are embedded within the Membership module. No finance modules are included, but easy links to Quicken and Quickbooks are provided. Data entry and inquiry screens are easy to learn, easy to use and complete. System preferences, user-defined fields, flexibility in editing 'drop-down' lists, and much elimination of duplicate data entry indicates that careful thought and good planning are a part of this product. It is easy to learn (training is 4 hours) and fun to use.

The Membership module has features often found only in much more expensive products. An Attributes screen contains six separate data tables that help keep track of the many different ways a person can be involved in congregational life. Groups Keeper, the query/search function, allows the user to save both dynamic lists (criteria for a selection) and static lists (the one-time result of a data search using

the criteria). Individuals or groups may be emailed from within the program, using links to your computer's email or telephony software. Some additions to the 'standard' information included about individuals and families are: alternate and date-sensitive addresses, life events, public and private comments, and several user-defined fields. Many of the existing fields can be renamed. Separate Attendance groups for Worship, Classes and Activities make data entry fast and easy. Several worship services may be created, and information about one or all is readily available. A new visitor may be added from the Attendance entry screen.

The Contribution module does a good job of providing basic entry functions. Check numbers and split entries (one contribution to several funds) are an option. A new contributor may be added from the entry screen. Numbered offering envelopes are permitted but not required. Pledges may be made to any fund, either single or multi-year. Links from Contributions to Quicken or Quickbooks can be set up in just a few minutes. Version 5 has made beginning steps to joint contributions and pledging, but have not yet completed the task. Contribution statements printed for couples pledging and giving together are correct, but some other information within the module (fund pledge report and individual's pledge record) still needs modification. There are several format options for contribution statements, and for selecting those to whom the statements will be sent.

Throughout the software, reporting is quick, flexible and easy to understand. Standard report formats may not meet all the needs of every congregation, but provides most of the basics. The church directory reports are particularly nice. Good documentation is available, both printed and on-line. The documentation includes helpful hints and suggestions on how to make best use of the software in your congregation.

New in Version 5 is a simple word processor for quick mail merges, new graphical reports, and a report writer. Many other small improvements have been made to program features, and this vendor has a good record of incorporating user requests into future releases.

Servant Keeper 5 offers much for a relatively low price, making it our "Best Buy for Under \$500" for a single user version (single-user version, \$499; additional \$400 for 5-station network, other options available). It's user-friendly, feature-rich and relatively powerful -- a great combination for many of today's congregations.

A fully working demo is available for \$10 from Servant PC Resources, Inc. (20 Woodward Avenue, Lock Haven, PA 17745-1745, 800-773-7570, www.servantpc.com)

Nancy Armstrong is Congregational Resource Consultant for the Indianapolis Center for Congregations. She has helped many congregations find the best technology for their use and, with Aaron Spiegel, directs the Center's Computers and Ministry Grants Initiative.



Spring 2002 Education Events

The Indianapolis Center for Congregation's spring schedule of educational events continues our commitment to sharing excellent resources with you as a way of helping you meet the ever-changing challenges of ministry. "These events bring a wealth of opportunity for learning for your staff and lay members alike," says Dr. Timothy Beuthin, the Center's education director. "I invite you to look over these offerings and attend these events with members of your leadership team. These are exciting adventures in growing together in congregational and spiritual life."



**The Art of Public Prayer:
An Evening with
Rabbi Larry Hoffman
March 13**

The Lakin Auditorium at
Jewish Community Center
(6701 Hoover Road, IN)

Free

Rabbi Larry Hoffman is professor of Liturgy at Hebrew Union College, a cofounder of Synagogue 2000, columnist for *The Jewish Week* and author of the *Art of Public Prayer* and *The Changing Face of Jewish and Christian Worship in North America*. He is a leader in the dialogue between historical and contemporary Christian and Jewish worship. "The Art of Public Prayer" addresses the all too common problem of people who find themselves bored or baffled by public prayer. Those attending synagogue or church know that prayer should help them make sense of life by discovering God's presence in their daily experiences. Hoffman's rich insights on prayer will help them (and their spiritual leaders) rediscover the power and vitality of public prayer. Clergy and lay leaders alike, no matter what faith tradition, will find this evening helpful to their ministry.



**Leading Change in the
Congregation-with Gil Rendle
April 17-18**

Southwest Church of the Nazarene
(4797 Tinchler Road, IN)

\$40

Gil Rendle, the vice-president of programs at the Alban Institute and author of *Leading Change in the Congregation: Spiritual and Organizational Tools for Leaders* and *The*

Multigenerational Congregation: Meeting the Leadership Challenge, is a consultant and nationally recognized authority on congregational change. We all know that change is an inevitable part of congregational life. Though it should be a positive, mission-enhancing experience for the congregation, leaders often approach change with a bit of trepidation, worried about unforeseen consequences. In this workshop, Gil Rendle will help congregational leaders better understand their own roles and resources in leading positive change, the context for any change, and the experiences and resistances that people feel about change. Teams of clergy, professional staff and lay leaders, boards, committees, and project teams will find this workshop full of helpful information.



**Beyond Small Groups to Authentic
Community-with Randy Frazee
May 10-11**

Aldersgate United Methodist Church
(9035 E. 21st Street, IN)

\$40

Randy Frazee, pastor of the Pantego Bible Church, had set up one of the most developed and integrated small group programs in the nation; yet he sensed something was still missing -- authentic community. He found that individuals often seek faith communities because they're looking for a sense of purpose or belonging. Sadly, some of them find loneliness instead. In this interactive workshop, Frazee will share how his congregation discovered the essentials of fostering community and put them into practice -- and how your congregation can, too. Frazee is author of *The Connecting Church: Beyond Small Groups to Authentic Community* and *The Comeback Congregation*. He is a Fellow of the George H. Gallup International Institute. Clergy and lay leaders involved in assimilation, fellowship, outreach and small group programs will find this workshop especially helpful.

For more information on any of these programs,
contact Tim Beuthin at 317-237-7799 or
tbeuthin@centerforcongregations.org or
visit our website at www.centerforcongregations.org



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A Newsletter from the Indianapolis Center for Congregations

Our Mission

The mission of the Indianapolis Center for Congregations is to assist Greater Indianapolis area congregations in finding and using the very best resources to address the practical challenges they face. The Center also provides educational events and workshops, all focused on important practical issues confronting congregations.

Our Staff

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Congregation of The Week



Did you know that there are more than 1,500 different congregations in the Indianapolis area? Would you like to learn more about them? Of course you would. We would, too. That's why we're going to feature a "Congregation of the Week" on our website.

You can help get that started by giving us information

about your congregation. It's easy – just send your congregation's name, address and phone number. You'll also want to include your primary e-mail contact and web address, if you have one.

Tell us your denominational affiliation, when you were founded, worship service and other important hours (office, regular educational event, etc.), and major ministries (food pantry, youth basketball, Bible studies and so on).

Also send along your mission statement or a 25-word description of your church's purpose. We also like photographs – both of your building and people.

To submit information, send it to Brent Bill c/o The Indianapolis Center for Congregations or at bbill@centerforcongregations.org.