

Centerpiece

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Indianapolis Center for Congregations, Inc.

Congregations Explore "Life Together" Center Announces New Major Grants Initiative

The Indianapolis Center for Congregations is pleased to announce its next major grants initiative, Life Together: Thinking and Acting Strategically. Life Together was developed in response to the increasing number of queries regarding strategic planning resources. Life Together will inform and empower congregations as they look toward the future and help congregations think and act strategically. Although the primary focus is on strategic planning, the program goes beyond planning and provides a broad and encompassing view of cooperation, conversation and action. Life Together invites congregations to

transformative arc of a congregation toward goodness and trust."

"Congregations need structured ways to talk about their identity, purpose and future, and they need to develop consensus and a commitment to act," wrote Alban Institute consultants Gil Rendle and Alice Mann in the popular strategic planning book *Holy Conversations*.

Effective planning supports people in their own faith journeys and their service to their congregations and the greater community.

Financial support (up to \$35,000 in matching grants) and a thorough educational component are part of this program. Past major grant initiatives — Sacred Space in 2003 and Computers and Ministry in 2000 — provided congregations with the knowledge, resources and support needed to address their building and technology challenges.

For congregations, thinking and acting strategically provides the opportunity for congregants to look beyond personal and

immediate desires, beyond the status quo toward a new life together. This program will be practical, thoughtful, prayerful and ultimately help congregations launch new, effective and creative programs.

Congregations in Marion, Boone, Hamilton, Hancock, Hendricks, Johnson, Morgan and Shelby counties are invited



to apply. The Center will award grants to 30 congregations. Matching grants of up to \$35,000 will be awarded to each congregation — up to \$5,000 for planning and up to \$30,000 for implementation. Participating congregations will attend four to five educational sessions, meet with assigned ICC consultants for regular progress updates, and receive advice on helpful resources.

Proposals are due January 11, 2007. Applying congregations will be notified of their status in the program in February 2007.

Information packets are available by contacting the Center at 317-237-7799 or info@centerforcongregations.org. An electronic copy of the application is available. Please contact Tim Shapiro at tshapiro@centerforcongregations.org or Nancy DeMott at ndemott@centerforcongregations.org.



assess their present situations, discover their visions, and create their futures.

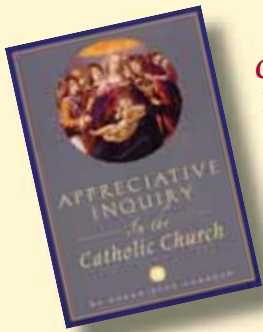
"The initiative encourages congregations to ask, 'How is our life together lived well?' " said Tim Shapiro, president of the Indianapolis Center for Congregations. "Strategic thinking and acting bends the



Resources You Can Use

Resources from the Congregational Resource Guide

The mission of the Indianapolis Center for Congregations is to assist Greater Indianapolis Area congregations in finding and using the very best resources available to address the practical challenges they face. One of the ways we do that is through the Congregational Resource Guide (CRG). The CRG was created by the Indianapolis Center for Congregations and the Alban Institute to help congregational leaders connect with resources they need to gain insight into problems and to encourage transformation in their communities of faith. The following resources (and many more) are available on the CRG at www.congregationalresources.org.



***Appreciative Inquiry In the Catholic Church* by Susan Star Paddock.**

Plano, TX: Thin Book Publishing Co., 2003. In this short but informative book, Susan Paddock summarizes the theory and application of appreciative inquiry, including its foundational process. Using case studies of organizations such as Catholic

Relief Services, the Diocese of Cleveland, and a variety of Catholic schools and parishes, Paddock explores the effective use of appreciative inquiry to build relationships and community, to do strategic planning and create mission statements, to enhance transitions, and to facilitate spiritual renewal. All denominations can benefit from the book's clear prose and insights.



***Holy Conversations: Strategic Planning as a Spiritual Practice for Congregations* by Alice Mann and Gil Rendle.**

Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2003. Gil Rendle and Alice Mann define "strategic planning" as "a structured conversation about what a group of people believe God calls them to be or do." This book, loaded with

planning tools, insists that it is not the "tools"—but the "conversations" evoked "by" the tools—that most benefit a congregation. Rendle and Mann lay out a three-phase strategic planning process. Each phase is thoroughly described, and planning tools are introduced. This will be especially useful to clergy and lay leaders in congregations that are ready to ask the questions: "Who are we?" and "What has God called us to do or be?"



***Discerning Your Congregation's Future: A Strategic and Spiritual Approach* by Robert Friedrich and Roy Oswald.**

Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 1996. This is not just another planning book. It incorporates the primary resources of discernment and prayer together with significant theoretical material—congregational size, systems, polarity management, congregational

health and norms—into an extremely useful and practical strategy for spiritual growth. The process is offered as a road map in which several activities and formats are suggested for each step, with the congregation, not the leader, at the center. If lay and professional leaders are seeking a powerful sense of God's vision for ministry (as opposed to a process for developing another mission statement), this book opens doors for big thinking and God's spirit.



***Memories, Hopes, and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change* by Mark Lau Branson.**

Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 2004. Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a powerful tool for strengthening congregations. Mark Lau Branson offers an account of how one Presbyterian church used AI to understand its

history, encourage its members to discover and pursue their dreams, and call a new pastor who could help make those dreams reality. He makes clear that AI—an attitude as well as a process—broadly applies in many settings. Branson outlines a five-step sequence. There are sample schedules, sample mini-lectures, and handouts, along with many helpful hints. In addition to introducing AI, this book will enhance the skills of those who already have some knowledge. Congregational leaders will benefit from reading this account whether or not they use AI, because it discusses many related developmental issues.



Learning Together

Center Presents Workshops on Free Internet Resources and Neighborhood Build

Congregations are invited to explore and learn at two exciting workshops scheduled in 2007.



On Thursday, February 22, the Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA) and the Indianapolis Center for Congregations team up to introduce congregational leaders to free resources on the web. *Internet Resources for Congregational Planning* is 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Thursday, February 22, at the Center office in Indianapolis.

From census profiles of your neighborhood to survey findings on topics of interest, we will guide you through the use of online resources for congregational planning. By the end of the workshop you will have information on your congregation's neighborhood and community, will know more about other congregations and the findings of national surveys, and will be trained to access these resources in the future. All of the resources are free, mercifully simple, and a few are even fun.

Roger Finke leads the workshop. Finke is the director of the ARDA and is a professor of sociology and religious studies at Penn State University. He is the co-author (with Rodney Stark) of *The Churching of America, 1776-2005* and *Acts of Faith*.

Internet Resources for Congregational Planning is 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Thursday, February 22, at the Indianapolis Center for Congregations, 303 N. Alabama St. The workshop is free. Lunch and workshop materials are provided. Registrations made by February 12 guarantee lunch. There are no prerequisites for this workshop.



On May 8 and 9, Hedda Sharapan leads *Building a Neighborhood Together*. Glue, paint and cardboard boxes can facilitate sharing, conversation and caring as participants work together to create the ideal neighborhood. Sharapan, associate producer with Family Communications and "ambassador" for Mister Rogers' Neighborhood, leads participants through the rich and varied process of being good neighbors.

The workshop is 6:00-9:00 p.m. Tuesday, May 8, and 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Wednesday, May 9, at Faith Presbyterian Church, 8170 Hague Road. Tuesday evening's workshop session focuses on *Building a Neighborhood—Inside Out*. Sharapan will share Fred Rogers' background and philosophy and discuss the challenges and inspiration found in the concept of "loving your neighbor as yourself." On Wednesday, Sharapan will teach participants how to facilitate their own *Neighborhood Build*, including organization,

ICC CALENDAR

DECEMBER

- 19 Grants Committee Meeting
- 19 GoodWords Reading Club

JANUARY

- 11 LTGI applications due
- 16 Grants Committee Meeting
- 23 GoodWords Reading Club

FEBRUARY

- 20 Grants Committee Meeting
- 21 Transformational Leadership Group
- 22 Internet Resources for Congregational Planning with Roger Finke
- 27 GoodWords Reading Club

MARCH

- 5-6 Flourishing Congregations Gathering
- 16-17 Transformational Leadership Retreat
- 20 Grants Committee Meeting
- 27 GoodWords Reading Club

conversation, materials, introduction activities, publicity and different versions of the *Neighborhood Build*. This session is a hands-on *Neighborhood Build* activity — participants will work together to create the ideal neighborhood out of boxes, ribbons, glue, paint and other materials.

The cost of the workshop is \$30. Dinner on Tuesday, lunch on Wednesday and workshop materials are included. Registrations should be made by May 1. This event is particularly helpful to educators and those responsible for leading family ministries in congregations.

For additional information or to register for these or other Center events, check out the website at www.centerforcongregations.org or contact the Center at 317-237-7799 or info@centerforcongregations.org. For the latest workshops, programs and educational events, check out the website. New items are added regularly.

For additional information or to register for events, go to the website at www.centerforcongregations.org and click on Educational Events or call the Center at 317-237-7799.



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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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Congregations Dream, Design, Discover at Flourishing Congregations Gathering

The Center for Congregations invites you to a special gathering where congregational leaders will explore what gives life and meaning to congregations who function at their best — a flourishing congregation.

On Monday and Tuesday, March 5-6, 2007, participants will gather at University Place Conference Center, 850 W. Michigan St., Indianapolis, for Flourishing Congregations: Moving from Dreams to Reality. The gathering is 2-8 p.m. Monday and 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Tuesday. The cost is \$50 per congregation for teams of 2-5 persons. Space is limited.

Using the narrative-rich process of “appreciative inquiry,” congregations will discuss strengths, successes, hopes, values and dreams. Appreciative inquiry is the process of studying what gives life and meaning to congregations when they function at their best. These conversations themselves will be transformational. When congregations study meaningful experiences, they naturally move in that direction, responding to the energy and spirit unleashed within those conversations.

The gathering provides a forum for sharing, networking, fellowship and peer learning. It is the optimal climate to facilitate the transformation from what is learned at the gathering into action in the local congregation. In addition,

participants will learn the processes of appreciative inquiry and asset mapping for application within their congregations or in a variety of settings. Despite differences in faith traditions,

congregations can energize each other through positive conversation, sharing meaningful experiences and imagining hope, creativity and possibility.

In the months leading up to the Flourishing Congregations gathering, Center staff, consultants and representatives will interview more than 50 local congregational leaders about their best experiences. These narratives will be published and used at the gathering as a “textbook” for learning. Registrants will also have the opportunity to submit stories of their best experiences on-line. For registration information, go to www.centerforcongregations.org or call 317-237-7799.

