

# Centerpiece

Spring 2007 Volume 7 Number 1 A Newsletter from the Indianapolis Center for Congregations, Inc.

## Center Unveils Updated Website Communication is Key to New Resource-Driven Website

Web surfers visiting [www.centerforcongregations.org](http://www.centerforcongregations.org) are in for a pleasant surprise. A new look, robust searching capabilities and easy communications are among features on the updated Indianapolis Center for Congregations website.

“The core is communication,” said Indianapolis Center for Congregations Information Technology Director Aaron Spiegel. “It’s much more of an interactive communications tool. It’s about giving information and getting it back.”

“The Center knows that congregations use technology in all kinds of creative ways,” said Tim Shapiro, president of the Indianapolis Center for Congregations. “We hope our website is a natural extension of all the ways congregations make use of the Internet.”

Visitors to the updated website will see immediately that they are invited in to a customized web experience. First-time visitors are asked to enter a zip code. This allows the website to prioritize information for the visitor’s home or congregation location. Subsequent visits to the website link users directly to their customized web page.

“The website is a tailored experience based on the location of the user,” Spiegel explained. Zip code information is gathered strictly to customize the user’s web experience.

Users will also be able to tailor the information they get from the Center. Folks can sign up to receive the newsletter, workshop mailings, resource mailings, email alerts, and so on.

“This website has the ability to customize what information you receive from the Center, both print and electronically,” Spiegel said.

Congregations are also able to use the website to more easily submit information, such as grant applications and reports, resource evaluations, surveys, and more.

Finding what you need on the website is also more user-friendly. The new site is resource-driven, rather than navigation dependent.



Congregations have the ability to search by keyword and topic to find all available resources on the website, rather than browsing for them – less clicking around, easier to find what you need, Spiegel explained. For example, the keyword “strategic planning” would connect you with past workshop resource guides, upcoming educational events, Life Together Grant Initiative information, PDFs and documents such as *Using Resources* and *Centerpiece*.

Spiegel explained that the new website is a communications tool between the Indianapolis Center for Congregations and users. Blogs will provide readers with insight into trends, new products, updated information, and issues relevant to congregations. All of the information the Center gathers in its work with congregations will be available somewhere on the website for congregations to utilize, he stated. In turn, users can respond to this information through the website by posting comments and completing resource evaluations. “It’s much more of an interactive communications tool,” Spiegel explained.

“Our goal is to make using our website an easier, more pleasant experience,” Spiegel stated. “The website is an extension of resource consulting – the experience should be like working with an ICC resource consultant.”

The Indianapolis Center for Congregations is dedicated to helping Indiana congregations find solutions to their pressing practical problems. We connect congregations with excellent resources and share what we learn with congregations across the country. The new website will help us continue to serve congregations and share resources and learning locally and nationally.

All the features you like from the old website are still available – they are just easier to find now. Congregations can still link directly from our website to the Congregational Resource Guide. The CRG, a joint project of the Alban Institute and the Indianapolis Center for Congregations, is a database of resources, categorized by topic.

If you have questions about the new website or need assistance finding anything there, you are welcome to contact the Center at 317-237-7799 or [info@centerforcongregations.org](mailto:info@centerforcongregations.org).



# 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](http://www.congregationalresources.org).



## [www.e-zekiel.com](http://www.e-zekiel.com)

E-zekiel is a turnkey solution for developing and managing church, non-profit and business websites and electronic communications – all available via the Internet with nothing to install on your computer.

## *Faith and Values Media's*

### [www.webmedley.com](http://www.webmedley.com)

Webmedley is Faithstream's web development tool that allows congregations to quickly establish and maintain a web presence.



There is no software or hardware to buy, and training is minimized through online tutorials and the "Microsoft Office" format. All the development and editing is done through a web-browser. Webmedley allows the user access to additional features such as dynamic content provided by Faithstreams —the largest coalition of Jewish and Christian faith groups dedicated to media production —distribution and promotion.

## *Reviews of Congregational Websites*

Hartford Institute for Religious Research, [http://hirr.hartsem.edu/leadership/website\\_review\\_index.html](http://hirr.hartsem.edu/leadership/website_review_index.html)  
After visiting thousands of web sites of religious communities, some staffers at the Hartford Institute for Religious Research decided to do their part to improve the overall quality and



design of congregational sites. Rather than focusing on what is wrong with congregational sites, HIRR hopes that critical examination of congregational websites will help others who are planning to develop or redevelop their websites.

## *Web Site Development for Religious Organizations*

[www.religiousresources.org/homepage/](http://www.religiousresources.org/homepage/)

Understanding that faith communities are often low on funds and must rely on volunteers, a professional web site developer has created a resource that will help congregations with instituting and maintaining organizational websites. This site is primarily focused on the process of website development and covers the steps of getting organizational support, clarifying goals, defining the audience, assessing resources, designing the site, publishing the site, and maintaining the site. In addition, it offers educational support on learning HTML, help with icons and images, advice on web servers and page storage, and more.

## *Faith and Words Come Together at Monthly Book Gathering*

GoodWords Reading Club meets monthly to share and discuss books that address some of life's most pressing issues. The Center's reading club gathers from 6:30-8 p.m. on the fourth Tuesday of each month to examine different fiction or non-fiction books that bring words and faith together.

On Tuesday, March 27, GoodWords studies *The Best American Spiritual Writing of 2006* by Philip Zaleski. Acclaimed writer and the editor of the series, Zaleski has assembled an outstanding collection of thirty-five pieces that range far and wide in subject matter and style. This book will appeal to those who like spiritual writing and also those who long for writing that illuminates a vast range of issues beyond our immediate line of sight. The group discusses *A Brief History of the Dead* by Kevin Brockmeier on

Tuesday, April 24. This is the story of a deadly virus that has spread rapidly across Earth, cutting off wildlife specialist Laura Byrd at her crippled Antarctica research station from the rest of the world. Meanwhile, the planet's dead populate "the city," located on a surreal Earth-like alternate plane, but their afterlives depend on the memories of the living, such as Laura, back on home turf.

Center staff members Nancy Armstrong and Brent Bill, both writers and avid readers, lead the group. There's no charge for the book club. Everyone is welcome. The Center provides light refreshments. Visit the Indianapolis Center for Congregations website at [www.centerforcongregations.org](http://www.centerforcongregations.org) to see a list of past books, upcoming book club information, and seasonal reading recommendations.



# Spring Education Events

Center Offers Topical Workshops to Congregations Across the State

## CHILDREN AND PRAYER

**T. Wyatt Watkins**

*Thursday, March 29, Fort Wayne*

T. Wyatt Watkins presents his discussion of *Children and Prayer* on Thursday, March 29, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. in Fort Wayne.

We can learn a lot about prayer from our children. From thanksgiving to wild wonder to observations and utterances of social conscience, kids' prayer is different from adult prayer. Wyatt Watkins will lead participants in exploring how parents and congregations can become more effective "stewards of the spirit" with their children. Watkins will discuss strategies for congregations, parents, and anyone engaged with children and youth in spiritual practice, along with opportunities for reflection and conversation.



Watkins is an author, musician and pastor of Cumberland First Baptist Church. He wrote for the Baptist Center for Ethics and has published three books: *What Our Kids Teach Us About Prayer*; *Gospel, Grits, and Grace: Encountering the Holy in the Ridiculous, Sublime, and Unexpected*; and *How Sweet the Sound: Stories Inspired by the Hymns We Love*.

Children and Prayer is 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Thursday, March 29, at First Christian Church, 4800 S. Calhoun St., Fort Wayne. The cost is \$15, which includes lunch and a copy of Watkins' book *What Our Kids Teach Us About Prayer*.

## FAITH, MONEY, AND GIVING

**William Enright**

*Mondays, April 30, May 7, 14, 21*

As stewardship and finance issues continue to be areas of interest to congregations, the Center offers opportunities to explore these topics. Congregations are invited to a workshop series this Spring and Fall to discuss faith, money, and giving.



Clergy will meet 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Mondays from April 30 to May 21 to look at a wide range of issues, including current trends in religious giving, the history of financing religion in America and rituals of giving. While the workshop touches on topics directly related to fundraising techniques and stewardship drives, the conversations will go much deeper, revealing the multifaceted dynamics of faith and giving. In the Fall, teams of lay leaders from these congregations will meet on three consecutive Monday evenings to investigate these same issues.

William Enright leads the workshop series. He is executive director of the Lake Family Institute on Faith and Giving at the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University and former senior pastor of the Second Presbyterian

## ICC CALENDAR

### MARCH

- 5-6 Flourishing Congregations Gathering
- 15-17 Transformational Leadership Retreat
- ICC Board Meeting
- 20 Grants Committee Meeting
- 27 GoodWords Reading Club
- 28 Children and Prayer (Fort Wayne)

### APRIL

- 17 Grants Committee Meeting
- 18 Transformational Leadership Group
- 30 Faith, Money, and Giving

### MAY

- 3 Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times (New Albany)
- 4 Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times (Fort Wayne)
- 7 Faith, Money, and Giving
- 8-9 Building a Neighborhood Together
- 14 Faith, Giving, and Money
- 15 Grants Committee Meeting
- 16 Transformational Leadership Group
- 21 Faith, Money, and Giving

### JUNE

- 19 Grants Committee Meeting
- 20 Transformational Leadership Group

Church, Indianapolis. He has authored several books, and he lectures at numerous colleges, universities and theological institutions.

*Faith, Money, and Giving* is 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Mondays, April 30 and May 7, 14, and 21, at the Indianapolis Center for Congregations, 303 N. Alabama St. The workshop series is free. Registration is required. The workshop is limited to 10 congregations. To inquire or register, contact Tim Shapiro at [tshapiro@centerforcongregations.org](mailto:tshapiro@centerforcongregations.org) or 317-237-7799.

For additional information or to register for events, go to the website at [www.centerforcongregations.org](http://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*

*Timothy Shapiro, President*  
*Brent Bill, Executive Vice President*  
*Nancy Armstrong, Finance Director & Resource Consultant*  
*Nancy DeMott, Resource Director*  
*Kara Faris, Education Director*  
*Aaron Spiegel, Information Technology Director*  
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*Janice Phillips, Administrative Assistant*  
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*Catharine Green, Resource Assistant & Database Administrator*  
*Jane Mastin, Communications Administrator*



## *Spring Education Events, continued*

### **CONGREGATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN ANXIOUS TIMES**

**Peter Steinke**

**Thursday, May 3, New Albany**

**Friday, May 4, Fort Wayne**

Congregational leaders today need to be both calm and courageous. Because they have more influence than any other group over the path a congregation takes, leaders must have command of their own anxiety and must not let others' anxieties contaminate them.



This workshop will help leaders to maintain the course, unearth secrets, resist sabotage, overcome timidity and doubts and withstand fury. Peter Steinke's insights, illustrations, and provocations will carry leaders

through difficult times, provide clarity when life becomes confusing, and uplift them in joyous moments.

Steinke is an internationally respected congregational systems consultant. He has also served as a parish pastor, an educator and a therapist for clergy. Steinke is the author of the best-selling books *How Your Church Family Works*, *Healthy Congregations*, and *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times*.

This workshop is 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Thursday, May 3, in New Albany (location information available soon) and Friday, May 4, at Northeast Christian Church, 4900 Stellhorn Road, Fort Wayne. The cost is \$30 (\$25 per person for teams of five or more), which includes lunch and a copy of Steinke's book *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times*.

### **BUILDING A NEIGHBORHOOD TOGETHER**

**Hedda Sharapan**

**Tuesday & Wednesday, May 8 & 9, Indianapolis**

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 6-9 p.m. Tuesday, May 8, and 9 a.m.-4 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, conversation, materials, introduction activities, publicity and different versions of the Neighborhood Build. This session is a hands-on activity.

The cost of the workshop is \$35 for both sessions; \$10 for the Tuesday evening session only; \$30 for the Wednesday session only. Dinner on Tuesday, lunch on Wednesday and workshop materials are included. This event is particularly helpful to educators and those responsible for leading family ministries in congregations.