

ANNUAL REPORT



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Indianapolis Center for Congregations

When people ask us to explain the work of the Center for Congregations, we sometimes use the analogy of a spark, a flame and a fire. The process unfolds this way: A congregation calls us with a request for assistance; we respond by recommending a range of resources that might include print publications, hands-on workshops, educational conferences and grant programs. Simple or complex, these resources have a common goal — to encourage a congregation to explore the possibilities and take the next step to solving a problem, meeting a challenge or maximizing an opportunity. Similar to a spark, the resources ignite a flame, the flame becomes a fire, and the fire takes hold and spreads when fueled by a congregation's energy.

In this year's annual report, we illustrate this process by featuring four very different but equally gifted congregations. The congregations, located throughout the state, were at key decision points in their ministries when they asked the Center to walk alongside them as they considered their options, chose their directions and embarked upon their journeys.

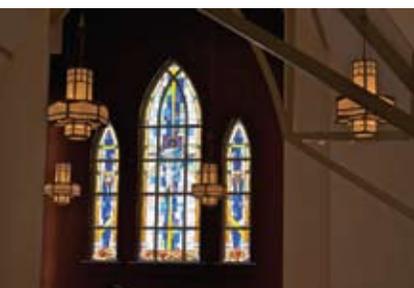
- Nativity Catholic Church in Evansville used a Flourishing Congregations grant to blend two cultural groups and empower them for service in the church, the community and beyond.
- Epworth United Methodist Church in Indianapolis used a resource grant to methodically plan long-delayed improvements to the 50-year-old facility.
- The Bridge Community Church in Decatur received Center funds to create high-tech tools to reach out to young families who are searching for a different kind of worship experience.
- St. Christopher's Episcopal Church in Carmel sent a staff member to a Center workshop on youth ministry and then applied for a grant to help design a teen program that will implement many of the workshop's strategies.

Our ability to serve Indiana congregations was greatly enhanced this year with the opening of our third satellite office, this one in Seymour. Doug Hanner joined us as director of the southeast facility and already has hosted a *Flourishing Congregations* event that attracted 150 participants. With offices strategically located in Indianapolis, Fort Wayne, Evansville and Seymour, we now have the capacity to respond to any Hoosier congregation that requests our services. Statistics for 2009 indicate congregations are making use of our statewide coverage, with more than 350 congregations calling us for the first time. Interest in our work is growing beyond our borders. One of our projects for the new year is to collaborate with the Alban Institute in disseminating information about our methodology to organizations that have similar missions across the country.

Our vantage point is unique, and with that in mind let me close on a positive note. Media reports continue to portray American congregations in negative ways. We read that attendance is declining at worship services, membership is shrinking, and the church no longer occupies a leadership role in our society. I do not agree. As one who interacts daily with congregations, I offer a very different assessment. In Indiana, congregational life not only is strong and vibrant, but it's growing stronger and more vibrant every day.

Tim Shapiro

Center President



TRANSFORMING IDEAS INTO ACTION

Father Henry Kuykendall, priest at Nativity Catholic Church in Evansville, will never forget November 4th and the party that marked his 70th birthday. The celebration was “awesome” — his word — and not just because of the scores of well-wishers, the hog roast, the mariachi band, and the lively dancing. What made it special was that the two ethnic groups that comprise Nativity’s congregation mingled comfortably for the first time since Kuykendall invited area Latinos to make the small Anglo church their parish home seven years ago.

“They sat together, greeted each other’s families, and even table-hopped,” says Kuykendall. “Up until this year, we would have parties and the Spanish would sit on one side of the room and the Anglos would sit on the other side. This time I saw a real change in the dynamic.”

The shift was a tangible sign that Nativity is making progress toward its vision “to create unity within our diversity.” Kuykendall and his small but enthusiastic staff sparked the idea; a Flourishing Congregations grant from the Center for Congregations–Southwest helped them transform it into action. Nativity is implementing a multi-faceted program aimed at eliminating cultural barriers and training lay leaders to assume pastoral duties previously performed by the parish priest. At the core of the program are four retreats conducted on the campus of Saint Meinrad Monastery, a 60-mile bus ride from Evansville. Volunteers from Nativity’s Latino and Anglo communities attend the weekend workshops structured to help each group appreciate the other’s traditions.

“In the past, the Anglos didn’t understand why Latinos celebrate with festive music and incorporate different liturgies,” explains Abraham Brown, the bilingual pastoral associate who joined Nativity’s staff a year ago. Separated by age and heritage, the young Latino families and the older Anglo members often felt they had little in common. Mass on Sunday at 9 a.m. accommodated the language and worship preferences of the Anglos; an all-Spanish version followed at noon. Not until the retreats did personal relationships start to form and a sense of community begin to build. Although both groups still prefer to celebrate Mass in their own language, they come together for special events—such as birthday parties—and “they call each other by name,” says Brown. “It’s been a big change.”

Encouraging as the change is, Kuykendall insists it’s a small part of the effort to fully integrate Latinos into the parish. He estimates that the Catholic Church in Latin America is 50 years behind its American counterpart in the way it views the priesthood. In Mexico, all parish work is done by the priest or, in his absence, by the nuns. Parish members have little responsibility for supporting the church financially or through voluntarism. Kuykendall’s age and the diminishing number of available



priests underscore the need for a more team-like approach to ministry. “I may be the last full-time priest at Nativity,” he says. “We must develop lay leaders who understand the way a parish works and have the skills to do pastoral work.”

He envisions a time when he can perform the sacramental rites and entrust members to conduct business meetings, maintain the facility, oversee the budget and plan fundraising events. To achieve this vision, the staff talks in terms of steps on a ladder, according to Wendy McCormick, director of the Center for Congregations–Southwest. “They know they can’t take members who have no concept of church involvement and immediately assign them to the parish council. Instead, they hope to begin a process that gradually moves people up, one level at a time, from their current commitment.”

The workshops are helping, as is the formation of several lay leadership teams. Communication is less of a barrier as Latino members become more fluent in English. Kuykendall measures their language progress by the frequency of their laughter. When he delivers his sermons at the Latino Mass he speaks in English and then waits for Abraham Brown to translate his words into Spanish.

“I like to tell jokes,” says Kuykendall. “Lately I’ve noticed that 40 to 50 percent of the congregation is laughing twice. They hear me first in English and they laugh; then they hear the translation in Spanish and they laugh again.”

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

Like Nativity Catholic Church in Evansville, Epworth United Methodist Church in Indianapolis is using a Center for Congregations grant to generate and manage major change. Located on the northeast side, Epworth resembles the suburban neighborhood it serves.



The sturdy limestone facility dates back to 1961 and reflects the unpretentious style of that era. "It looks a lot like the houses that surround it," says Randy Siebert, chairman of the congregation's Building for the Future Task Force. "It's on a single floor and doesn't have a steeple. Some people drive by every day and don't even know we're here."

A dip in membership, an approaching 50th anniversary, and the arrival of senior pastor Doug Walker prompted members to schedule a retreat to discuss the church's future. Where did they see Epworth going? What might the church look like in 10 or 15 years? "It was a brain-storming session where all attendees could dream as big as they wanted without considering costs," recalls Walker, whose personal assessment was that the congregation was in fine shape but the physical structure needed to be updated to attract a younger population.

A long-range planning committee formed and eventually evolved into the Building for the Future Task Force. Members solicited input from the congregation. A resource grant from

the Indianapolis Center helped support a facilities assessment that confirmed Walker's initial evaluation. Maintenance projects had been put on hold for too long. Big-ticket needs included energy-efficient windows and upgrades to the heating, cooling, plumbing and electrical systems. Then there were aesthetics to consider.

"The sanctuary is virtually the way it was when it was built 50 years ago," says Bob Andrews, chair of the

board of trustees. Known for its excellent music program, the church lacks space in the chancel area for its choirs, instrumentalists and praise band. Other projects that emerged as priorities were the entrance and foyer that members described as "unwelcoming" and the basement fellowship hall that has a low ceiling and view-obstructing posts. "We realized that we couldn't wait any longer to make improvements," says Andrews.

To help determine priorities and time line, the same company that conducted the site assessment now will create a master plan. An architect will meet with focus groups. A capital campaign will follow only if the congregation expresses its willingness to step up its giving to underwrite the renovation costs. Satisfaction with the status quo has diminished, and a readiness for change is growing

even among church elders who have attended Epworth since the doors opened 50 years ago.

"Some of our oldest members are among the most enthusiastic supporters," says Andrews. "They understand that the work needs to be done and they're glad that somebody has finally grabbed hold and said, 'Okay, here we go.'"

A DECADE OF GROWTH

The same energy for change that Epworth is experiencing sparked the launch of a new congregation 10 years ago in a part of Indiana already known for its number and variety of churches. The Bridge Community Church, founded by four couples, now attracts more than 900 weekly worshippers to its big box facility—originally a Kmart—on the northern edge of Decatur. A clue to its continued success is in its motto: "The Bridge exists to help people find their way back to God."

The assumption is that most people have had some kind of church experience in their lifetime. For those who choose no longer to attend, the experience was likely negative. The Bridge offers a clean-slate approach without traditional trappings to remind worshippers of their previous brush with religion. The sanctuary, called the auditorium, has no organ, stained-glass windows or hymnals. Dress is casual, music is contemporary, and sermons—call them messages—are packed with applications to daily life.

"Most people love God but for one reason or another don't consider church worth their time," explains Mo Hodge, lead teacher and founding pastor. "Many have been hurt by the church, or they've had high expectations that weren't met. They left on bad terms, and so we want to win them back. Our main goal is to make God famous. The old way of saying that is to 'give glory to God,' but that sometimes loses its meaning because it's used so much."

Sophisticated technology attracts families to The Bridge and nudges them to return each week. Classrooms are equipped with lights, cameras, screens and sound systems. The congregation's websites, updated through a grant from the Center for Congregations-Northeast, include audio and video from recent services. A new DVD, the production of which was supported by Center funds, gives viewers a sampling of what they'll encounter when they visit The Bridge. Hodge and his staff were so pleased with the quality of the DVD that they made more than a thousand copies and looked for ways to distribute them to persons who might like a nontraditional type of worship.

"We decided to deliver full Thanksgiving meals to low-income neighborhoods," he says. "We packed 334 boxes with turkeys, potatoes, vegetables and frozen pumpkin pies" ... plus copies of the DVD. "The Sunday before Thanksgiving we drove all over the county knocking on doors and giving out boxes. People were dumbfounded. They sent thank-you cards, called us on the phone, and a couple of families came to church the next Sunday."





Using technology as a tool, The Bridge has built a reputation for having one of the strongest youth ministries in the area. Full-time staff serves specific age groups from toddlers through high school, and a family worship hour unfolds with all the pizzazz of a live Disney show. “This focus on children is among the three most important things to work on” for a new church trying to establish its niche in a landscape dotted with steeples and spires, says Brian Witwer, director of the Center for Congregations — Northeast. The other two essential elements are “strong worship experiences and outreach ministries. After that, everything else will follow.”

SUBSTANCE & SUSTAINABILITY

Finding help in building a vibrant youth ministry was C. Davies Reed’s goal when he enrolled in an all-day workshop sponsored by the Indianapolis Center for Congregations. Reed, 18 months into his position as associate rector at St. Christopher’s Episcopal Church in Carmel, was aware of the three major challenges that he faced. A recent seminary graduate—the priesthood is his second career—he had little formal training in youth ministry; the youth program represented only one-third of his responsibilities at St. Christopher’s; and the program that he inherited was in a slump.

“Most youth programs have a pattern of highs and lows, often based on the personality of the youth pastor,” he says. “If you have someone with a great personality, he gets things going, but then he moves on. If no one is available to continue the momentum, the program can lose energy. The key is to create a program that has both substance and sustainability.” At its strongest point, his church’s youth program was supervised by a team of parents whose teens were part of the group. After the students graduated and the parents stepped aside, the quality suffered. “When I came, there really was very little in place for kids in grades six through 12,” he says.

The workshop, called *Sustainable Youth Ministry* with Mark DeVries from Youth Ministry Architects, gave him a glimpse of a strong program’s structure. “Did Youth Ministry Architects ever work with individual congregations?” he asked DeVries during a coffee break. “Did the Indianapolis Center ever make

grants to support a consultation?” he asked Center staff member Nancy Armstrong. The affirmative answers prompted Reed to apply for a grant, secure matching funds and schedule a team of consultants for a weekend of intense meetings, discussions, focus groups and interviews. The sessions culminated in a Sunday presentation to the entire congregation.

“We learned that we need to allocate more resources—more money and more people—if we want to grow our program,” says Reed. “We have to change the way we’re doing things, and we need to recruit a legion of volunteers.” The response from the congregation was positive and resulted in parents coming forward with offers of help. “Some said, ‘I want to be involved but I don’t want to be frontline. I’ll do backroom stuff,’” recalls Reed. “Well, there’s plenty of that to do. For example: Food. You’ve got to feed kids. Last year, I tried to do it all by myself. I’d order the pizza, set up the room and then make sure the activities were ready.”

The consultants provided a timeline that included a to-do list of tasks, arranged by priority. For starters, the youth of the church identified adults they would like to have involved in planning the program. Those members have agreed to make up a team that will help design a sustainable ministry. Reed estimates it will take about 18 months to “get to where we really need to be, with all the pieces in place.” He hopes the church eventually will hire a part-time person, possibly a seminarian, to have direct contact with the youth. That would leave Reed to tend to the administrative tasks that he enjoys and feels he does well. In the meantime, he will continue to oversee the youth program’s busy spring calendar of events.

“Mark DeVries talks about the fact that you can’t stop doing youth ministry to design youth ministry,” says Reed. Just as the congregation erected its church in three construction phases, so does he plan to build the youth program in specific stages. He hopes the result will be a ministry that can sustain changes in personnel without losing its impetus. Success will breed success, and he looks forward to the time when a groundswell of people will join him in the effort. “It will take a while for all of us to reorient our thinking, but we’re going to do this as a community.”



CENTER FOCUS ANNUAL REPORT STATISTICS

RESOURCE CONSULTING

CENTRAL

- 3758 Conversations in
- 642 Cases of which
- 308 are New Cases with
- 494 People representing
- 308 Congregations
- 44% were clergy
- 56% were laity

THE TOP ISSUES

Congregational Vitality
Information Technology
Organizational Learning
Congregational Finance
Building
Marketing
Strategic Planning

NORTHEAST

- 1030 Conversations in
- 371 Cases of which
- 327 are New Cases with
- 269 People representing
- 189 Congregations
- 68% were clergy
- 32% were laity

THE TOP ISSUES

Appreciative Inquiry
Congregational Finance
Congregational Vitality
Building
Communications
Leadership
Sermons and Preaching

SOUTHWEST

- 1427 Conversations in
- 258 Cases of which
- 183 are New Cases with
- 192 People representing
- 120 Congregations
- 58% were clergy
- 42% were laity

THE TOP ISSUES

Information Technology
Congregational Finance
Communications
Building
Congregational Vitality
Leadership
Public Ministry

SOUTHEAST

- 516 Conversations in
- 128 Cases of which
- 110 are New Cases with
- 83 People representing
- 66 Congregations
- 66% were clergy
- 34% were laity

THE TOP ISSUES

Congregational Vitality
Stewardship
Appreciative Inquiry
Congregational Finance
Faith and Money
Youth Ministry

EDUCATIONAL EVENTS

- 98 Educational Events and Meetings
- Including 24 held in the Northeast area
- 17 in the Southwest
- 7 in the Southeast
- and 5 in the Northwest
- 1711 People representing
- 685 Congregations from
- 86 Faith Groups or Denominations

Alban Institute Board of Directors Meeting
Aldersgate UMC Staff Meeting, Fort Wayne
Bachelor Creek Staff Conference, Fort Wayne
Better Preaching, Better Listening
Blogging Invitational, Evansville
Building Issues, Fort Wayne
Catholic Archdiocese of Indianapolis
Catholic Community Foundation
Christian-Jewish Dialog Luncheon
Church Choir Directors Luncheon
Clergy Roundtable Discussion, Jeffersonville
Columbus Clergy Gathering
Congregational Building Luncheon
Congregational Giving Table Talk

Crawfordsville Clergy Gathering
Creating Cultures of Generosity
Crown Point Ministerial Association Luncheon
Cultivating a Church with Vibrant Purpose
Developing Generosity, Evansville
Economic Challenges Advisory Committee
Effective Leadership for Building Programs
Electronic Media, Fort Wayne
Elkhart County Expansion Event
Energizing Your Sunday School Program
Faith and Fundraising
Faith Chapel UMC Planning Meeting
Finance Invitational, Evansville
Flourishing Congregations Southeast
Four Generations in Your Congregation
From Spark to Fire
Governance and Ministry
Green Stories
ICC Board Meeting
Indiana Economic Challenges Initiative
Internet Strategies for Your Congregation
Irvington United Methodist Church
Let's Talk Preaching

Life Together Gathering
Northeast Resources Luncheon
Northwest Invitational Meeting
Nurturing Faith & Family Life
Religious and Congregational Trends
Resource Grant Information Sessions
Samaritan Institute
Southwest Open House
SPE Catholic Conversations
St. Alban's Episcopal Church
Staying Connected in a Facebook World
Terre Haute Clergy Luncheon
The 1% Rule of Board Leadership, Evansville
The Essential Small Church
The Great Emergence, Fort Wayne
The Pastor as Minor Poet, Fort Wayne
The Soul of Your Congregation
UMC Female Clergy Meeting
Wabash Welcome Event
Web 2.0 Bistro

GRANTS

- \$831,149
- 67 Grants of which
- 10 were Southwest Flourishing Congregations Grants totaling \$56,375
- 14 were Life Together Initiative Grants totaling \$367,108
- 43 were Resource Grants totaling \$407,666

GRANT RECIPIENTS

All Saints Episcopal Church
BridgeWay Community Church
Broadway Christian Church
Broadway United Methodist Church
Calvary Christian Church of Hartford City Inc.
Central Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Central United Methodist Church
Christ Church, the Lutheran Church of Zionsville
Church at the Crossing
Congregation Beth-El Zedeck
Emmanuel Lutheran Church
Epworth United Methodist Church
Faith Presbyterian Church
First Assembly of God
First Baptist Church of Indianapolis

First Presbyterian Church of Evansville
Geist Christian Church
Greenwood Christian Church
Holy Cross Catholic Church
Immanuel United Church of Christ
Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation
Kingsway Christian Church
Life Church
Meridian Woods Baptist Church
Mount Pleasant Christian Church
Mt. Auburn United Methodist Church
Mt. Olive Lutheran Church
Mt. Olive United Methodist Church
Nativity Catholic Church
New Light Christian Church
Northminster Presbyterian Church
Northside New Era Missionary Baptist Church
Northwood Christian Church
Park Chapel Christian Church
Pilgrim Lutheran Church
Plainfield United Methodist Church
Poseyville Christian Church
Purpose of Life Ministries
Sacred Heart Catholic Church
Santa Claus United Methodist Church

Servants of Christ Lutheran Church
Southland Community Church
Southminster Presbyterian Church
Spencer First Church of the Nazarene
St. Alban's Episcopal Church
St. Andrew the Apostle Catholic Church
St. Anthony Catholic Church
St. Augustine's Episcopal Church
St. Christopher Catholic Church
St. Christopher's Episcopal Church
St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church
St. Louis de Montfort Catholic Church
St. Luke's United Methodist Church
St. Mary Catholic Church
St. Matthew's Episcopal Church
St. Michael Lutheran Church
St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Stones Crossing Church
The Bridge Community Church
The Lighthouse Free Methodist Church
Trinity Episcopal Church
Unitarian Universalist Church
Unitarian Universalist Church of Bloomington
White River Christian Church
Whiteland United Methodist Church
Zion Hill Missionary Baptist Church

Financial Report

STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION AND ACTIVITIES

The following is a summary of the statement of financial position and the statement of activities of the Center as of December 31, 2009 and for the year then ended. This financial information was extracted from the audited financial statements of the Indianapolis Center for Congregations, Inc. It does not, however, include all disclosures normally associated with financial statements prepared in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles. The complete financial statements, including footnotes and the report of our accountants, BKD, LLP, are available for review upon request.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION	ASSETS	2009	2008
	Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 1,830,780	\$ 1,172,810
	Prepaid expenses and other assets	24,648	38,657
	Investments	22,960,442	20,821,234
	Property and equipment	275,607	202,369
	Total assets	25,091,447	22,235,070
	LIABILITIES		
	Accounts payable	\$ 52,956	\$ 104,144
	Accrued expenses	81,407	63,800
	Total liabilities	134,363	167,944
NET ASSETS			
Unrestricted	\$ 2,023,023	\$ 1,540,550	
Temporarily restricted	22,934,091	20,526,576	
Total net assets	24,957,114	22,067,126	
Total liabilities and net assets	\$ 25,091,477	\$ 22,235,070	

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES		2009			2008		
		Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Total	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Total
	Revenues and other support						
	Contributions	\$ —	\$ 6,061,117	\$ 6,061,117	\$ —	\$ 9,587,525	\$ 9,587,525
	Return of grant funds	—	21,653	21,653	—	17,670	17,670
	Educational Events	34,489	—	34,489	26,333	—	26,333
	Investment income	490,742	—	490,742	568,523	—	568,523
	Other income	684	—	684	138	—	138
		525,915	6,082,770	6,608,685	594,994	9,605,195	10,200,189
	Net assets released from restrictions	3,675,255	(3,675,255)	—	3,366,086	(3,366,086)	—
Total revenues and other support	4,201,170	2,407,515	6,608,685	3,961,080	6,239,109	10,200,189	
Expenses and losses							
Resource Consulting	459,003	—	459,003	438,082	—	438,082	
Resource Discovery and Dissemination	254,530	—	254,530	216,740	—	216,740	
Education	567,363	—	567,363	411,143	—	411,143	
Resource Grants	611,252	—	611,252	597,076	—	597,076	
Major Grant Initiative	465,839	—	465,839	655,569	—	655,569	
Congregational Learning and Evaluation	546,116	—	546,116	401,746	—	401,746	
Total program services	2,904,103	—	2,904,103	2,720,356	—	2,720,356	
Management and general	812,697	—	812,697	680,867	—	680,867	
Total expenses	3,716,800	—	3,716,800	3,401,223	—	3,401,223	
Loss on disposal of equipment	1,897	—	1,897	1,333	—	1,333	
Total expenses and losses	3,718,697	—	3,718,697	3,402,556	—	3,402,556	
Change in net assets	482,473	2,407,515	2,889,988	558,524	6,239,109	6,797,633	
Net assets, beginning of year	1,540,550	20,526,576	22,067,126	982,026	14,287,467	15,269,493	
Net assets, end of year	\$2,023,023	\$ 22,934,091	\$ 24,957,114	\$ 1,540,550	\$ 20,526,576	\$ 22,067,126	





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MISSION

The mission of the Indianapolis Center for Congregations is to help strengthen Indiana congregations by helping them find and use the best resources available to address the challenges and opportunities they identify – and then to share what we learn nationwide.

The Indianapolis Center for Congregations is funded by Lilly Endowment Inc. and is a supporting organization of the Alban Institute. Alban is a research, publishing, education, and consulting organization based in Herndon, Virginia. Founded in 1974, Alban is an independent center of learning and leadership development with a focus on congregations.

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