Expanded searching capabilities, user friendly workshop registration, improved resources display and an updated look are all part of the Center’s new website, which launched this fall.

“As a resource-focused organization, we decided the Center’s website should be resource-based as well,” said Aaron Spiegel, the Center’s information technology director. “The new site is designed to give the user the easiest, fastest and most logical access to the Center’s resources.”

**Staying Connected**

Found at the same browsing address, www.centerforcongregations.org, the updated site helps congregational leaders find workshops, grant information, resources and the Center services they need. The site also helps Center staff to connect with Indiana congregations and to share what we learn nationally.

The Center has a unique mission: to help strengthen Indiana congregations by connecting them to the best resources to address their challenges and opportunities.

The website supports this work, featuring relevant and timely information about resources, workshops, grant programs, community events, findings and studies, all in areas of interest to congregations.

**Empowering Congregations**

“Through our work with Indiana faith communities, Center staff gain knowledge every day about congregations, their programs, their staffs and members, and how they impact the communities they serve,” said Center President Tim Shapiro. “The new website helps us share that knowledge to strengthen congregations in Indiana, across the country and throughout the world.”

**Improved Features**

Upon arrival at the website, users find a clean, updated design. The front page features five navigation options — Home, About the Center, Grants and Initiatives, Resource Database and Workshops. A rolling display of photos is eye-catching, as well as informational. Clicking on specific photos leads readers to other areas of interest on the website. Two constantly updated columns of stories show the most recent blogs and upcoming workshops.

Digging deeper into the site, browsers find an easy-to-use workshops page with a variety of options. They can peruse all of the workshops by exploring the list of events, via region by clicking on a particular area of a color-coded Indiana map, or via date by clicking on a featured calendar.

The new user friendly Resource Database allows readers access to lots of information on topics of interest to congregations. The resource guides feature lists of books, websites, articles and organizations recommended by workshop presenters on particular topics. Also available are past Center publications, such as the Annual Reports, Centerpiece newsletters, Special Reports, Using Resources and more. The page also highlights Center staff writings on various topics.

Web browsers looking for information on a particular topic will appreciate the improved searching capabilities. After typing a topic into the search bar in the upper right-hand corner of the website, a list of related items from the website appears. The search even looks within PDFs on the site, so a results list might include workshops, blog posts, resource guides, articles, newsletters, reports and more.
Check Out These Workshops in December, January and Beyond

The Center for Congregations presents an exciting line-up of workshops through the chilly winter months and into the sunny spring. Volunteer management, faith formation, congregation management software and culture-making are among upcoming topics. Take a look at this compilation of our offerings. For additional information and on-line registration, check our website at www.centerforcongregations.org.

**Trends, Practices and Innovations in Faith Formation**
In this luncheon workshop, participants explore the research on faith growth and effective practices in faith formation. Consultant, educator and author John Roberto will illustrate how congregations can utilize this research with children, adolescents, young adults, adults, families, multiple generations and more. This workshop is Wednesday, December 7, 2011 in Seymour.

**Envisioning and Designing 21st Century Faith Formation**
Faith formation in the 21st century will require new principles, models, approaches and technologies. Consultant, educator and author John Roberto presents a “network” approach to faith formation and offers a variety of practical strategies, ideas and resources for targeting the spiritual and religious needs of people. The workshop is Thursday, December 8, 2011 in McCordsville.

**Congregations and Culture**
As society changes, congregations can become culture-makers and make flourishing and vibrant contributions to their neighborhoods and the world around them. Author, minister and media producer Andy Crouch helps people of faith think about their cultural vocations and discern what it means to carry their religious identity with them through the week in the midst of a changing culture. This workshop is Wednesday, January 25, 2012 in New Palestine and Thursday, January 26, 2012 in Newburgh.

**A Practical Guide to Congregational Planning**
Thriving congregations have a sense of direction. Identifying that direction requires thoughtful reflection and intentional planning. In this workshop led by Center staffers Nancy DeMott and Tim Shapiro, participants learn a model of strategic planning and discover resources to help them use that model in their congregations. The luncheon workshop is Thursday, February 9, 2012 in Evansville.

**Congregation Management Software Basics**
Nancy Armstrong, finance director for the Center for Congregations and an experienced church business administrator, explores congregation management software to keep track of your membership data. Learn the pros and cons of desktop and web-based systems at this luncheon workshop on Thursday, March 15, 2012 in Indianapolis.

**Shared Ministry: Equipping People to Serve**
Volunteers are valuable resources in congregations. Finding, matching, training and keeping these generous individuals is an important part of congregational management. Volunteer management veteran and national speaker Andee Marks explores ministry that belongs to the people, contributing to spiritual growth, helping people discover their gifts and matching volunteers with the appropriate serving opportunities. This workshop is Wednesday, March 21, 2012 in Evansville and Friday, March 23, 2012 in Indianapolis.

**Helping People Use Their Gifts**
Volunteer management veteran and national speaker Andee Marks explores with congregations eight strategic steps for recruitment, training and retention of volunteers. Participants will look at gifts discovery, matching and placement of volunteers and growing a volunteer base. This workshop luncheon is Thursday, March 22, 2012 in Columbus.

For details and on-line registration for these workshops and more, visit the Center for Congregations website at [www.centerforcongregations.org](http://www.centerforcongregations.org)
I’ve had the same family physician for several years. Our family respects him and trusts him. I’m grateful that we’re a healthy bunch. But when needed, we go to him for help regarding a number of aches and pains and preventative care. He listens. He teaches, mostly by handing out an article or referring us to a specialist. He follows up to see how we’re doing. He reminds me why family physicians are so important. He’s like a reference library for health. I know he’s more than that, but I value the experience of being helped by someone who knows something about a wide range of health topics.

In some ways, the Center for Congregations functions like the local family doctor for your congregation. We listen. We assess. We respond to your questions, your concerns. We refer you to specialists when needed.

The Center works with congregations about many issues. In fact, we’ve organized them into some 150 categories. Although these categories don’t include sore throats, headaches and the rest, they do include everything from strengthening the prayer life of teenagers to removing bats from the belfry. We keep track of what congregations call us about — the top presenting issues include subjects such as strategic planning, technology, building issues, youth ministry, community ministry, spirituality, leadership development and stewardship.

The Center is not the specialist concerning these subjects. We are a resource related to these subjects. We help you think more clearly about strategic planning or stewardship. We recommend resources (the specialists) that are the best helpers. We keep in contact with you regarding how it is going, ways we can support your learning and the achievement of your goals.

The Center respects congregations. We value your contribution to the faith development of your members. We value your contribution to the common good. And we want to see your congregation flourish. Or as our family’s physician says as I walk out the door, “Be well.”
Our Mission
The Center for Congregations strengthens Indiana congregations by helping them find and use the best resources to address their challenges and opportunities.