The Congregational Resource Guide (CRG) helps congregational leaders and members find and use the best resources.

The Center for Congregations is pleased to announce the launch of this new web-based application. Found at www.thecrg.org, the CRG is an online tool designed to help congregations find the right resources to address their challenges and opportunities.

In 2013, the Center for Congregations received an incredible opportunity – to reinvent the CRG, a project originally launched in 2002 as a joint effort of the Center and the Alban Institute. This new CRG offers interactive features allowing congregational teams to search, save, organize and discuss the resources and issues that are relevant to them.

In addition to phone, email, educational events and resource consulting, the Congregational Resource Guide offers another way for Indiana congregations to access the Center’s services — resource consulting, educational events and grants. Center staff and consultants have evaluated and selected the CRG resources and serve as CRG resource experts.

In more than 16 years of resourcing congregations, the Center has learned that congregations have the best chance of flourishing when an outside resource is used in concert with the congregation’s own assets and creativity to address a challenge or opportunity.

“This is a unique tool for congregations and an exciting initiative for us,” stated Center President Tim Shapiro. “We hope that the CRG will help congregational leaders, members and teams enhance their capacity to blend excellent resources with their own ingenuity.”

Folks can check out the new CRG on a desktop, laptop, tablet or phone. Responsive technology makes it easily readable on any device.

**Search**
The CRG helps users find the right resources for the congregational challenges they identify. Resources can be books, articles, websites, organizations and more. These resources are chosen for the CRG and evaluated based on the Center’s extensive work with congregations.

**Save**
Once helpful resources are identified, they can be checkmarked and printed or saved. The user can create an account that allows him or her to save the resources and discuss them with others in the congregation.

**Workspaces**
A CRG Workspace is a repository for resources and discussions related to a specific topic, created by a congregational team member. Within a workspace, users can begin conversations about the resources and the congregational topic, invite other congregation team members to see the resources and join the discussion, and invite an expert to help. Users can create multiple workspaces around a variety of topics they identify.

It is the Center’s hope that congregational leaders, members and teams will find this new application to be a helpful tool. Congregational life is busy and challenging and full of opportunity. The CRG is an easily accessible application that highlights the best resources and encourages conversation and cooperation.
Upcoming Workshops Explore Important Issues for Congregations

Winter 2014 and 2015 brings an exciting line-up of workshops and events for Indiana congregations. Community engagement, fundraising, generational ministry and conflict are among workshop topics offered. Information and on-line registration for these events and more can be found at the Center website, at https://www.centerforcongregations.org/workshops-list.

Creating an Environment of Safety and Respect in Your Congregation
In this luncheon workshop, pastor and writer Joshua Brown talks about highlighting a safe, welcoming and respectful environment within congregations. Brown relays his Indiana congregation’s experiences with creating a Bill of Rights for the church, following a sexual abuse scandal. This Bill of Rights states what everyone can expect when they gather in this congregation. The luncheon is December 10, 2014 in Fort Wayne.

Funding Your Ministry Projects
Resource development, action steps, best practices and communication are all part of a successful fundraising plan. Join executive strategist and non-profit leader Aimée Laramore as she helps congregational leaders walk through these important steps to create an action plan for raising needed funds. This workshop is January 22, 2015 in Fort Wayne.

Reaching and Unleashing Baby Boomers and Beyond
Baby Boomers are approaching the later years of life in a radically different way than previous generations. Discover why this generation is essential to the ministry of your church and community and learn how to engage and unleash them to make a significant impact. Author, speaker and consultant Amy Hanson leads this workshop February 11, 2015 in northwest Indiana and February 12, 2015 in Indianapolis.

Guidelines for a Fruitful Ministry
When leaders have questions about planning, operating or growing their congregations, they need answers that are insightful and practical. Dr. Gary McIntosh, internationally known author, speaker and consultant on church growth, will lead participants in exploring change, volunteer involvement, programs and visitors. The workshop is February 11 in Avon and February 12, 2015 in Seymour.

Transforming Congregational Conflict
This workshop presents problem-solving techniques for handling conflict in the congregation and offers compassionate and effective ways to deal with discord. Educator, author and pastor Theresa Latini offers practical skills and strategies for pastors and lay leaders. This workshop is March 10, 2015 in Evansville and March 12, 2015 in Seymour.

Creative Worship: Designing Memorable Experiences
The day is a mix of practical philosophy and tips for developing and maturing your use of technology and digital imagery to communicate the gospel through powerful, transforming stories in worship. Author and animator/illustrator Jason Moore leads this workshop on April 15, 2015 in Indianapolis and April 16, 2015 in northwest Indiana.

Congregations and Community Engagement
This workshop is for key congregational leaders who are determined to serve their communities more deeply. Topics for the day include “Outreach Isn’t Optional,” “Meet the Neighbors,” “Seven Models” and “Out of the Pew and Into the Community.” Author, speaker and consultant Joy Skjegstad leads this workshop, which is April 14, 2015 in Elkhart and April 16, 2015 in Evansville.
Possibilities, ideas and opportunities are numerous in your congregation. The challenge is often deciding which inspiration to take to reality. Once you are ready to act on the right idea, your congregation and its leaders are challenged with determining how to do the work.

If your congregation is like many others in Indiana, it is a larger task to make the dream a reality than to receive the dream. It is one thing to sense a call to serve your neighborhood through a job fair. It is another task to figure out how to pull off a job fair. Who should be in charge? What is the budget? What is the timeline? Where should it be held? How do you publicize?

There are more helpers — that is, there are more outside resources — available to help you dream than there are to help you implement. Yet, there are a few guideposts that can keep you moving ahead:

- Make sure you have the right people doing the work. Who are the right people? Those who care about the project and are able to act strategically. These are check-list folks who follow though quickly on things rather than procrastinate.
- Every new endeavor needs to have a budget. You can’t bridge the gap between dream and do without financial resources.
- Create a timeline. Everything in creation is bounded in time. Make a macro and a micro timeline. For example, if you are working on something like a job fair create a schedule for all the activities that will produce the job fair (that’s macro) and make a schedule for the event itself (that’s micro).
- Form a communication plan. Who needs to know what when?

These are just a few ideas related to strategic implementation of your congregation’s dreams.

The Center is often called upon early in a congregation project. We also want to be helpful to you when you are in the midst of doing. Let us know how we can help you make your dreams a reality. We are ready and willing to walk alongside you as you accomplish great things.

**Resources You Can Use**

**Learning for Congregations**

Check out our new web-based application, the Congregational Resource Guide (CRG). The CRG can be found at www.thecrg.org. You can search, save and discuss resources around topics that are important to your congregation. Below are a few of the resources that can be found on the CRG.

**Renewal**

Marty Ostow. DVD. Auburn Media, 2007. “Countless Americans are answering a spiritual call to confront the enormous challenges of environmental degradation. For many, faith has inspired action.” This feature-length presentation tells the stories of grassroots environmental initiatives led by people of faith from a variety of religious traditions, including Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Buddhist. The video is designed for theatrical and community viewings but its 8 segments can also be viewed one at a time for an engaging study series.

**Becoming a Multicultural Church**


This book tells the story of one mainline Massachusetts congregation which moved from being a “traditional” church of one social grouping to a multicultural and numerically much larger church. The story is told by the pastor for the benefit of other congregations learning from this experience.

**Interfaith Network On Mental Illness**

http://www.inmi.us/

The Interfaith Network on Mental Illness is dedicated to increasing “awareness and understanding of mental illness among clergy and members of faith communities by helping them more effectively develop ... supportive environments for persons dealing with mental illnesses.” To this end, they have created the Caring Clergy Project at http://www.caringclergyproject.org/, which offers, among other resources, a Checklist for Faith Communities, Ten Steps to Developing a Mental Health Ministry, and two video series, Making Referrals and Suicide Prevention and Intervention.

**Centerview**

By Tim Shapiro

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Our Mission
The Center for Congregations strengthens Indiana congregations by helping them find and use the best resources to address their challenges and opportunities.