“A lot of churches move out as their populations change, but Holy Angels has always been here as a stable part of the neighborhood.”

— Holy Angels Catholic Church, Indianapolis
Growth, care, hospitality and affirmation are signs of vibrancy that we witness in congregations throughout Indiana. Many congregations in our state are thriving. While they all experience challenges, we see these faith communities, over and over again, successfully enhancing their work, stepping out and facing their obstacles.

We know this because of the stories they tell us. We hear them every day. First Friends Meeting in Indianapolis introduces the youth to the best of the Quaker faith tradition. Holy Angels Catholic Church in Indianapolis makes a commitment to the neighborhood as a gesture of hope and support. Olive Branch Baptist in Dillsboro provides positive welcome and assimilation, resulting in growth and energy. St. Mary Catholic Church in Crown Point makes a committed effort to minister to those facing end-of-life issues. I am pleased to share these stories with you in this report.

Challenges and opportunities are as varied as the congregations themselves. In 2015, the Center continued to walk alongside them through resource consulting, education events and grants. An abundance of wonderful things happened.

Improvements continued on the new Congregational Resource Guide (CRG) in 2015. The CRG is a web application allowing congregational leaders, staff and members to search, save, organize and discuss the resources and issues that are relevant to them.

Also in 2015, we awarded a record 118 resource grants to congregations. This ongoing granting opportunity allows Indiana congregations to apply for matching funding for resources around issues that are important to them.

Congregations are among our communities’ greatest assets, and we are pleased to continue serving their needs. I hope you are inspired by the stories and information in this 2015 Annual Report.

Tim Shapiro
Center President
Patrick Lanman will never forget his first Sunday morning in the pulpit at Olive Branch Baptist Church. “There were 22 people in the pews,” he says, “and five of them were my family.” Twelve years later, parishioners joke that if they oversleep and are a few minutes late for worship, they likely won’t find a seat. It’s a sweet headache for a 160-year-old church so sheltered by the rolling hills of southern Indiana that its location would confound the most sophisticated GPS system.

“It’s hard to explain to people exactly where we are,” admits Lanman, the bi-vocational pastor who commutes 13 miles from Vevay, where he owns the weekly newspaper. “We’re located on the curve in the road just down from the unincorporated community of Bear Branch.” To clarify, he adds: “Our building sits in Ohio County, but we border Switzerland County, where a lot of our folks live. Our mailing address is Dillsboro, which is in Dearborn County, but our phone number—the 667 exchange—is Ripley County.” Members drive a variety of distances from both sides of the Ohio River because, as Lanman says, “They feel at home here.”

Olive Branch is one of several vibrant faith communities that have partnered with the Center for Congregations this year in an effort to strengthen and expand their already-successful ministries. Some have received grants to advance construction plans; others have used Center resources to design and implement initiatives that meet unique needs. Olive Branch leaders contacted the Center when the church’s lively youth program led to a surge of members and a shortage of space. “When I was a kid, parents took their children to church,” explains Lanman. “It’s exactly the opposite now. If kids are excited about church, parents will take them wherever they want to go.”

The leadership team agrees, but adds that among Olive Branch’s many attractions is Lanman himself, who warmly welcomes newcomers of all ages and quickly assimilates them into the church’s ministry. “We’ve always had a core group of great people and now we’re adding to that core,” says Richard Kindler, often the first to arrive and last to leave on Sunday morning. When worship attendance surpassed 100 and Sunday school classes spilled over from the basement into the kitchen and then outside to an annex, a building committee formed to consider the options. All money collected at the first worship service of every month was designated to support whatever expansion plan emerged.

“Richard and I used to stand out in the parking lot, and he would point to the field and say, ‘Someday there’s going to be a big family life center right there,’” recalls Lanman. “Then he’d turn in another direction and say, ‘and that’s where we’re going to put a new sanctuary, big enough to fit everyone into it.’” The first step toward realization of the dream was to earn the congregation’s approval to erect a 90’x120’ steel structure flexible enough to accommodate the church’s weekly activities, as well as to host special events such as the August chicken fry that draws as many as 500 hungry guests. The projected cost was sobering—$500,000—but the vote was unanimous.

“There’s no doubt in my mind that this is a feasible project for them,” says Doug Hanner, director of the Center for Congregations’ southeast office. A matching grant for $7,700 from the
Center for Congregations helped defray architectural and engineering fees. Construction is now under way with a completion date set for August, in time for the annual chicken fry. The outlook is bright. “This is a real team effort,” says Hanner. “These are gritty folks in the work they do and the faith they share. They’ve been careful in their pace and strategic in their decision-making. They know they’re building this space for clear and specific reasons. They’re leveraging their resources wisely to make the project successful.”

**A “BEACON OF LIGHT”**

A different kind of construction effort is gaining momentum on the west side of Indianapolis, where members of Holy Angels Catholic Church plan to replace their historic wood-frame building—erected in 1903 and torn down in 2012—with an imposing fan-shaped sanctuary. Lay leader Reggie Ash filmed the demolition of the old landmark as onlookers shed tears, traded memories and claimed bits of rubble as mementoes. “Our church has been a beacon of light for more than 100 years,” says Ash, co-chair of the building committee that utilized Center for Congregations services in its deliberations. “People in the neighborhood have had their share of hard times, and the church has always been there for them.”

The need to replace the wood-frame structure came as no surprise. “I loved the old place, but it had served its purpose,” says Adelaide Long, who cleaned the sanctuary and was familiar with its many shortcomings. “The roof was leaking, the floors were dropping, and I had to stick newspaper in the cracks to stop the cold air from coming in.” The Marion County Health Department compiled a long list of violations and issued an ultimatum: Fix the problems or vacate the property. Repairs were too costly, which made demolition inevitable. Without a worship space, the congregation faced the possibility of a merger with a sister parish. After much consideration, the Archdiocese of Indianapolis decided Holy Angels was a community asset too important to lose.

“A recent study showed this area has the highest number of abandoned and boarded up houses in the city,” says Father Kenneth Taylor, who grew up in the parish and has been its spiritual leader for a decade. “A lot of churches move out as their populations change, but Holy Angels has always been here as a stable part of the neighborhood.” Situated on a hill overlooking Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, the old sanctuary was a highly visible symbol of hope to generations of inner-city residents, and for that reason, “it’s important that we build on the same place,” says Taylor.

Initial estimates for a new church complex exceeded $3 million. That number was pared to $1.6 million by limiting construction to a sanctuary without adjoining offices and rectory. A $15,000 grant from the Center for Congregations helped secure several preliminary architectural designs, which Taylor showed to members for their input. Everyone expected opinions to vary as to which concept the architect should pursue, but “the positive reaction to one was enthusiastic,” recalls Sister Gail Trippett, pastoral associate. “When we got to the fourth design the whole place expressed approval. It was amazing. Everyone caught the same vision.”

Groundbreaking won’t take place until the parish has generated a certain percentage of the project’s total cost. In the meantime, members will gather for Mass at nearby Marian University. The fundraising effort, now in its second year, continues to spark interest and support within the church community and far beyond. Children who attend Holy Angels
School—only 10 percent of whom are Catholic—are collecting “praise for pennies” to purchase doors for the new sanctuary. The local news media have featured stories about the building campaign, and random contributions have poured in from throughout the city. “It’s not unusual for strangers to stop me on the street to ask, ‘How’s it going, Father? Have you broken ground yet?’” says Taylor. “People genuinely want us to be here.”

**Passing along the faith**

On the opposite side of Indianapolis, another vibrant congregation—First Friends Meeting—has partnered with the Center for Congregations to create a program that instills in its youth the traditions of the Quaker faith. The need for the program became obvious shortly after Ruthie Tippin arrived to pastor the 425-member church. During her rounds of get-acquainted home visits, she fielded two questions repeatedly: What are we doing for our young people? How will the next generation understand what it means to be a Quaker?

Tippin had long envisioned a comprehensive “affirmation class,” aimed at middle-school students, to address those very concerns. An invitation to participate in the Center for Congregations’ Youth Ministry Grants Initiative provided the perfect opportunity to explore the vision and break new ground for other Quaker meetings. “To my knowledge, we’ve done something that no other meeting has done,” says Beth Henricks, Christian education and family ministries director at First Friends and overseer of the project. “Our goal was to raise our students’ awareness of Quaker principles. We wanted to look at our history and testimonies and learn what Quakers are doing in the world today.”

A matching grant from the Center enabled Henricks and her team to hire a professional educator who developed a detailed curriculum that included lesson plans, hands-on learning activities and field trips. They recruited 11 participants—fifth graders through high school juniors—who agreed to meet twice monthly for two hours on Sunday afternoons. Guest speakers ranged from a young Quaker from New England to a rabbi from Indianapolis. The topic of comparative religion took on new meaning when the class hosted a youth group from a nearby mosque. Every other month, the youth traveled to a site that was significant in Quaker history, culminating with a trip to Philadelphia.

For sixth grader Paul Lee, a highlight of the series was the powerful “Follow the North Star” program at Conner Prairie, in which students take on the roles of fugitive slaves. “Paul talked a lot about that when he came home;” says his father, Dan Lee. “Learning about the Quaker principles of social justice and equality really inspired him and heightened his understanding of the courage it takes to stand up for your beliefs. As a parent, I talked with Paul about how God speaks to us, and from a Quaker point of view, puts in us a sense of what’s right and wrong.”

To measure the impact of the 10-month course, Henricks gave the students a test before the first class and after the last. She describes the learning curve as “dramatic” and plans to post the curriculum on the First Friends’ website so other meetings can experience similar results. The church will repeat the series in the fall of 2017, and an adult version, with a dozen participants, currently is under way.

“One of the beautiful things that came out of this was the proposal that the youth group made to the congregation at one of our monthly business meetings,” recalls Henricks. The intent was for the students to learn the Quaker governance process by presenting an idea to the general membership. Since it was merely a practice exercise, they could propose something as simple as different cookies for the Sunday fellowship.
hour. Instead, they recognized the assignment as an opportunity to build on what the affirmation class had begun. “They said our church needed a youth pastor,” says Henricks. “The congregation listened, agreed, and our trustees are funding the new position for two years.”

**Breaking the Silence**

Education of a different kind was the goal of a project designed and executed by five members of St. Mary Catholic Church in Crown Point after they attended the Circle of Care program sponsored by the Center for Congregations. In four day-long sessions, each separated by several weeks, teams from 10 participating churches explored ways to support their parishioners who were dealing with illness, death and grief. As a homework assignment, the teams were to conduct a “gap analysis” to determine what needs their home churches were not yet addressing. Based on the analysis, each team was encouraged to create a project aimed to close the gap.

“As we filled out the assessment, we realized that St. Mary was doing a lot in terms of health, wellness and serving homebound members,” says Sister Joanne Marie Schutz, pastoral associate. “But we were surprised that we had nothing in place to educate people about end-of-life issues.”

This realization resulted in the team’s decision to create a three-hour seminar called “Leaving a Legacy,” focusing on ways to ease the pain and grief leading up to and following death. The Sunday afternoon event, open to everyone in the St. Mary community, brought in speakers from out of state and tapped the expertise of parish member Carole Pepa, a nurse who discussed the benefits of hospice care, and parish priest Father Pat Kalich, who explored the sacraments that are administered near the time of death. The more than 100 persons in attendance praised the workshop and offered suggestions for a follow-up session.

“As part of the evaluation, we asked them, ‘How else can we help?’” says Schutz. “They told us they wanted information about funerals.” Four months later, she and her team responded to that request with “Funeral Planning 101,” which covered everything from Mass preparations to organ donations. Both workshops shared valuable information and lifted the shroud of silence that often blankets the uncomfortable topic of death.

“The workshops were all about the importance of being prepared,” says team member Marian Weeks. “Our goal was to help people have loving conversations as they prepare for what is inevitable.” The opportunity to participate in the Center for Congregation’s in-depth learning program coincided with the celebration of St. Mary’s 150th anniversary in 2015. A portion of the church’s vision statement, developed in anticipation of the anniversary, called for “opening our arms to serve others.” The Circle of Care program created a new way to do that. “I can now say that I am beginning to see some of the beauty in death,” says team member Sherry Ginter. “I certainly have a better understanding of how to prepare for it and how to make choices now that will relieve my loved ones from having to make them later.”

Caring ministries, affirming youth, welcoming growth and commitment to community are all part of vibrant congregational life. Strong Indiana congregations such as these are finding guidance, resources and matching grant assistance through the Center to help address challenges and enhance opportunities.
**Central**
- 4147 Conversations in 83 Cases of which Southwestern Congregations from 661 Cases of which 148 People representing 86 Congregations including 26 held in Central Indiana. 42% were laity.
- 118 Resource Grants 194 are New Cases with 121 Educational Events and Meetings.
- $1,055,644 for 48% were laity.

**Northeast**
- 1966 Conversations in 170 Cases of which Northwestern Congregations from 118 New Cases with 169 People representing 109 Congregations. 58% were clergy. 42% were laity.
- The Top Issues: Youth Ministry Building Staffing/Volunteers Information Technology Community Ministry

**Northwest**
- 2405 Conversations in 268 Cases of which Northwestern Congregations from 191 New Cases with 231 People representing 138 Congregations. 52% were clergy. 48% were laity.
- The Top Issues: Youth Ministry Strategic Planning Congregational Vitality Information Technology

**Southwest**
- 893 Conversations in 83 Cases of which Southwestern Congregations from 65 New Cases with 108 People representing 57 Congregations. 44% were clergy. 56% were laity.
- The Top Issues: Youth Ministry Building Strategic Planning Children's Ministry Congregational Growth

**Southeast**
- 1516 Conversations in 154 Cases of which Southeastern Congregations from 119 New Cases with 148 People representing 86 Congregations. 54% were clergy. 46% were laity.
- The Top Issues: Youth Ministry Adult Education Building Children's Ministry Strategic Planning

**Grants**
- All Souls Unitarian Church, Indianapolis
- Avon Christian Church (DOC), Avon
- Benton Mennonite Church, Goshen
- Bethel United Methodist Church, Fort Wayne
- Broadway Christian Church, Fort Wayne
- Brookside Community Church, Indianapolis
- Brownstown Christian Church
- Calvary Church, Valparaiso
- Calvary United Methodist Church, Brownsburg
- Carmel United Methodist Church
- Center Chapel United Methodist Church, Marion
- Central Presbytery Church, Terre Haute
- Christ Lutheran Church, Zionsville
- Christ Memorial Temple, Lafayette
- Christ the Savior Lutheran Church, Fishers
- Christ's Community Church, Fishers
- Clay United Methodist Church, South Bend
- College Mennonite Church, Goshen
- College Park Church, Indianapolis
- Congregation Beth Shalom, Bloomington
- Covenant Church, West Lafayette
- Covenant Community Church, Indianapolis
- Crossroads Christian Church, Valparaiso
- Crossroads Church, Avon
- Crossroads Community Church, Kokomo
- Davy Family Church
- Davis Memorial Church of the Nazarene, Bedford
- Eagle Church, Zionsville
- Emmaus Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne
- Fairlawn Presbyterian Church, Columbus
- Faith Mennonite Church, Goshen
- Faith Missionary Church (PEC), Indianapolis
- First Baptist Church, Vincennes
- First Baptist Church of Griffith
- First Christian Church, Vincennes
- First Christian Church, Brazil
- First Christian Church (DOC), Shelbyville
- First Church of God Anderson, Bedford
- First Missionary Church, Fort Wayne
- First Presbyterian Church, Michigan City
- First Presbyterian Church, Peru
- Fountainview Christian Church
- Fresh Oil Ministries, Gary
- Grace Gathering, Elkhart, Highland Village Church, Bloomington
- Holy Angels Catholic Church, Indianapolis
- Holy Family Episcopal Church, Fishers
- Holy Rosary Catholic Church, Indianapolis
- Holy Shepherd Lutheran Church, St. John
- Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation
- Indy Metro Church, Indianapolis
- Jesus Christ Outreach Ministries International, Gary
- Joy of All Who Sorrow Eastern Orthodox, Indianapolis
- Lake Village Presbyterian Church
- Lakeview Church, Indianapolis
- Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Evansville
- Maple City Chapel, Goshen
- Monticello United Methodist Church
- Mt. Gilead Church, Mooresville
- Mt. Zion Apostolic Church, Indianapolis
- Nappanee First Brethren Church, Nappanee
- New Dimensions Christian Church, New Albany
- New Hope Community Church, Newburgh
- New Life Church, Kokomo
- New Life Church, Goshen
- New Life Wesleyan Church of Chesterton
- New Palestine United Methodist Church
- New Second Baptist Church, East Chicago
- New Shiloh Baptist Church, Gary
- North Manchester First Brethren Church
- Odon Christian Church
- Ogilvie Christian Church, Columbus
- Ollie Chapel, Dillsboro
- Orchard Park Presbyterian Church, Indianapolis
- Our Shepherd Lutheran Church, Avon
- Outlook Christian Church, McCordsville
- Ovid Community Church, Anderson
- Peter's Rock Missionary Baptist Church, Gary
- Pierceton Presbyterian Church
- Plainfield Christian Church
- Prince of Peace Catholic Church, Madison
- Sacred Ground Worship Center, Indianapolis
- Sanctuary Community Church, Greenwood
- Shiloh United Methodist Church, Jasper
- Shoals United Methodist Church
- Silver Lake Wesleyan Church
- St. Christopher's Episcopal Church, Carmel
- St. Francis-in-the-Field Episcopal Church, Zionsville
- St. James African Methodist Episcopal, Elkhart
- St. John Paul II Catholic Church, Sellersburg
- St. John's United Church of Christ, Boonville
- St. Lawrence Catholic Church, Lafayette
- St. Mary Catholic Church, Frankfort
- St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Lafayette
- St. Matthew United Methodist Church, Frankfort
- St. Michael Catholic Church, Greenfield
- St. Michael Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne
- St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Brownstown
- Sinesville Church of the Nazarene
- Temple Beth-El, South Bend
- The Ridge, Columbus
- Trinity Church, Indianapolis
- Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Crown Point
- Union Community Church, Valparaiso
- Unity of Northwest Indiana, Hammond
- Victory Temple Assembly of God, Jasper
- Victory Temple Missionary Baptist Church, Gary
- Vienna Baptist Church, Scottsburg
- Vineyard Community Church of Greenwood, Wabash Ave. Presbyterian Church, Crawfordsville
- Wabash Presbyterian Church
- Wesley Chapel United Methodist, Vincennes
- Woodruff Place Baptist Church, Indianapolis
- Zion Missionary Baptist, East Chicago

**Events and Meetings**
- Accomplish Associated Churches Food Bank, Fort Wayne
- Association of Lutheran Development Executives (ALDE)
- Authentic Congregational Leadership
- Bethel Church, Crown Point
- Brownstown Christian Church staff meeting
- Central United Methodist, Evansville
- Clergy Support Group, Evansville
- Community Engagement Luncheon
- Compassionate Care Congregational Strategic Planning

**Resource Grants**
- $1,055,644 for 118 Resource Grants

**Annual Report Statistics**
- 2015 Annual Report Statistics
- Center Focus
- Educational Events
- Grants
- Resource Consulting
## 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, 2015 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 auditors, BKD, LLP, are available for review upon request.

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Mission
The mission of the Indianapolis Center for Congregations is to 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 Congregational Resource Guide is a project of the Indianapolis Center for Congregations. This web-based application helps congregations find and use the best resources for the challenges they identify.

The Indianapolis Center for Congregations is funded by Lilly Endowment Inc. and is a supporting organization of Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis and Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

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Acknowledgements
Photography
Chris Minnick

Writing
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Front cover photo is St. Mary Catholic Church, Crown Point.
“We’ve always had a core group of great people and now we’re adding to that core.”

— Olive Branch Baptist Church, Dillsboro
“Our goal was to raise our students’ awareness of Quaker principles. We wanted to look at our history and testimonies and learn what Quakers are doing in the world today.”

— First Friends Meeting, Indianapolis