



*Center for
Congregations, Inc.*

2006 Annual Report



Reaching Out

Whether it is expressed or implied, “reaching out” is at the core of almost every congregation’s mission. As an organization that works to strengthen faith communities, the Indianapolis Center shares the same mission. In this year’s annual report we focus on four congregations that are reaching out in intentional ways to accomplish aggressive goals. By telling their stories we also tell our own. The role of the Center has been to walk alongside these congregations—reaching out with resources and encouragement—as they have implemented creative plans to:

Shaarey Tefilla



- Recover from a tragedy that led to a decade of mourning
- Mount a relocation campaign that promises to make history
- Energize teens to appreciate ancient church liturgy
- Organize an ecumenical event open to the entire state

These colorful and dramatic stories are representative of the work that we have engaged in for almost a decade. As we approach our tenth anniversary, we continue to extend our services to a growing number of congregations in a growing number of ways. During 2006 we tallied 5,118 contacts with 522 congregations in central Indiana and in the region served by our satellite office in Allen County. The launch of the Northeast Center for Congregations in 2005 was our first experiment in reaching beyond our Indianapolis base. In the past year Northeast Director Brian Witwer has made significant inroads in the seven-county area encircling the Center. He has boosted the facility’s visibility by calling on ministerial associations, becoming acquainted with the area’s 1,000 congregations, and hosting seminars on topics that range from urban ministry to the emerging church.

The success of the Northeast Center has prompted us to explore the possibility of extending our services. In July we invited 15 clergy from throughout Indiana to participate in a roundtable discussion about the resource networks available to congregations. We asked participants to suggest ways we might expand but not duplicate those networks. As 2006 drew to a close, we were beginning to consult with a sampling of congregations in several southern counties.

Even as we sought guidance on breaking new ground, we retained the services of Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE) to measure the impact of our work in and around the familiar territory of Indianapolis. Previously, PIRE helped the Center and the Alban Institute better understand our respective consulting practices. Now, PIRE’s study will help us understand the effect we have had on congregations and, in turn, the impact the congregations have had on their home communities.

Among the discoveries that we’ve already made about our work is that it often has spin-off benefits we didn’t anticipate. As an example, the Center has developed two tools from our three-year Sacred Space Grants Initiative (SSGI) that we will use to reach out and assist congregations for years to come. First, our staff has written a book to be published by the Alban Institute that summarizes what SSGI taught us; second, we’ve upgraded and repackaged a DVD that tells the stories of several grant participants who successfully walked through the SSGI process. Those congregations will serve as models for other congregations about to embark on projects to improve their sacred spaces.

We now are preparing for a new major grant initiative, announced in 2006 to unfold in 2007. Called “Life Together—Thinking and Acting Strategically,” it will help 30 congregations design and implement long-range plans. During this three-year experience the Indianapolis Center will walk as partners with the participating congregations. Again, the ministry of reaching out—theirs and ours—continues.

Timothy Shapiro
President



Northminster Presbyterian

Reaching beyond the choir

Congregations pursue ambitious goals

Don Craft smiles as he recalls a meeting a few years ago at Northminster Presbyterian Church when participants introduced themselves by telling the date they had affiliated with the congregation. Craft, who had joined more than 20 years earlier, identified himself as “one of the older members” of the group. But his senior status was short-lived when someone in the circle bested his tenure by 30 years and still another described her 1948 wedding in the church’s sanctuary.

“We’re a traditional, urban-centered church,” explains Craft, a veteran lay leader who has served as an elder, trustee, treasurer and foundation board member. He adds that like many similar faith communities, “we’ve seen the graying of our congregation... our average age is somewhere in the 60s.”

The aging of Northminster’s membership was just one concern when the Rev. Dr. Teri Thomas joined the staff as senior minister five years ago. The stately church on Kessler Boulevard in Indianapolis had suffered a tragedy in 1996 when its long-time pastor, Fred Mathias, and his wife, Clea, were murdered in their home ten days before Christmas. Grief and depression had taken their toll, and membership had decreased from 2,000 to 1,200. “When we cleaned the rolls, it was closer to 900,” clarifies Thomas.

After a decade of mourning, members of the congregation were expressing a readiness to regroup and move on. They told Thomas they were committed to halting the decline and wanted the church to reclaim its position as a lively force within its northside neighborhood. They set an overall direction, agreed on a mission statement—“Seek, Serve and Embrace”—and borrowed a catch phrase from the best-selling business book, *Built to Last*. As suggested by the text, they were poised to pursue a “Big, Hairy, Audacious Goal:” to grow their membership to 2,013 by the year 2013.

“That’s when we went to the Center for Congregations for help,” says Thomas.

Northminster Presbyterian Church



Designing a plan, boosting visibility

In their numerous congregational meetings, small group sessions and officer retreats, members had asked, “OK, how do we make this happen?” A team of volunteers, headed by project leader Don Craft, created a comprehensive proposal with components that reached out to the community in a variety of ways.

Designed to raise the visibility of the church, the plan included special events that ranged from an outdoor summer festival, complete with a neighborhood yard sale, to a series of eclectic Sunday night concerts that might feature a classical cantata one month and a Celtic band the next. They submitted the proposal to the Indianapolis Center for Congregations (ICC) and in June



Center for Congregations

were awarded a resource grant to set the plan in motion.

“The Center has helped us in so many ways,” says Thomas. “In the beginning it was with funding. Then, after we got the programs up and running, we selected a building committee and sat down with staff from the Center to talk about renovating the church, adding a parking area and creating a fellowship space. They gave us really good recommendations for architects and suggested the kinds of questions we should be asking.”

With momentum growing, the congregation is now mindful of a new challenge. Members understand that the building project will require much energy, and they don’t want to lose focus or jeopardize their ambitious outreach program that already is showing signs of success. In 2006 for the first time in more than 25 years, the church took in more members than it lost. “That’s a major turnaround for us,” says Thomas. “Our nursery is full with babies on Sunday morning and that feels good.”

It feels so good that she and her leadership team agree that they won’t be disappointed if they don’t quite achieve their “big, hairy, audacious goal” of doubling the membership by the year 2013. “I don’t know if we’ll make it or not, but that’s all right,” says Craft. “We’re optimistic, and we’re definitely moving in the right direction.”

Making Hoosier history

A very different faith community, located not far from Northminster Presbyterian Church, is also utilizing

Center resources to reach out in a variety of ways to break new ground—literally. Compared to Northminster, Congregation Shaarey Tefilla is younger in years and smaller in size. “We have a very modest budget; we don’t have a custodial staff; everyone pitches in,” says Rabbi Arnold Bienstock. “We have people changing light bulbs, taking out garbage...it’s beautiful!”

The synagogue was founded in 1992 by families that met in the living rooms of their Hamilton County residences. The current worship space on Central Avenue in Indianapolis is several miles from most members’ homes, lacks classrooms and has a shortage of parking. Children and people with physical challenges have difficulty accessing its raised pulpit, which limits the participatory kind of worship that Bienstock encourages. “The building doesn’t reflect what we’re about,” he summarizes. The solution to the problems seemed logical—move to a new facility in Carmel and make history by becoming Hamilton County’s first and only synagogue.

“We wanted to reach out to our members by relocating to a site closer to where they live,” says Bienstock. “The old principle is true: Whatever the Christian world does, the Jewish world does even more so. By that I mean that as the general population of Indianapolis suburbanizes, the Jewish community totally suburbanizes.”

Although he estimates that 95 percent of the congregation favored a move out of the city, he was aware of an understandable reluctance to commit to a \$3.5 million construction project. With 160 families on their membership rolls, could they afford to embark on such an ambitious goal? Bienstock, who came to Indianapolis the same year that the ICC opened its doors, was familiar with the Center and felt comfortable asking for guidance. “I went there and

said, ‘How can we make this project a reality?’”

Help came in the form of an award from the Sacred Space Grants Initiative (SSGI), which enabled the synagogue to conduct a feasibility study that revealed the potential of raising \$1.5 million. SSGI classes and field trips followed and introduced Shaarey Tefilla representatives to pitfalls to avoid and ideas to consider as they began designing their new building. “One Sunday we went on a tour in Cincinnati and visited three new

synagogues,” says Bienstock. “That was very helpful.”

The congregation broke ground in early October on a

building that will occupy a ten-acre tract of prime land in Carmel. Members anticipate conducting their first service in their new home by the end of 2007 or early in 2008. When its doors finally open, the facility will support a worship style that invites families—including children—not only to participate in but also to lead portions of the Shabbat services. Bienstock describes the building as “lovely,” “within our means” and with “room to grow.” Contributions have already surpassed the feasibility study’s estimate, and fund-raising is ongoing. He credits the ICC with providing resources that went far beyond grant money.

“We needed a lot of handholding,” he says. “We’re a small institution that needed plenty of encouragement and help. The Center kept pushing us and telling us that, yes, we could do it.”

Preserving faith traditions

Congregation Shaarey Tefilla’s determination to pass along its rich religious traditions to the next generation is a goal that virtually all faith communities share. Many Christian churches, even those with rituals that date back several centuries, are eyeing

the aging populations in their pews and experimenting with ways to attract and involve young members. They are updating their worship services—integrating everything from drama to drums—in an effort to spark interest. These bold moves have generated mixed responses from targeted teens.

“We don’t use Latin anymore, and our Mass is participatory,” explains Maureen Shea, coordinator of music and liturgy at St. Thomas More Catholic Church in Mooresville, Indiana. “People don’t just sit and listen...they sing and they get involved. We’ve even moved a bit on the music and have blended contemporary songs and traditional hymns. I use piano more than organ now, but we have to be careful not to step over the edge.”

Stepping over the edge would be to tamper with the sacred ritual that older members characterize as “the heart of our faith” but that some youth describe as “boring,” says Marianne Hawkins, coordinator of faith formation and youth ministry at St. Thomas More. When changes in worship failed to improve young members’ view of Catholic liturgy, Hawkins began searching for alternative ways to build understanding and appreciation. She spoke with colleagues at other churches who gave rave reviews



St. Thomas More



Shaarey Tefilla

to a week-long leadership conference called “One Bread, One Cup” that unfolds annually at the historic Saint Meinrad monastery deep in the hills of southern Indiana.

“Youth pastors told me that they had taken their young people to the conference and it had totally changed the parish,” says Hawkins. The setting, a 152-year-old arch abbey, didn’t sound like most students’ choice of a summer getaway; and the purpose, to gain new understanding of Catholic liturgy, seemed unlikely to ignite rousing enthusiasm. Added to these obstacles was the cost. The registration fees to send six students and four adults came to \$3,100, more than the church or the parents felt they could afford. Hawkins approached the Center for Congregations, requested assistance and was awarded a grant that “took the edge off and made the conference affordable,” she says. “The kids paid some, the church paid some, and the grant filled the gap.”

It turned out to be money well invested. In typical teenage hyperbole, Sarah Gall describes her five-day experience at the secluded religious compound first as “amazing,” then as “wonderful,” and finally as “unforgettable.” Whatever the word choice, the results were obvious when the youth returned to their home parish. “I’m definitely more involved in my church and I’m more respectful when I’m there,” says Gall. “I’ve learned the importance of prayer and personal reflection and I feel more engaged in the liturgy.”

Like Gall, the teens who attended the conference now serve as role models for their peers who didn’t share the experience firsthand. “They’re up on the altar, they’re singing and they’re reading,” says Hawkins. “I’ve sensed a deepening of faith in the kids. They have a better awareness of the Mass and understand what it’s all about. Other students watch them and decide that it’s OK to get involved in worship. The level of participation has definitely increased.”

Reaching beyond denominations

A broad, ecumenical event that could have an equally powerful impact on adult participants will unfold in September 2007 and will reach out to persons of all ages and faiths throughout Indiana. Called *Renovaré*—Latin for “renewal”—the regional conference has the potential to draw as many as 1,200 to the First Church of the Nazarene, just 15 minutes from downtown Indianapolis. Among its major attractions will be speaker Richard Foster, author of several best-selling books including *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*.

“Renovaré is a spiritual renewal movement,” explains Dave Ambrose, pastor of formation at BridgeWay Community Church in Fishers and a driving force behind the conference. Ambrose became familiar with *Renovaré* as a staff member at a church on the West Coast, where Foster is based. “When I moved to Indiana I looked for

an opportunity to bring the *Renovaré* experience here.” Ambrose quickly earned the support of BridgeWay’s lead pastor, Craig Parker, who admires Foster’s ability to reach out across denominational lines and discuss lofty spiritual principles in down-to-earth language.

“A challenge for any church is putting the ‘cookies on the bottom shelf,’” says Parker, who helped launch BridgeWay Church in 2000. Translation: It’s no easy task to communicate deep faith lessons in terms that make them accessible and palatable to a range of believers, many of whom are new to the church. “*Renovaré* is one way to do that.”

Parker suggested that Ambrose visit the Center for Congregations and share his vision for the regional event. The Center responded with advice, access to its network of congregations and funds to nudge the project forward. The next step was to assemble a planning team made up of representatives from a cross-section of Central Indiana congregations. Volunteers came from a range of traditions: Catholic, Friends, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, Anglican...and the list goes on. For Parker, the opportunity to become acquainted with members of so many churches was a major benefit in itself.



“Here we are, working with congregations not in a watered-down, ecumenical, ‘kumbaya’ kind of way,” he says. “We’re doing something real and meaningful. This is the sort of thing that cuts across all of the different boundaries.”

Parker and Ambrose are hopeful that *Renovaré* will have an impact on participants long after the event itself is history. “Spiritual formation groups will result from the conference,” says Ambrose. “Those groups will remain active in different churches and will deal with the inner spiritual life of the members.” Parker is hopeful that the friendships that are growing among clergy and lay leaders who are planning the event will continue to deepen. This, he believes, could be one of the great legacies of the effort.

“In churches, it’s so easy to turn our chairs inward and talk to ourselves about ourselves,” says Parker. “But that’s not what it’s about. We need to keep our chairs facing outward. We need to be reaching out.” ☪

Center Focus

ANNUAL REPORT STATISTICS

	CENTRAL	NORTHEAST	
RESOURCE CONSULTING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4,989 Conversations in • 663 cases of which • 281 were New Cases with • 850 People representing • 475 Congregations • 60% were clergy (518) • 31% were laity (331) 	<p>THE TOP ISSUES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Congregational Vitality Information Technology Appreciative Inquiry Strategic Planning Building Issues Congregational Finance Internet and the World Wide Web Religious Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 258 Conversations in • 82 Cases of which • 34 were New Cases with • 123 People representing • 95 Congregations • 63% of who were clergy (77) • 36% of who were laity (45) <p>THE TOP ISSUES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specialized Ministries Multicultural Resources Information Technology
EDUCATIONAL EVENTS	<p>Center Hosted.....22</p> <p>Center Sponsored.....18</p> <p>Invitational Gathering.....23</p> <p>Long Term Learning.....11</p> <p>Workshop.....13</p> <hr/> <p>Total.....87</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 883 people representing • 368 congregations from • 65 Faith Groups or denominations <p>Alban Institute - Consultants Meeting</p> <p>Architecture to Transcend</p> <p>Bilingual Tax Workshop</p> <p>Children and Prayer</p> <p>Choir Directors Roundtable</p> <p>Christ Church Cathedral Episcopal Church - Retreat</p> <p>Congregational Giving Luncheon</p> <p>Earlham School of Religion</p> <p>Emotional Intelligence I and II</p>	<p>Faith and Film</p> <p>Faith, Money, & Giving</p> <p>Flourshing Congregations</p> <p>Good Words Reading Club</p> <p>Hoosier Pastoral Clergy Writing</p> <p>Indianapolis Church Finance Group</p> <p>Lutheran Urban Ministers Meeting</p> <p>Music and Memoir, Story and Song -- Spirit & Place</p> <p>Raising the Roof II</p> <p>Reclaiming Testimony</p> <p>SEED</p> <p>Serving God with Style</p> <p>St. John Catholic Church - Planning session</p> <p>The Practicing Congregation</p> <p>Tranformational Leadership</p> <p>Transforming Congregational Culture</p> <p>Young Adult Ministries Invitational</p>	<p>Center Hosted..... 1</p> <p>Center Sponsored.....1</p> <p>Invitational Gathering..... 1</p> <p>Workshop.....7</p> <hr/> <p>Total..... 10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 132 people representing • 74 Congregations from • 31 Faith Groups or Denominations <p>Body, Mind & Spiritual Growth</p> <p>Church on Fire Leadership Gathering</p> <p>Community Ministry</p> <p>Creating a Culture of Generosity</p> <p>Northeast Open House</p> <p>Media Ministry School</p> <p>NE Community Ministry Group</p> <p>Reclaiming Testimony</p> <p>Transforming Congregational Culture</p>
GRANTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 61 Resource Grants • Totaling \$585,875 <p>RESOURCE GRANT RECIPIENTS</p> <p>All Saints Episcopal Church</p> <p>Avon United Methodist Church</p> <p>Bells Chapel Church of God</p> <p>BridgeWay Community Church</p> <p>Broadway United Methodist Church</p> <p>Calvary United Methodist Church</p> <p>Church of A.C.T.S.</p> <p>Church of the Living God</p> <p>Common Ground Christian Church</p> <p>Congregation Beth-El Zedeck</p> <p>Cornerstone of Hope Church</p> <p>Emmanuel United Methodist Church</p> <p>First Baptist Church of North Indianapolis</p> <p>First Christian Church</p> <p>First Congregational Church</p> <p>Fountain of Truth Christian Church</p> <p>Grace Community Church</p> <p>Greater Faith Apostolic Pentecostal Church</p> <p>Greenwood United Methodist Church</p> <p>Hamilton Hills Baptist Church</p> <p>Harvest Bible Chapel</p>	<p>Healing Streams Word and Worship Center</p> <p>Heartland Church</p> <p>Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church</p> <p>Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation</p> <p>Lakeview Christian Center</p> <p>LifePoint Church</p> <p>Light & Life Free Methodist Church</p> <p>Lockerbie Central United Methodist Church</p> <p>Lord of Life Lutheran Church</p> <p>Mt. Auburn United Methodist Church</p> <p>New Beginnings Ministries</p> <p>New Joy Lutheran Church</p> <p>Northeast Community Church</p> <p>Northminster Presbyterian Church</p> <p>Northside New Era Missionary Baptist Church</p> <p>Northview Christian Life Church</p> <p>Oaklandon Christian Church</p> <p>Old Bethel United Methodist Church</p> <p>Olive Branch Christian Church</p> <p>Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church</p> <p>Redeemer Presbyterian Church</p> <p>Souls Harbor Assembly of God</p> <p>St. Andrew's Anglican Catholic Church</p> <p>St. Barnabas Catholic Church</p>	<p>St. Christopher Catholic Church</p> <p>St. John Lutheran Church</p> <p>St. Joseph Catholic Church</p> <p>St. Luke's United Methodist Church</p> <p>St. Mary Catholic Church</p> <p>St. Matthew Catholic Church</p> <p>St. Monica Catholic Church</p> <p>St. Peter's United Church of Christ</p> <p>St. Pius X Catholic Church</p> <p>St. Thomas More Catholic Church</p> <p>The Church Within</p> <p>The Journey</p> <p>Trinity Episcopal Church</p> <p>Union Chapel United Methodist Church</p> <p>Zion United Church of Christ</p> <p>Zionsville Christian Church</p>

Statements of Financial Position and Activities

The following is summary of the statement of the financial position and the statement of activities of the Center as of December 31, 2006 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	2006		2005	
Cash and cash equivalents		\$593,914		\$969,021
Prepaid expenses and other assets		15,152		30,903
Interest Receivable		26,572		6,508
Investments		9,676,633		11,248,886
Property and equipment		115,500		101,358
Total assets		\$10,427,771		\$12,356,676
Liabilities				
Accounts payable – trade		\$38,119		\$35,226
Accounts payable – related party		-		71,456
Accrued expenses		41,787		22,026
Total liabilities		79,906		128,708
Net Assets				
Unrestricted		524,854		37,388
Temporarily Restricted		9,823,011		12,190,580
Total net assets		10,347,865		12,227,968
Total liabilities and net assets		\$10,427,771		\$12,356,676

Summary Statement of Activities

	2006			2005		
	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Total	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Total
Revenues and Other Support						
Contributions	\$ --	\$ --	\$ --	\$ --	\$8,171,433	\$8,171,433
Return of Grant funds	--	30,000	30,000	--	--	--
Workshops and invitational gatherings	8,625	--	8,625	30,601	--	30,601
Interest Income	497,383	--	497,383	176,607	--	176,607
Other	189	--	189	889	--	889
	506,197	30,000	536,197	208,097	8,171,433	8,379,530
Net assets released from restrictions	2,397,569	(2,397,569)	--	3,457,262	(3,457,262)	--
Total Revenues and other support	2,903,766	(2,367,569)	536,197	3,665,359	4,714,171	8,379,530
Expenses and Losses						
Resource Consulting	344,662	--	344,662	375,898	--	375,898
Resource Discovery and Dissemination	141,904	--	141,904	214,917	--	214,917
Education	320,946	--	320,946	547,589	--	547,589
Resource Grants	700,369	--	700,369	710,745	--	710,745
Major Grant Initiative	170,153	--	170,153	1,205,751	--	1,205,751
Congregational Learning and Evaluation	155,936	--	155,936	--	--	--
Total program services	1,833,970	--	1,833,970	3,054,900	--	3,054,900
Management and general	581,417	--	581,417	629,031	--	629,031
Total expenses	2,415,387	--	2,415,387	3,683,931	--	3,683,931
Loss on disposal of equipment	913	--	913	769	--	769
Total expenses and losses	2,416,300	--	2,416,300	3,684,700	--	3,684,700
Change in Net Assets	487,466	(2,367,569)	(1,880,103)	(19,341)	4,714,171	4,694,830
Net Assets, Beginning of Year	37,388	12,190,580	12,227,968	56,729	7,476,409	7,533,138
Net Assets, End of Year	\$524,854	\$9,823,011	\$10,437,865	\$37,388	\$12,190,580	\$12,227,968

Notes to Financial Report – The Center's net assets are derived from an operating grant for years 2006-2008, and a satellite operations grant for years 2005-2007 from the Lilly Endowment, Inc. These assets are recorded as temporarily restricted net assets as their use by the Center has been limited by the grantor for the period 2005-2008. Net assets are released from grantor restrictions by incurring expenses satisfying the restricted purposes or by occurrence of other events specified by grantors during the years 2005-2008.



Mission

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

Funded by Lilly Endowment Inc.
Affiliated with the Alban Institute

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