

Serve one
another
in
love!

2008 Annual Report



*Indianapolis
Center for
Congregations*

Looking Within

Of the many lessons that the Center for Congregations has learned in its 12-year history, one stands out: No two Hoosier congregations are the same. They may be of similar size and share common locations, demographics and traditions, but each is blessedly unique. We were reminded of this in 2008 as we stepped up our efforts to serve a greater number of congregations in and beyond Central Indiana. Encouraged by the positive response to our office in Fort Wayne—now in its third year—we established a satellite facility in Evansville in July and hosted education events in the state’s southeast region and planned similar opportunities for the northwest region. Our intent is also to broaden our reach within the state’s midsection to include 33 counties that stretch from Richmond to Terre Haute.

Just as congregations differ in name, denomination and setting, so do they vary in the goals they set, the problems they face and the solutions they choose. This makes our work important. The Center, along with our partner the Alban Institute, has found that “best practices” is a misnomer. What is right for one faith community may not suit another. The Center’s role is to sort through the available resources, point out the possibilities and share what we’ve learned from our other consultations. In the end, clergy and congregations decide on the best practice for their unique situation.

In this year’s annual report you’ll become acquainted with four congregations that have looked within to determine how to step beyond. Each is responding to change in a different way. Seerley Creek Christian Church, one of 30 congregations participating in our Life Together major grants initiative, is reaching out to a neighborhood hit hard by the economic downturn. St. John Lutheran Church has used a Center grant to guide its efforts in planting a sister church and expanding its childcare ministry. Members of Faith United Methodist Church in Fort Wayne are redesigning their ministry to meet the needs of an urban community in transition. Immanuel United Church of Christ in Mt. Vernon is applying new strategies of ministry that members learned when they attended their first Center for Congregations event in Evansville.

By boosting its visibility and expanding its outreach, the Center has seen growth in several key areas this year. As examples:

- We worked with 976 congregations representing more than 100 diverse faith traditions.
- We sponsored 96 events that ranged from get-acquainted luncheons to day-long workshops to 18-month learning opportunities.
- Our *Flourishing Congregations* gatherings attracted 416 participants to locations in Fort Wayne and Evansville.
- We increased the impact of our workshops by offering identical sessions at multiple locations.
- We welcomed visitors to our website from all 50 states and 84 countries.
- The Center is finding new ways to share its learning. Each month, a Center staff member contributes a story to the Alban Institute’s award winning *Congregations* magazine.

Looking ahead, we are enthusiastic about extending our services to any congregation in Indiana that would find them helpful. We also look forward to serving as an agent of collegial relationships between and among congregations that value the learning opportunities that come with being part of a diverse network of unique faith communities.

Rev. Timothy Shapiro
President

Looking Within, Stepping Beyond

A tree, fashioned of construction paper, decorates a bulletin board in the worship center of Seerley Creek Christian Church on the south side of Indianapolis. Half of the tree's 115 leaves are green and half are gold, reminding members of their commitment to the church's new strategic plan. Among the goals included in the plan is the intent to attract young families with children. This has led to the hiring of a youth pastor, which has led to a shortfall in the church's budget.

"We have to increase our giving by an average of \$5 per family per week," estimates Rev. Ron Reed, senior pastor. As each family agrees to the increase, a leaf turns from green to gold. "When the tree is all gold, we'll know members are committed to supporting our new youth ministry."

The strategic plan is a result of Seerley Creek's participation in *Life Together—Thinking and Acting Strategically*, a major grant initiative sponsored by the Center for Congregations. Reed recognized the need for a plan when the neighborhood surrounding the church began to shift from residential to industrial. The change prompted the congregation to debate whether or not to move the church to a more densely populated location. "Once we decided to stay, I said, 'OK, but we have to reinvent ourselves,'" recalls Reed.

His concern was that the congregation was "treading water." The building was paid for, attendance was flat, and challenges were few. "I wasn't content to remain in a maintenance ministry. When I retire I want to leave something behind that is positive and moving in the right direction." He saw *Life Together* as an opportunity to "light a fire under our group" and to work alongside diverse

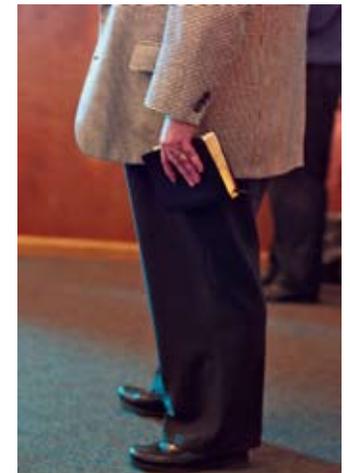
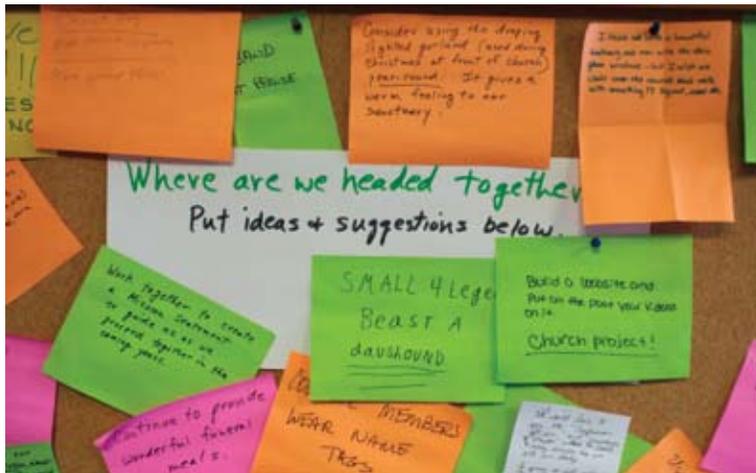
church teams that were trying to solve a variety of issues. "We're an independent congregation," he admits. "Sometimes that independence gets in the way of us cooperating with other churches. *Life Together* took us out of our comfort zone."

Seerley Creek members showed their support for the strategic-planning effort by turning out en masse for a congregational banquet where they celebrated their church's past and envisioned its future. The four goals that emerged from the evening's discussion were distilled and published in pamphlet form. The church elders then scheduled one-on-one meetings with each family to review the pamphlet, explain the plan and gain approval. To qualify for an implementation grant from the Center for Congregations, the congregation had to agree to allocate matching funds. The response was positive, and a timeline is in place to move the plan forward. Over the course of the next two years, members will step up their community service, expand their youth ministry, undergo leadership training, and break ground for a building addition.

"What we've tackled is so big that if God isn't in it, it isn't going to work," says Reed, who is optimistic. "Things are already starting to happen."

Thinking Outside the Walls

"There is no right way to do the wrong thing," claims a message tacked over a water fountain in the hall of St. John Lutheran School. The words offer insight into the decision-making philosophy of the school's sponsor, St. John Lutheran Church. "Our members need a lot of information and a lot of conversation" before choosing a course of action, explains Ivonne Zimmer, the church's business and development director.



The suburban Indianapolis neighborhood that encircles the historic church-school compound is growing and has caused the congregation to consider two major projects—expanding its childcare ministry and planting a sister church in nearby Johnson County. Before committing to either possibility, congregational leaders engaged an outside consultant to conduct a feasibility study, funded in part by a resource grant from the Center for Congregations.

“The purpose of the study was to help us anticipate population growth and needs,” says Zimmer. Church members wanted to understand the demographics of the area, including trends and forecasts. They also wanted to determine the demand for additional childcare. Their current pre-school enrollment is at capacity: 40 children, between the ages of two and five. Many of the program’s “graduates” progress to St. John Lutheran School, which enrolls students through the eighth grade. The missing piece in the age continuum is a nursery for babies as young as six weeks.

“The study confirmed a need for infant care, but it advised that we should go small...perhaps accepting an additional 20 children,” says Zimmer. “Now we’re in the planning stage—taking measurements and looking at options.” Based on the study’s findings, the church plant project also is likely to proceed, but the pace will be more leisurely. Zimmer describes the current status as the “buy-in phase,” with church leaders meeting with representatives from other Lutheran congregations to share research data and generate support. Members of the St. John congregation also need to fully embrace the idea of launching a sister church, an outreach they’ve never attempted in their 156-year history. Regardless of their final decision, the early steps have been educational.

“I think the process has taught our church that we need to think outside our walls,” says Zimmer. “We have new people in our midst and we have other areas where God is calling us to serve.” Having the support of the Center for Congregations has helped in ways that go beyond financial assistance. “It’s made us realize that we had a partner—an outside resource—that was saying, ‘Hey, this is a good project.’”

Embracing Diversity

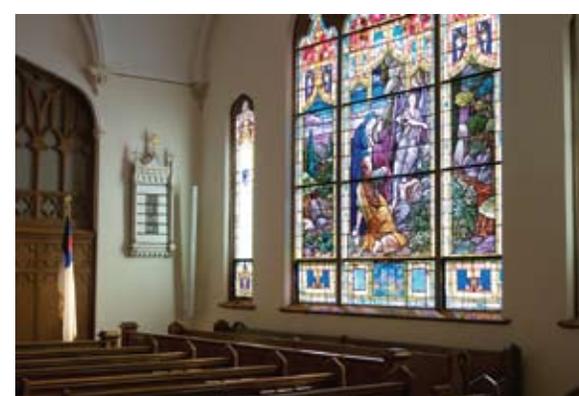
When members of Faith United Methodist Church in Fort Wayne surprised Rev. Rebecca Fisher with a party to celebrate her first anniversary as their pastor, everybody wore red—her favorite color—to show solidarity. She jokes that district leaders of the denomination may have assigned her to the position because Faith UMC “needed a jolt,” and she had the energy to provide it. “I’ve told my members to let me know if I’m moving too fast,” she says of her efforts

to strengthen the church’s ministries, deal with its aging building and achieve its goal to become a flourishing, multi-cultural congregation.

“The church decided several years ago to reach out to the changing demographics of the neighborhood,” she explains. “At the time, it was an all-Caucasian congregation, but persons moving into the area were mostly African Americans, so that was the target group.” Now the demographics are shifting again, with an influx of Hispanic and Burmese families. “We have 17 or 18 languages represented around us,” she says. “The high school that serves this part of the city is truly a melting pot.”

A photograph, dating back to 1916, hangs in the fellowship hall and shows more than 1,000 church members clustered in front of the historic brick building. The facility once was the center of Fort Wayne’s German community and served as home to the city’s first German school.

Today, the education wing—with its many classrooms, gymnasium and cafeteria—often is closed to conserve heat. Membership has declined to 145, but the congregation hasn’t lost its determination to be a positive force in the neighborhood. Each Thanksgiving members prepare dinner for more than 700 guests; the gym is equipped with soccer goals, an attraction for neighborhood youth; support groups such as Nar-



cotics Anonymous meet regularly; volunteers teach GED classes; and the congregation is active in the Interfaith Hospitality Network, a ministry to the homeless.

Fisher is proud of members' commitment to ministry and has promised to explore solutions to the church's many challenges. Recognizing the value of outside guidance, she accepted an invitation to bring a team of lay leaders to the *Flourishing Congregations Summit* sponsored by the Center for Congregations and its northeast satellite office in April. Strategic planning was on the agenda. "I told my people that I may not have all the answers to our problems, but I know some people who do," she says.

Working alongside representatives from 64 statewide congregations, the Faith UMC team learned to identify and build on their church's assets, create a vision and set goals. They also responded to an opportunity to apply for funds to help them develop and implement a strategic plan. Their grant proposal was successful, and now they are in the process of hiring consultants who will coach them through the planning process and train them in cultural sensitivity. They also want to solicit advice from churches similar to theirs that have experienced transitions and have emerged as thriving multi-cultural faith communities.

"I want to hear how other churches have solved their problems," says Fisher. "I want to know what it will take for Faith United Methodist Church to become an example of a flourishing congregation." The plan will unfold over three years, and although Fisher anticipates many changes, she is passionate about preserving the positive characteristics that make Faith UMC special. "I want our church to be very similar in spirit to what it is right now," she says, "because we're on fire."

Beginning the Journey

Although located in opposite corners of the state, Faith UMC in Fort Wayne and Immanuel United Church of Christ in Mt. Vernon share certain similarities. Both are rooted in the evangelical tradition and were founded as German-speaking congregations. Members are enthusiastic about reaching out to their surrounding communities and hope to expand the number of worshippers in the pews on Sunday mornings. Each church has sent lay leaders to a major event sponsored by the Center for Congregations where they've learned the value of developing a strategic plan to channel their energy and give them direction. Whereas Faith has received grant support and is well on its way to implementing its plan, Immanuel is just beginning the journey by applying for assistance.

"What's neat about this process is that our members are very involved," says Paul Seburg, pastor of Immanuel since 1996. "Sometimes it's too easy for clergy to attend a conference and come back full of excitement only to find that members don't share the excitement because they weren't part of the event."

Immanuel is well positioned for a growth spurt. Its membership has remained relatively stable since the church's founding in 1871, and generations of frugal management have kept it debt-free. The congregation has evolved into a congenial mix of long-time members and recent arrivals who are part of the suburban push into Posey County. "We call ourselves a country church," says Seburg, "but we're just 11 miles from downtown Evansville, and we only have two families who are full-time farmers."

When the Center for Congregations scheduled its *Flourishing Congregations* gathering for September, so many Immanuel members volunteered to attend that the pastor's wife, Alison, relinquished her slot to a lay leader. Participants immediately put to use the lessons they learned at the conference by soliciting input from the congregation. "We gave out pencils and paper and asked people to write down the different things they value about the church and the direction they would like the church to take," says Seburg. The bulletin board in the narthex was soon covered with messages.

A committee has formed to create a mission statement and discuss the possibility of hiring an expert to help formulate a strategic plan. "At first we were dubious about using a consultant," admits Alison Seburg. "Now we see the value of having a person from the outside serve as a stimulus. We're excited to think there are new ways of looking at how we can attract families and help the community." She likes the idea of inviting the Center for Congregations to accompany the church as an objective partner on the journey. "We see the Center as a resource that tries to serve congregations of all denominations. It doesn't have an agenda and it won't tell us what to do."

If Immanuel UCC is at a crossroads, so is the church's pastoral couple. Paul Seburg will turn 70 in June, a birthday that has prompted an undercurrent of speculation within the congregation. "Everyone knows that at some point he's going to retire," says Alison. "Members are thinking, 'Where do we go from here?'" Instead, the Seburgs hope that the strategic planning process will empower members to pause, take an introspective look and ask, "Where does the church want to go from here?"

Center Focus ANNUAL REPORT STATISTICS

RESOURCE CONSULTING

CENTRAL

- 3753 Conversations in
- 526 Cases of which
- 359 are New Cases with
- 558 People representing
- 313 Congregations
- 45% were clergy (249)
- 55% were laity (309)

THE TOP ISSUES
Stewardship
Building
Clergy Sabbaticals
Congregational Vitality
Technology
Outreach
Capital Campaigns

NORTHEAST

- 862 Conversations in
- 197 Cases of which
- 181 are New Cases with
- 173 People representing
- 100 Congregations
- 57% were clergy (98)
- 43% were laity (75)

THE TOP ISSUES
Appreciative Inquiry
Congregational Growth
Children's Ministry
Youth Ministry
Community Ministry
Congregational Renewal
Spirituality

SOUTHWEST

- 633 Conversations in
- 183 Cases of which
- 173 are New Cases with
- 137 People representing
- 103 Congregations
- 58% were clergy (79)
- 42% were laity (58)

THE TOP ISSUES
Congregational Vitality
Building
Appreciative Inquiry
Mission and Vision
Diversity
Clergy Sabbaticals
Technology

EDUCATIONAL EVENTS

- 96 Educational Events and Meetings
- Including 23 held in the Northeast area
- 9 in the Southwest
- and 7 in the Southeast
- 1827 People representing
- 564 Congregations from
- 69 Faith Groups or Denominations

Alban Institute Transition Team
Better Preaching and Better Listening
Catholic Archdiocese Strategic Planning
Central Christian Church (DOC)
Clergy Invitationals
Coaching Congregations Conversation
Cornerstone of Hope Retreat
Covenant Bible Group
Creating a 501(c)3
Creativity & Spirituality
Emergent Church Group Conversation

Faith Chapel United Methodist Church Meeting
Faith, Money and Giving Reunion
First Wayne Street United Methodist Church Meeting
Flourishing Congregations, Evansville
Flourishing Congregations Summit, Fort Wayne
GoodWords Reading Group
Holy Places Book Signing
Soul Food Indiana Authors Luncheon Series
Indianapolis Center for Congregations Board Meeting
Irvington United Methodist Church Retreat
Life Together Grant Initiative
Lilly Endowment Evaluation Meeting
Lilly Endowment Website Meeting
Megachurches
Methodist Group Meeting
North United Methodist Church Planning Session
Northwest Invitational
Not-for-Profit CFO's Meeting
Praying in Color

Praying with Purpose
Quaker Life Meeting
Real Kids, Real Faith
Re-Imagining the Church
Resurrection Lutheran Church Planning Session
Roman Catholic Archdiocese
Rotation Sunday School
Shared Resources Luncheon
Small Church Spirituality
Spiritual Strategic Journey
St. Joseph United Methodist Church Meeting
Sustainable Youth Ministry
Tech Talk
Technology and its Possibilities
Transition into Ministry - Lilly Endowment
Unbinding the Gospel Invitational
United Methodist Pastors Meeting
Walk in the Light Christian Church

GRANTS

- \$913,259.14
- 71 Grants of which
- 13 were Northeast Flourishing Congregations Grants totaling \$55,377.13
- 18 were Life Together Initiative Grants totaling \$461,432.20
- 40 were Resource Grants totaling \$396,449.81

GRANT RECIPIENTS

Angola United Methodist Church
Avon United Methodist Church
Beacon Heights Church of the Brethren
BridgeWay Community Church
Calvary Evangelical Lutheran Church
Calvary United Methodist Church
Carmel Hope Fellowship
Carmel United Methodist Church
Castleton Church of the Nazarene
Christ United Methodist Church
Christ's Community Church

Clayton Christian Church
Cornerstone of Hope Church
CrossRoads Church at Westfield
Cumberland Christian Church
Emerson Avenue Baptist Church
Epiphany Lutheran Church ELCA
Fairview Presbyterian Church
Faith Missionary Church (EFC)
Faith United Methodist Church
Fall Creek Community Church
First Assembly of God
First Baptist Church, Franklin
First Baptist Church of Fort Wayne
First Baptist Church of Indianapolis
First Mennonite Church, Berne
First Mennonite Church, Indianapolis
Garfield Park United Church of Christ
Grace United Methodist Church
Hamilton Hills Baptist Church
Harvest Bible Chapel - Indy West
Holy Spirit Catholic Church

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church
Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Immanuel United Church of Christ
Irvington Presbyterian Church
John Knox Presbyterian Church
Kingsway Christian Church
Lord of Life Lutheran Church
McCordsville United Methodist Church
Mt. Auburn United Methodist Church
New Unity Missionary Baptist Church
Northeast Community Church
Northside New Era Missionary Baptist
Northwood Christian Church
Olivet Missionary Baptist Church
Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Catholic Church
Phillips Temple CME Church
Pilgrim Lutheran Church
Puritan Missionary Baptist Church
Resurrection Lutheran Church
Seerley Creek Christian Church
South Wayne Baptist Church

Southminster Presbyterian Church
SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi
St. Andrew's Anglican Catholic Church
St. Gabriel Catholic Church
St. James Lutheran Church
St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church
St. John Lutheran Church
St. John the Forerunner Orthodox Church
St. Jude Catholic Church
St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church
The Journey
Trafalgar Christian Church
Trinity United Methodist Church
Trinity Wesleyan Church
Walk in the Light Christian Church
Witherspoon Presbyterian Church
Woodburn United Methodist Church
Zion United Church of Christ

STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION AND ACTIVITIES

The following is summary of the statement of financial position and the statement of activities of the Center as of December 31, 2008 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	2008			2007		
	ASSETS					
Cash and cash equivalents		\$ 1,172,810			\$ 2,368,732	
Prepaid expenses and other assets		38,657			18,646	
Investments		20,821,234			12,900,669	
Property and equipment		202,369			115,780	
Total assets		22,235,070			15,403,827	
LIABILITIES						
Accounts payable		\$ 104,144			\$ 81,846	
Accrued expenses		63,800			52,488	
Total liabilities		167,944			134,344	
NET ASSETS						
Unrestricted		\$ 1,540,550			\$ 982,026	
Temporarily restricted		20,526,576			14,287,467	
Total net assets		22,067,126			15,269,493	
Total liabilities and net assets		\$ 22,235,070			\$ 15,403,827	
SUMMARY STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES	2008			2007		
	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Total	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Total
Revenues and other support						
Contributions	\$ —	\$ 9,587,525	\$ 9,587,525	\$ —	\$ 7,030,263	\$ 7,030,263
Return of grant funds	—	17,670	17,670	—	35,050	35,050
Workshops and invitational gatherings	26,333	—	26,333	22,216	—	22,216
Investment income	568,523	—	568,523	466,367	—	466,367
Other income	138	—	138	325	—	325
	594,994	9,605,195	10,200,189	488,908	7,065,313	7,554,221
Net assets released from restrictions	3,366,086	(3,366,086)	—	2,600,857	(2,600,857)	—
Total revenues and other support	3,961,080	6,239,109	10,200,189	3,089,765	4,464,456	7,554,221
Expenses and losses						
Resource Consulting	438,082	—	438,082	394,609	—	394,609
Resource Discovery and Dissemination	216,740	—	216,740	163,863	—	163,863
Education	411,143	—	411,143	387,053	—	387,053
Resource Grants	597,076	—	597,076	651,686	—	651,686
Major Grant Initiative	655,569	—	655,569	348,509	—	348,509
Congregational Learning and Evaluation	401,746	—	401,746	119,125	—	119,125
Total program services	2,720,356	—	2,720,356	2,064,845	—	2,064,845
Management and general	680,867	—	680,867	559,498	—	559,498
Total expenses	3,401,223	—	3,401,223	2,624,343	—	2,624,343
Loss on disposal of equipment	1,333	—	1,333	8,250	—	8,250
Total expenses and losses	3,402,556	—	3,402,556	2,632,593	—	2,632,593
Change in net assets	558,524	6,239,109	6,797,633	457,172	4,464,456	4,921,628
Net assets, beginning of year	982,026	14,287,467	15,269,493	524,854	9,823,011	10,347,865
Net assets, end of year	\$ 1,540,550	\$ 20,526,576	\$ 22,067,126	\$ 982,026	\$ 14,287,467	\$ 15,269,493

Notes to Financial Statements – The Center's net assets are derived from operating grants for years 2006-2011 and a satellite operations grant for years 2008-2010 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 2006-2011. 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 2006-2011.



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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

The Indianapolis Center for Congregations 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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