“We always want to welcome people to our table.”

— Northeast Christian Church, Fort Wayne
Welcome! While Indiana congregational leaders and members greet their fellow worshippers, their neighbors and their friends, they are also embracing opportunity. They are dreaming big and exploring ways to make the world a better place. Every day, lives are changed because of Indiana congregations. The Center for Congregations walks alongside those who are leading faith communities as they face their challenges and accept new opportunities.

In 2016, the Center gave out a record number of grants to congregations. Grants are like scholarships for congregations to learn to do new things. Resource grants awarded in 2016 helped Indiana congregations develop strategic plans, raise money for capital campaigns, assess neighborhood needs, develop youth ministry and more.

The Center’s education offerings expanded last year to include live online learning events. Now, in addition to traditional workshops, Indiana congregational leaders can engage the best experts on their most vital topics via mobile device, tablet and desktop computer.

As congregational leaders talk about issues that are important to them, Center staffers listen and formulate opportunities around these topics through workshops, learning events and grant initiatives. In response to Indiana congregations’ desire to increase community engagement, we began the Community Ministry Grants initiative — 29 organizations from central Indiana participated in the first phase of the program.

The stories of Indiana faith communities are inspiring, exciting and thoughtful. This report shares the journeys of four congregations, whose leaders worked with the Center to welcome and dream and explore. I hope you find joy and inspiration in their stories.

The Center is pleased to serve and support Indiana congregations. This report offers a sampling of our statistics, financials and the work that is at the heart of our mission.

Tim Shapiro
Center President
When Doris Weaver and Evie Shellenberger presented their proposal for an ambitious new youth project to the Paoli Mennonite Fellowship, they encouraged members to “dream big.” Their plan, as outlined in their application for a Center for Congregations grant, offered two options. The Fellowship could vote in favor of the more traditional “cake” option, or they could step out in faith and support the “cake with icing” opportunity. The decision was quick and the vote unanimous.

“They said, ‘Let’s do the whole thing,’” recalls Shellenberger, who serves as the congregation’s youth director. This meant raising $30,000 in matching funds above members’ annual giving commitments. Pledge cards went out to the Fellowship’s 50 households, and the money poured in.

The goal of both options was to promote interaction between the Fellowship’s teens and adults as they studied the issue of immigration and linked it to Mennonite core values of global awareness, peace, justice and biblical nonviolence. Mennonites are one of the historic peace faiths, often championing these related causes. The first option—the “cake”—culminated in a group trip to the border between Arizona and Mexico in 2016. The second option added the “icing,” which was a week-long visit to Guatemala in 2017 to become immersed in Central American culture.

“Enthusiasm for the program grew. The Fellowship hosted guest speakers from Guatemala, offered Spanish lessons on Sunday evenings, sampled south-of-the-border cuisine, watched documentaries, and participated in a six-week series called “Radical Hospitality.” This series viewed immigration from a Mennonite faith perspective. The stairway leading to the youth meeting room was decorated with paper airplanes created from pages of a world atlas; posters welcomed students to “Guatemala 101,” and a globe competed for space on a table strewn with travel brochures. To raise money for the project, youth sold pounds of coffee—“caffeine with a conscience”—imported from a cooperative of farming families in Mexico.

“As a congregation, we speak out in favor of immigration and the importance of accepting other people,” says K.C. Warren, a high school senior who signed on for both trips. “I got involved because I wanted to have a better understanding of what immigrants have to deal with when they leave home to come to the United States. I wanted to be able to tell people, ‘I’ve seen this with my own eyes.’”

What they witnessed on both sides of the border last year has had a lasting impact on the 10 teens and 11 adults who made the trip. Parker Sullivan, one of the younger members of the group, was struck by the poverty of the working-class Mexicans he met. As an activity, the
students were given the equivalent of a factory worker’s daily wage and told to visit a grocery store and purchase food for a family of six. It was a tough assignment. The meal that resulted from the exercise was modest, which made the lesson profound. “The trip helped me appreciate how hard the people work for their families,” summarizes Sullivan. “I really respect them for that. Education is everything; they work and work and work just so their children can go to school and have a better life.”

**CATALYSTS FOR CHANGE**

At first glance, Eastern Star Missionary Baptist Church in Indianapolis has little in common with the Mennonite Fellowship in Paoli. Their settings are distinctive. “Traffic jams aren’t a problem down here,” jokes Evie Shellenberger about the Fellowship’s heavily wooded acreage where youth raise funds by tapping maple trees and turning sap into syrup.

By contrast, Eastern Star Church serves an urban population from three highly visible locations that welcome 7,000 worshippers on Sunday mornings. From its main campus on East 30th Street, the church reaches out to a neighborhood where more than 38 percent of residents live at or below the poverty line. Church programs range from food and clothing pantries, to emergency rent and utility assistance, to counseling services, to college scholarships.

As different as Eastern Star Church and the Mennonite Fellowship are, they share three characteristics. Leaders of both congregations have challenged their members to “dream big” this year; their ambitious proposals have generated enthusiastic responses from the pews; and their dreams are moving closer to reality with the help of grants from the Center for Congregations.

“Our target for 2017 is to add seven new homes to the neighborhood,” explains Nancy Silvers Rogers, executive director of ministries at Eastern Star Church. “We’ll be responsible for building five, and two will come from Habitat for Humanity.”

The church embarked on a comprehensive community development project called The Rock, and new construction comprises only the first piece of the multi-faceted effort to enhance the quality of life in the Arlington Woods neighborhood. As many as 30 additional homes eventually will dot the landscape, and existing properties will be subject to renewal and renovation.

The Rock’s overall goals are to:

- build a sense of community among the people who live and work in the 46218 zip code of Indianapolis.
- expand the range of housing options available within a one-mile radius of the church.
- grow the overall financial security of local residents.
- increase the formal and informal educational opportunities available to neighborhood families.

Although the church has been at its current location for 21 years and knows the community
well, its leaders spent several months hosting focus groups, interacting with residents, listening to concerns, and identifying priorities. The church’s role was clear from the start: it would serve as a catalyst for positive change by initiating discussions, convening partners, and introducing residents to resources available to them.

“Then we’ll step back,” says Rogers. “People need to have the confidence and resiliency to determine their own destiny. We want them to take command and advocate for their neighborhood. Good advocacy comes when people unite around common issues and goals.”

A grant from the Center for Congregations enabled the church to hire a strategic planner, who served as a coach to keep leaders on task and the project on course. As crews have cleared the site for early construction to begin, enthusiasm has spread. Now the challenge is to channel the energy and sustain the momentum.

Successful community development takes time and is organic, with success in one area igniting progress in another area. “Our congregation is very generous,” explains Rogers. “We’ve tried to be as transparent as possible and have given them a lot of information.” As a result, “They’re excited. They ask, ‘What can we do?’ They say things like, ‘We want to do more than just write a check. We want to roll up our sleeves. We can paint; we can weed; we can do whatever you need!’ We tell them: ‘Hold that thought….‘”

WELCOME TO THE TABLE
Creating communities of a different type is the goal of Fort Wayne’s growing Northeast Christian Church. Symbolic of the youthful congregation—Sunday worship typically draws 200 adults and 100 children—are the oversized tables that members build and place in their homes. In keeping with New Testament tradition, “when people sit and eat together, they are in each other’s lives,” says Jeff Kowatch, one of five governing elders. The church’s rough-hewn tables are intentionally large enough to accommodate many guests. “That’s who we are,” adds Kowatch. “We always want to welcome people to our table.”

If a lack of space isn’t an issue at the table, it poses a problem in the pews. Attendance is growing, and church leaders have researched how best to address their expanding numbers. They considered remodeling or relocating, but ruled out both options. “We believe that the people, not the building, are the church,” explains Anthony Opliger, lead pastor. “We decided we want to cultivate smaller communities of believers who are on mission together.” Such smaller church congregations—commonly called church plants—would encourage meaningful relationships and shared leadership. As one member noted: “You can’t easily hide in a small church. We want people to be actively involved.”

With the help of Matt Burke, northeast director of the Center for Congregations, Opliger and his team learned about the “citywide parish church model.” This model encourages church leaders and members to strategically plant and nurture spin-off faith communities within a given municipality. “In essence, it’s a model that seeks to preserve the benefits of the larger organization while developing specific, local communities that meet the needs of congregants and the surrounding area,” says Burke. In short, it combines the best of two worlds. A grant from the Center enabled Opliger and his colleague, Pastor Josh VonGunten, to travel to a church in Portland, Oregon that has successfully implemented the model. The experience answered many questions and raised a few others.

“We learned that the best way for this model to succeed in a sustainable way is for each church plant to have its own leaders who come from the community they serve,” recalls VonGunten. Otherwise, “having people travel back and forth
Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation
[from the founding church] to fill different needs in different places is exhausting and can burn people out. It also works against one of our core values, which is to have church members and leaders embedded in the community and in deep relationship with each other.”

As Northeast’s pastoral staff and lay leaders continue to explore how best to move forward, they’ve solved their immediate space problem. In October, they expanded to offer two back-to-back Sunday worship services. “That was a big step in itself,” says Kowatch. “We learned a lot because it was a small way of planting that first church. It caused us to look at our congregation and ask, how can we intentionally make two communities out of one?”

ReImAgInIng youth mInIstRy
Making ongoing adjustments to a project as it unfolds is a strategy that many congregations—Northeast Christian Church among them—use as they explore ways to enhance their ministries. But sometimes “adjustments” are more than minor tweaks. In the case of the Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation, recipient of a Center for Congregations grant, it meant re-imaging a project aimed to strengthen teens’ involvement with the synagogue. The original proposal failed to gain traction because it required participants to attend Wednesday evening sessions. Since most of the students live five to 50 miles away, the schedule was unsustainable. Youth Director Lea Coleman recognized the problem and asked for help in creating a Plan B.

“These are very academic kids,” says Coleman. “So I let them drive the discussion. What they said was that they wanted a program that would broaden their leadership skills.” The plan that emerged from the conversations addressed the leadership-training request and much more. It blended education and travel with hands-on opportunities to practice the traditions of their faith. “Members of our congregation are strong proponents of tikkun olam, which means ‘to give back’ or ‘to repair the world,’” explains Coleman. “We found that our teens crave opportunities for hands-on experiences in reaching out and giving back to the world.”

A trip to Hebrew Union College Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati enabled the students to interact with young scholars preparing to become religious leaders. They visited New York City and attended a convention of the North American Federation of Temple Youth, where they practiced their networking skills alongside 5,000 peers. Because their congregation participates in the Interfaith Hospitality Network program in Indianapolis, the youth helped host area homeless families for an overnight visit that included dinner, games and assistance with homework assignments. The teens also volunteered at Gleaners Food Bank where they filled “backsacks” that provide weekend food for disadvantaged children in Indianapolis. To further address the issue of hunger in the city, they organized food drives and delivered vanloads of canned goods to a local kosher food pantry.

Coleman uses the word “eye-opening” when she describes the experiences that Plan B provided the congregation’s youth. “I’d say our students are more enlightened now,” she notes. “They’ve seen things they wouldn’t otherwise have seen, and they view those things from a different perspective. They’re more aware of their surroundings, and that’s a very good thing.”
2016 Annual Report Statistics

Central
- 5313 Conversations in
- 800 Cases of which
- 707 People representing
- 394 Congregations
- 46% were Clergy
- 54% were Laity

The Top Issues
Community Ministry
Building
Congregational Vitality
Information Technology
Youth Ministry

Northeast
- 2161 Conversations in
- 174 Cases of which
- 120 People representing
- 119 Congregations
- 59% were Clergy
- 41% were Laity

The Top Issues
Building
Youth Ministry
Congregational Finance
Information Technology
Community Ministry

Northwest
- 2571 Conversations in
- 196 Cases of which
- 192 People representing
- 109 Congregations
- 53% were Clergy
- 47% were Laity

The Top Issues
Community Ministry
Leadership Development
Youth Ministry
Inclusion and Welcoming Communications

Southeast
- 996 Conversations in
- 99 Cases of which
- 73 People representing
- 73 Congregations
- 51% were Clergy
- 49% were Laity

The Top Issues
Community Ministry
Congregational Finance
Leadership Development
Children’s Ministry
Care Ministries

Southwest
- 1296 Conversations in
- 128 Cases of which
- 123 People representing
- 70 Congregations
- 54% were Clergy
- 46% were Laity

The Top Issues
Congregational Finance
Information Technology
Building
Outreach
Strategic Planning

Events and meetings include:
- Advance Look: Flourishing Congregations
  All Saints Catholic Parish, Evansville
  Area Methodist Pastors, Seymour
  Asking Good Questions
  Assessing Your Community
  Bethel Church, Crown Point
  Blue Grass United Methodist, Evansville
  Bring Your Life to Your Congregation
  Brownstown Christian Church Retreat
  City Church, Evansville
  Community Ministry Grants Initiative

Congregational Care for the Ailing, Terminally Ill and their Families
Congregations and Community Engagement

Creative Worship: Designing Memorable Worship Experiences
Crossroads Christian Church, Evansville
Cultivating Sustainable Missional Ministries
Develop a Communication Strategy that Works
Developing an Effective Community Ministry
Developing Your Internal and External Communications
Disciples of Christ Regional Ministers, Indianapolis
Envisioning and Designing 21st Century Faith Formation
Evaluating Your Congregation’s Communication and Welcome
Faith and Money Focus Group
Five Things Your Visitors Want to Ask, but Won’t Getting to Know Your Congregation
Grace and Peace Lutheran, Evansville
Group’s Equipping Institute Four-Part Program
Guidelines for Fruitful Ministry
Improving Young People’s Online Presence
Inspiring Generosity, Thriving Stewardship
Invigorating Congregational Life through Youth Ministry
Leadership in a New Key
Living Hope Church, Merrillville
Millennials and Social Movements

Resource Consulting
- 102 Educational Events and Meetings
- Including 31 held in Central Indiana
- 11 in the Northeast
- 20 in the Northwest
- 15 in the South
- 19 in the Southwest
- and 6 Live Online Events
- 1480 People representing
- 626 Conversations from
- 90 Faith Groups or Denominations

Resource Grants
- All Souls Unitarian Church, Indianapolis
- Amo First Baptist Church
Assembly Memorial Church, Goschen
Beacon Heights Church of the Brethren, Fort Wayne
Bethany Christian Church, Washington
Brookside Community Church, Indianapolis
Brown Street United Methodist Church, Lafayette
Calvary Church, Valparaiso
Calvary Lutheran Church, Indianapolis
Canterbury House at IU, Bloomington
Central Christian Church, Indianapolis
Chapel Hill Christian Church, Kokomo
Christ the King Lutheran Church, South Bend
Christ the Savior Lutheran Church, Fishers
College Mennonite Church, Goshen
Common Ground Church, Indianapolis
Common Ground Church of the Nazarene, Decatur
Community Church of Greensburg
Community Congregational Church, Franklin
Creekside Church of The Brethren, Elkhart
Crossroads Church at Westminster
Crossroads Community Church, Fishers
Eagle Church - Anson, Zionsville
Eastern Star Missionary Baptist Church, Indianapolis
Elkhart Northside Church of the Nazarene
Englewood Christian Church, Indianapolis
Evangelical United Church of Christ, Indianapolis
Fairview Presbyterian Church, Indianapolis
First Assembly Community Ministries, Lafayette
First Baptist Church, East Chicago
First Baptist Church of Indianapolis
First Christian Church, Greensburg
First Christian Church (DOC), Shelbyville
First Church of God Bedford (Anderson), Bedford
First Missionary Church, Indiana
First Presbyterian Church, Bloomington
First Presbyterian Church of Evansville
Fourth Street Christian Church
Freedom Church, Lebanon
Freedom Life Center, Evansville
Fresh Oil Ministries, Gary
GracePoint Church, Valparaiso
Great Commission Church of God, Indianapolis
Harbour Shores Church, Cicero
Harvest Bible Chapel Indy South, Greenwood
HeartPointe Church, Sheridan
Hobart Assembly of God
Holy Family Church, Oldenburg
Hope the Breakfast Church, Indianapolis
Huntiertown United Methodist Church
Indiana Wesleyan University
Jeffersonville United Methodist Church
Journey Lutheran Ministries, Fishers
Joy of All Who Sorrow Eastern Orthodox Church, Indianapolis
Liberty Bible Church, Chesterton
Life Church, Fishers
Messiah Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne
Messiah Lutheran Church at Eagle Creek, Indianapolis
Metropolitan Baptist Church, Gary
Mount Pleasant United Methodist Church, Butler
Mt. Gilead Church, Mooresville
Mt. Pleasant Lutheran Church, Kendallville
Nashville United Methodist Church
New Day Baptist Church, Alexandria
New Life Church, Kokomo
Northside Church, Fort Wayne
Orchard Park Presbyterian Church, Indianapolis
Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church, Indianapolis

Our Shepherd Lutheran Church, Avon
Pathway Community Church, Fort Wayne
Progressive Baptist Church, Indianapolis
Pt. Haas Christian Church, West Lafayette
Ridge United Methodist Church, Munster
Roberts Park United Methodist Church, Indianapolis
Shelbyville Community Church
Sherwood Oaks Christian Church, Bloomington
Silverwood Mennonite Church, Goshen
South Point Baptist Church, Crown Point
Southport Christian Church, Indianapolis
St. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis
St. John The Baptist Parish, Newburgh
St. Joseph University Parish, Terre Haute
St. Matthias Catholic Church, Crown Point
St. Michael’s Episcopal Church, Noblesville
St. Paul Catholic Center, Bloomington
St. Peter’s Highland United Church of Christ, Evansville
St. Pius X Catholic Church, Indianapolis
St. Timothy’s Episcopal Church, Indianapolis
Stones Crossing Church, Greenwood
Sts. Mary and John Parish, Evansville
Taylor Chapel United Methodist Church, Fort Wayne
The Point, Seymour
The River Community Church, Marion
The Sanctuary, Columbus
Trinity Baptist Church, Gary
Trinity Lutheran Church, Darmstadt, Evansville
Two Cities Church, West Lafayette
Union Chapel United Methodist Church, Indianapolis
Victory Temple Assembly of God, Jasper
Vineyard Community Church of Greenwood
Walk in the Light Christian Church, Indianapolis
Waymaker United Methodist Church, Fort Wayne
West Bridge Church, Danville
Zion Lutheran Church, New Palestine

- $1,899,255 for
- 103 Resource Grants totaling $977,324
- 42 YMGI Grants totaling $921,931

Granting 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, 2016 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.

### Summary Statement of Financial Position

Complete financial statements, including footnotes and the report of our auditors, BKD, LLP, are available for review upon request.

### Summary Statement of Activities

The following is a summary of the statement of financial position and the statement of activities of the Center as of December 31, 2016 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.

### Assets

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2015</th>
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<tr>
<td>Cash and cash equivalents</td>
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<td>Contributions receivable</td>
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<td>Prepaid expenses and other assets</td>
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<td>Investments</td>
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<td>Total assets</td>
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### Liabilities

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<tr>
<td>Accounts payable</td>
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<td>Accrued vacation pay</td>
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<td>Other accrued expenses</td>
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<td>Total liabilities</td>
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### Net Assets

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<td>Total liabilities and net assets</td>
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### Revenues and Other Support

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<td>Contributions</td>
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<td>Return of grant funds</td>
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<td>Educational events</td>
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<td>26,711</td>
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<td>Interest and dividends</td>
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<td>Total revenues and other support</td>
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<td>Net assets released from restrictions</td>
<td>6,062,954</td>
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### Expenses and Losses

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<th>2016</th>
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<td>Resource Discovery and Dissemination</td>
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<td>Major Grant Initiative</td>
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<td>Congregational Learning and Evaluation</td>
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<td>Total program services</td>
<td>5,071,204</td>
<td>4,021,269</td>
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<td>Total expenses</td>
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<td>4,836,496</td>
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<td>386,586</td>
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<td>Change in gains (losses) on investments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net assets, end of year</td>
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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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Fax 812-405-1138

**Center for Congregations – Southwest**
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Phone 812-618-2012
Fax 812-618-2013

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Nancy Armstrong, Finance Director
Matt Burke, Northeast Director and Education Director
Nancy DeMott, Resource Director
Kara Faris, Resource Grants Director
Doug Hanner, Southeast Director and CRG Director
Katie Lindberg, Northwest Director
Wendy McCormick, Southwest Director
Aaron Spiegel, Information Technology Director
Susan Weber, Evaluation Project Coordinator for the Religion Division of Lilly Endowment Inc.
Terrance Bridges, Associate for Resource Consulting
Catharine Green, Resource Assistant and Database Administrator
Jane Mastin, Communications Administrator
Kate White, Associate for Resource Consulting
Eunita Booker, Northeast Administrative Assistant
Sofia Cook, Southwest Administrative Assistant
Carol Delph, Southeast Administrative Assistant
Jerri Kinder, Indianapolis Administrative Assistant
Kelly Minas, Indianapolis Administrative Assistant
Rose Villarruel, Northwest Administrative Assistant

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**Consultants**

Marie Fleming
Sherri Session
Jon Swanson

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**2016 Board of Directors**

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Chair
Indianapolis, Indiana

Ms. Katie Patterson
Vice Chair
Speedway, Indiana

Rev. Richard Hamm
Secretary
Indianapolis, Indiana

Rev. Lant Davis
Terre Haute, Indiana

Rev. Dr. Michael Jenkins
Louisville, Kentucky

Rev. Dr. Matthew Myer Boulton
Indianapolis, Indiana

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**Acknowledgements**

Photography
Chris Minnick

Writing
Holly G. Miller

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Front cover photo is Eastern Star Missionary Baptist Church, Indianapolis
“People need to have the confidence and resiliency to determine their own destiny. We want them to take command and advocate for their neighborhood. Good advocacy comes when people unite around common issues and goals.”

— Eastern Star Missionary Baptist Church, Indianapolis
“Members of our congregation are strong proponents of *tikkun olam*, which means ‘to give back’ or ‘to repair the world.’ We found that our teens crave opportunities for hands-on experiences in reaching out and giving back to the world.”

— Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation