

## COLLEAGUES:

In this final issue of *Clergy Notes*, we present a selection of resources on the Internet that your peers have found helpful—information about congregations, ministry, and research in the field of religion, as well as demographics, government, social services, and other information. We think the sites listed in this issue deserve your attention.

Beginning in April, The Polis Center's Project on Religion and Urban Culture will direct its attention to a new phase of public teaching. We will spend less time on publications, and more time on developing sustained conversations that lead to a clearer understanding of religion's role in urban life. Working with leaders from the religious, government, human services, and other sectors, we will try to bring into focus how religion affects civic life and decision-making. We hope to encourage religious and civic leaders to become better informed by good research and proven practices.

We'll be producing an eleven-part video series on religion in Indianapolis that we think you'll enjoy using in your congregation; we hope it will be used by leaders in the secular community as well.

We'll be available to speak to your congregation or neighborhood group on a variety of issues, including the history of religious life in Indianapolis, current beliefs and attitudes, faith-based partnerships, neighborhood relations, and the growth of "new" faith traditions.

If you're interested in learning more about these new opportunities, give me a call or send me an email. Let's keep in touch.



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## STRAIGHT FROM THE SOURCE

## AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHN WIMMER

John Wimmer has been director of the Indianapolis Center for Congregations since

its founding in 1997. Recently, ICC moved from its offices on North Meridian into more spacious quarters at 303 N. Alabama St. (at the corner of New York and Alabama Streets, next to O'Malia's Food Market). The new site houses the Center's administrative offices, and offers a large meeting area, a library, and a computer room.

The Center for Congregations is making a major effort to help congregations enter the Information Age. Through its Computers and Ministry Grants Initiative, the Center helps congregations develop a technology plan, and it may fund up to half the cost of implementing the plan. Wimmer said the Center's role in the Initiative, as with its other programs, is to serve as a facilitator. "We help congregations think about what technology they need," said Wimmer, "then link them with the engineers and software trainers and installation people." The Center offers its consulting services for free; a registration fee is typically required for its workshops and conferences.

In association with its parent organization, the Alban Institute, the Center for Congregations recently unveiled a Web-based Congregational Resource Guide at [www.congregationalresources.org](http://www.congregationalresources.org). The site has entries on topics such as administration, building issues, congregational health and growth, public ministry, and worship. As Wimmer explains in the following interview, the site is intended to highlight a few of the best resources available in each category.

**Clergy Notes:** What was the thinking behind the Congregational Resource Guide?

Wimmer: The role of denominations has changed. Congregations themselves are increasingly becoming teaching institutions. A whole new group of resources have risen, and they're not necessarily denominational resources. So, there's this whole constellation of resources out there, but there's no filter to help people know what are the best resources.

For example, in the area of congregational conflict, if you just hand someone a bibliography, how do they choose? Our Congregational Resource Guide is intended to offer a sort of Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval. But it's not just what the experts say. This guide is intended to be a switchboard where folks can find resources and interact with the material, and with us. We also hope the page will help congregations make contact with each other. One of the things we're learning is that congregations love to be resources for one another.

**CN:** Why the interest in congregations and technology?

Wimmer: We kept hearing from congregations that this was an area where they needed help. Most of the information that's available out there comes from software vendors, and they are not the best people to ask.

**CN:** Does the new location signify a new direction for the Center?

Wimmer: The new location is just a developmental step. We had always envisioned having a place where people could come and meet. When we were just getting off the ground and there was only myself and a couple of staff people, just having office space was adequate for us. The new space signals that we're moving into a new phase of our work, but we're not changing direction at all.

**CN:** In general, what would you like clergy to know about the work of the Center?

Wimmer: Whatever issue is its burning desire, we can help a congregation get the help it needs to tackle that issue. We're learning about the importance of learning. Sometimes, congregations don't learn from experience—they keep making the same mistakes over and over. Working with an outside resource, be that a book or another congregation or educational institution, helps the congregation to see what it's doing and think differently about it. And, with our Grants Initiative, if there's a cost for the resource they need, we can help them pay for it. That's a real gift to the community.

## RESOURCES

We offer here a sampling of Internet sites of interest to clergy from past issues. There are as well several

new recommended Web sites. Please note that back issues of *Clergy Notes*—and other Polis Center publications as well—are available at [www.thepoliscenter.iupui.edu](http://www.thepoliscenter.iupui.edu).

## Culture and Politics

*American Demographics*, [www.demographics.com](http://www.demographics.com)

Magazine that reports on generation-based trends and occasionally publishes articles about American religious life.

Barna Research, [www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org)

Christian marketing firm that tracks cultural and religious trends and interprets them from an evangelical perspective.

*Books and Culture*, [www.christianitytoday.com/books](http://www.christianitytoday.com/books)

Book reviews and essays by Christian scholars and writers.

*Current Thoughts and Trends Magazine*, [www.navpress.com/ctt.asp](http://www.navpress.com/ctt.asp)

Digest of articles that have recently appeared in diverse media sources and are of relevance to Christians.

Ginghamsburg United Methodist Church, [www.ginghamsburg.org](http://www.ginghamsburg.org)

Web site of a large Ohio-based church with a “postmodern” approach to ministry.

Indiana Civil Liberties Union, [www.iclu.org](http://www.iclu.org)

Indiana Family Institute, [www.hoosierfamily.org](http://www.hoosierfamily.org)

Tracks the progress of proposed state legislation important to conservative Christians; also has essays articulating IFI’s position on various moral questions and political issues.

Indiana General Assembly, [www.ai.org/legislative](http://www.ai.org/legislative)

Information on legislation under consideration by the state legislature.

The Ooze, [www.theooze.com](http://www.theooze.com)

Essays and dialogue about the “postmodern” revolution in American religious life, and information about conferences related to that subject.

Project Vote Smart, [www.vote-smart.org](http://www.vote-smart.org)

Tracks the voting record of politicians across the nation, at every level of government.

*Re:generation Quarterly*, [www.regenerator.com](http://www.regenerator.com)

Periodical whose purpose is “to provide commentary, critique, and celebration of the church and contemporary culture.”

Religion and Ethics Newsweekly, [www.thirteen.org/religionandethics](http://www.thirteen.org/religionandethics)

Companion site of the television show; offers both summaries and in-depth coverage of religious issues in the news.

*Tikkun*, [www.tikkun.org](http://www.tikkun.org)

“A bimonthly Jewish critique of politics, culture, and society.”

## Congregations and Ministry

Central Indiana Human Services Database, [www.imcpl.lib.in.us/cgi-bin/irntop.pl](http://www.imcpl.lib.in.us/cgi-bin/irntop.pl)

Comprehensive, searchable database of social-service providers in the Indianapolis area.

Christian Community Development Association, [www.cdda.org/homepage.html](http://www.cdda.org/homepage.html)

Sponsors conferences and offers resources centered on religious organizations and their role in economic development.

Church Ad Project, [www.churchad.com](http://www.churchad.com)

Christian advertising agency that designs and sells a wide variety of print and radio ads with a religious message.

Church Federation of Greater Indianapolis, [www.churchfederationindy.org](http://www.churchfederationindy.org)

City of Indianapolis, [www.indygov.org](http://www.indygov.org)

Congregational Resource Guide, [www.congregationalresources.org](http://www.congregationalresources.org)

FaithWorks Indiana, [www.state.in.us/fssa/faithworks](http://www.state.in.us/fssa/faithworks)

Organization created to help Indiana’s congregations understand and take advantage of “charitable choice” provision of federal welfare reform.

Indianapolis Center for Congregations, [www.centerforcongregations.org](http://www.centerforcongregations.org)

Manlove Church Marketing, [www.churchmarketing.com](http://www.churchmarketing.com)

National Ten Point Leadership Foundation, [www.yesamerica.org/NTLF.html](http://www.yesamerica.org/NTLF.html)

Organization devoted to working with gang members and troubled teens; begun in Boston, it has branch chapters in numerous large cities.

Percept Group, [www.perceptnet.com/pn4/homepage.htm](http://www.perceptnet.com/pn4/homepage.htm)

Provides planning and marketing resources to congregations and denominations.

Small Group Network, <http://smallgroups.com>

A networking forum and information resource for small-group leaders.

Stephen Ministries St. Louis, [www.stephenministries.org](http://www.stephenministries.org)

Organization that facilitates small-group ministry and serves as a general resource center for churches with

a small-group program.

Welfare Information Network, [www.welfareinfo.org](http://www.welfareinfo.org)

Contains information on all aspects of welfare reform, including a special section devoted to faith-based initiatives.

## Research Tools

Adherents.com, [www.adherents.com](http://www.adherents.com)

Statistics on religious adherence around the world.

Hartford Institute for Religious Research, <http://hrr.hartsem.edu>

Studies issues related to church growth and religious adherence, and serves as an information resource specializing in the sociology of religion.

Pluralism Project, [www.fas.harvard.edu/~pluralism](http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~pluralism)

Harvard-based project that studies and documents the religious diversity of the United States.

Religious Movements Homepage, <http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu>

Primarily focused on documenting the rise and progress of new religious sects and cults.

Religious Tolerance, <http://religioustolerance.org>

Purpose is to highlight religious diversity in America; summarizes the position of denominations and faiths regarding key cultural and theological questions.

Resources for American Christianity, [www.resourcingchristianity.org](http://www.resourcingchristianity.org)

Contains information about, and products generated by, some of the religion projects funded by Lilly Endowment Inc.

Virtual Religion Index, <http://religion.rutgers.edu/vri>

Rutgers University-based database with links to information on a wide variety of religions.

Wabash Center Guide to Internet Resources, [www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/Internet/front.htm](http://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/Internet/front.htm)

An extensive guide for finding information and resources in all areas of religious research.

## General Interest

Beliefnet, [www.beliefnet.com](http://www.beliefnet.com)

Web-based publication that covers all aspects of faith and religion; especially strong at providing links to other resources.

The Freedom Forum, [www.freedomforum.org/first](http://www.freedomforum.org/first)

The First Amendment section of the Freedom Forum's Web site; contains news and essays related to

church-state separation.

From Jesus to Christ, [www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion)

Web companion to the PBS Frontline show of the same name; includes essays on various aspects of the rise of Christianity.

Secular Web, [www.infidels.org](http://www.infidels.org)

Posts articles by a range of authors who write from a secular perspective but often engage the work of religious writers.

Sermon WareHouse, [www.voicings.com](http://www.voicings.com)

“Contains the largest collection of contemporary, full-text Sunday sermons in existence.”

*Ship of Fools*, [www.ship-of-fools.com](http://www.ship-of-fools.com)

“The magazine of Christian unrest,” offering humor, cultural commentary, and discussion.

*Spirituality and Health*, [www.spiritualityhealth.com](http://www.spiritualityhealth.com)

Posts articles and facilitates discussion focused on the mind/body connection.