



# Center for Congregations

**Search for the President**  
**Center for Congregations**  
Indianapolis, IN

## THE SEARCH

The Center for Congregations invites applications and nominations for the position of President. This is an exceptional opportunity for a visionary and collaborative leader with a passion for strengthening Christian congregations in Indiana. The Center serves as a conduit for congregations to think about their challenges in a new more expansive way while honoring the autonomy and wisdom of congregations. Over the last several years the Center for Congregations team has grown, expanded the range of congregations served, and introduced new program offerings to address the dynamic needs of Indiana's congregations. With generous funding from the Lilly Endowment, Inc. (LEI) the Center for Congregations is well positioned to continue to strengthen the vitality of congregations in Indiana by coming alongside them and helping them find and use resources to address challenges that they have identified, while also contributing to congregational vitality efforts nationally through its publications, thought leadership, and online resource database.

Reporting to the Board of Directors, the President is the chief executive of the center, leading a team of 30, with oversight for an approximate annual \$19M operating budget and roughly \$3.5M in annual grant awards. Working collaboratively with Lilly Endowment and the congregations of Indiana, the President will be responsible for listening carefully to congregational leaders, hearing their needs, and serving as a catalyst in the development of the vision, outcomes, and strategic priorities that will guide the ongoing work of the Center. In order to fulfill the mission of the Center the President will need to cultivate a high-functioning team, be attentive to the evolving challenges and opportunities facing congregations in a rapidly changing landscape, and serve as a trusted partner to congregations, community organizations, faith leaders, and other key stakeholders across Indiana.

The Center for Congregations has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist with this search. Inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed in confidence to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

## ABOUT THE CENTER FOR CONGREGATIONS

The 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. The

Center for Congregations strengthens Indiana congregations by helping them find and use the best resources to address their challenges and opportunities.

### [Resource Consulting](#)

“Resource consulting” is the foundational methodology for how The Center for Congregations approaches their work with congregations. Essentially resource consulting is a series of conversations in which a congregation describes an opportunity or challenge they seek to address, and the Center listens, assesses and helps the congregation find and use resources that advance the congregation’s learning and capacity.

This approach is developmental, based on how adults in community learn to do new things. The Center places the agency where it should be – with the congregation. In practice this requires deep listening, asking a lot of questions, encouraging clergy and laity to inquire together, and slowing down to create the space for new learning.

Resource consulting is about working with a helper -- someone listening to a congregational leader talk about a challenge or opportunity and then linking that leader with a resource that is going to help them effectively address that which they’re most concerned about at the moment. A resource could be any kind of helper outside the congregation: a book, a workshop, a website, a DVD, a video on YouTube, or a seminary professor.

### [Educational Resources](#)

The Center for Congregations connects Indiana congregations with leading industry experts to provide practical tools and real-life examples they can use in their congregation today. All resources are designed and developed in direct response to what the Center for Congregations hears and learns from the congregations of Indiana. The Center offers a wide range of in-person learning experiences, virtual and recorded workshops, and on-demand courses so congregations can access the information they need when it works for their schedule. In 2023 the Center provided 30 educational workshops that served 577 attendees including 154 who were first time attendees. The Center also released 21 new podcasts in 2023.

### [Grant Program](#)

The Center’s approach is to listen to congregations about their needs then provide information, options, and assistance with finding vendors, consultants, and organizations so that congregations can realize their vision. The Center for Congregations’ grant program supports Indiana congregations to help them address challenges and opportunities that they have identified through funding a variety of expenses, resources, and activities. They offer a variety of matching grants and special grant programs to allow congregations to select the funding that best meets their needs. In addition, the Center for Congregations staff provide hands-on support and provide support to congregations through every step of the grant process from completing the application to receiving the grant and follow-up reporting.

Congregational grants are made possible by a grant to the Center for Congregations from the Lilly Endowment Inc. Current grants opportunities include Resource Grants, Equity Grants, and Mental Health Initiatives. In 2023 the Center awarded \$3,879,422 over 276 grants, with 56 of those being equity grants and 190 were resource grants.

---

### Resource Grants:

A resource grant is a matching grant up to \$25,000 for qualifying Indiana congregations to fund a variety of expenses, resources, and activities.

### Equity Grants:

The Equity Grant is designed to serve congregations impacted by systemic injustice or inequality. This funding opportunity is a 90/10 matching grant up to \$25,000. To qualify, a congregation must have an annual gross income of under \$100,000 and be either a congregation of color or a rural congregation.

### The Congregational Resource Guide

The CRG (Congregational Resource Guide) is an online tool to help leaders of all congregations across the nation to find the right resources to address their unique challenges and needs.

### **Special Initiatives**

The Center for Congregations develops special initiatives that respond collectively to what the Center is hearing and learning from congregations. A few recent examples include the Mental Health Initiative, Connect Through Tech, and Youth Ministry.

#### Mental Health Initiative

The Mental Health Initiative (MHI) launched in 2023 is an education and grant initiative designed to assist Indiana congregations in addressing mental health and wellness among their members. This opportunity includes educational sessions and a grant of up to \$40,000 to fund expenses and activities that support mental health programming in congregations. MHI addressed crucial access, cost, and stigma issues. Presenters, books, podcasts, videos, counselors, and consultants acknowledged that mental illness doesn't have to be the overarching story of a person's life. The congregation can support others toward positive feelings, resulting in meaning and purpose. During 2023 the Center for Congregations awarded a total of \$1,099,329 over 29 MHI grants, had 290 registrants for MHI Education events, and added 89 mental health resources to the Congregational Resource Guide.

#### *Connect Through Tech*

During the COVID-19 pandemic the Connect Through Tech grant provided essential resources to help congregations keep up with the need for online ministry. These grants also supported new creative efforts to engage congregants through new forms of ministry, such as online workshops or a video series of Bible lessons for children.

## Staff and Governance

The Center for Congregations has a [staff](#) of 30 dispersed to 5 locations across the state of Indiana. The [Board of Directors](#) provides oversight and guidance to the President and includes individuals with diverse backgrounds in ministry, law, and community leadership.

## ROLE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE CENTER FOR CONGREGATIONS

The President is responsible for advancing the mission of the Center for Congregations by listening to congregational leaders of Indiana and collecting and sharing insights about innovative practices that nurture congregational vitality within rapidly changing contexts. The President provides strategic leadership for all the Center's funded and associated programs (Center for Congregations Core Programs, Satellite, Young Adult Initiative, Economic Challenges Facing Pastoral Leaders, Congregations with Community, and Communications & Evaluations.) The President is the primary point of contact with Lilly Endowment, Inc, and is directly supervised by the Board of Directors. The President convenes and directly supervises the work of the Executive Leadership Team (Executive Program Director, Executive Director for Center Evaluation, Executive Director of Finance, and Executive Director of Talent & Culture) for the Center. The President ensures that the Center carries out religious, educational, and other resource needs as a supporting organization of Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary and Christian Theological Seminary.

As the Center for Congregations looks to the future, the next President will be expected to embrace the following:

## KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE PRESIDENT

### Serve as a Trusted Faith-Informed Leader and Partner

The President should be a collaborative, faith-informed leader who excels in building rapport with a diverse range of congregations, community organizations, and other key stakeholders across Indiana. The President should be attentive to building a strong engaged partnership with the Lilly Endowment, Inc. The President should also seek opportunities to further leverage existing partnerships with Christian Theological Seminary and Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. In addition, the President should be an effective and compelling ambassador and storyteller for the Center for Congregations who operates with high levels of emotional intelligence.

### Advance the Conversation on the Changing Dynamics in Congregational Life and Increasing Congregational Vitality in Indiana and Nationally

The President should play a significant role as a leader and role model for visionary work in congregational vitality. The role requires someone who is well versed in the complexities of the rapidly changing dynamics in congregational life and is equipped to develop innovative solutions and strategies that incorporate the voices and needs of the full range of Indiana's Christian congregations, with particular attention to those historically underrepresented and/or under-served (rural congregations, congregations of color, non-traditional congregations, etc.). The President will partner with Lilly Endowment Inc. to broadcast success stories from the Center's work in Indiana and to share lessons learned, best practices, and resources.

### **Support and Develop a Dedicated Staff**

The President will serve as a stable, approachable, transparent leader for staff across the organization and in collaboration with the senior leadership team will cultivate a positive organizational culture. The President will bring strong organizational acumen to help assess and implement procedures and mechanisms that will ensure that the internal operations of the Center are collaborative, efficient, and effective. The President must be an experienced manager of people, attending to morale, professional development, communication, and a sense of shared vision and responsibility.

### **Catalyze a Compelling Vision for the Center's Continued Innovation and Effectiveness**

The President will be responsible for listening deeply to the congregations of Indiana, hearing their needs, and serving as a catalyst in the development of the vision and outcomes for the next era of the Center for Congregations programs and initiatives. The President will be responsible for galvanizing key constituents and the Center staff around a vision that meets current needs but is also forward looking and attentive to evolving needs. The President will be a thought leader who can identify emerging trends in both scholarship and practice, make data-informed decisions, and find innovative ways to share impact of the work of the Center across the state and nation.

## **QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS**

The Center for Congregations seeks a forward-thinking strategic leader who knows how to listen deeply and build strong partnerships to serve as its next President.

The successful candidate will bring many of the following experiences, characteristics, and abilities:

- **Education:**
  - A master's degree in a relevant field (e.g., Business Administration, Nonprofit Management, Public Policy, Religion, etc.) is required. A Master of Divinity (M.Div.) or comparable degree or higher is preferred.
- **Experience:**
  - Depth of expertise and demonstrated leadership in and commitment to strengthening congregations as a pastor or congregational leader with ongoing involvement in congregational life
  - Significant experience and demonstrated competence in religious scholarship—particularly congregational studies and/or the social scientific study of religious communities—and an ability to understand and communicate about the landscape of religion in the United States and Indiana specifically.
  - Proven experience managing large, complex programs, including budgeting, staff management and development, and strategic planning. (Experience in a senior management role in a grant-funded organization with a comprehensive program, an annual budget of at least \$5 million, and supervising a distributed team across multiple work locations is ideal.)
  - Record of working across cultural, socio-economic, theological, and denominational boundaries and with people of many different backgrounds and beliefs

- **Skills & Competencies:**

- People-Centered Leadership style that values an empathetic human focused culture
- Executive-level engagement experience developing and maintaining strong relationships with other funders and a Board of Directors and external partners.
- Excellent leadership and team management skills with the ability to motivate, guide, and mentor, and hold accountable diverse teams seeing each person as a different individual
- Exceptional communication and interpersonal skills, including the ability to engage with a wide range of stakeholders.
- Financial acumen, with experience managing large budgets and financial forecasting.
- Ability to manage multiple priorities.
- Ability to think strategically and translate long-term goals into executable plans
- Ability to lead and manage individuals and collaborative teams
- Excellent written, verbal and interpersonal communication skills

- **Personal Attributes:**

- Desire to work with, and a positive view of, congregations.
- High degree of Emotional Intelligence
- Visionary with a commitment to driving organizational impact.
- Strong desire to lead an organization that values equity, responsibility, and relationships.
- Adaptable and able to thrive in a changing environment.
- Strong commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in all aspects of the organization

## Applications, Inquiries, and Nominations

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website for the search. Electronic submission of materials is strongly encouraged.

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/center-congregations/president>

Ernest Brooks, Partner  
Liz Braun, Senior Associate  
Henry Nickerson, Search Coordinator  
Isaacson, Miller

*The Center is committed to providing equal employment opportunities to all employees and applicants without regard to race, religion, color, sex (including childbirth, breast feeding, and related medical conditions), sexual orientation, transgender status, national origin, citizenship status, uniform service member status, pregnancy, age, genetic information, disability, or any other protected status in accordance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws.*

*The Center is also committed to complying with the laws protecting qualified individuals with disabilities, as well as employees' religious beliefs and practices. The Center will provide a reasonable accommodation for any known physical or mental disability of a qualified individual with a disability and/or employees' religious beliefs and observances to the extent required by law, provided the*

*requested accommodation does not create an undue hardship for The Center and/or does not pose a direct threat to the health or safety of others in the workplace and/or to the individual.*