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The number one project for Congregational Life at this time is the startup of the Family Friendly Partner Network in Central Illinois District.

The Family Friendly Partners Network (FFPN)...

...trains and equips clusters of congregations to become intentional Christian marriage and family forming centers. These churches desire to invest resources in a three year process to become partners with Christian marriages and homes to deliberately pass on faith in Jesus Christ to the next generation. They receive training and coaching through a series of workshops, and can contract on-site delivery days, and phone or email coaching. Congregations both with and without a parochial school and/or pre-school are active network participants.

FFPN networks are already in existence in other districts: Michigan, Nebraska, Ohio, Indiana, South Wisconsin, Missouri, and one in Singapore.

At the time of this article's writing, we have achieved the necessary number of congregations registered to begin our network. Member congregations are committing themselves to three years of training events led by Ben Freudenberg, current director of the Family Life Program at Concordia University – Ann Arbor, former church DCE for 30+ years as a minister to youth and the Christian home, and author of "The Family Friendly Church."

FFPN member congregations in the CID include:

- Trinity – Auburn
- Trinity - Bloomington
- St. Paul – Havana
- St. Paul – Lexington
- Faith – Lincoln
- Our Savior's – Springfield
- Trinity - Springfield

Over the course of three years, partner church leaders gather nine times to be trained to lead a process to move their congregations toward a Family Friendly Church. They will explore topics of marriage, parent education, human sexuality, step parenting, and training parents in faith formation. In the end, a church will include in its mission, program and structure a church wide passion, knowledge, and resource base for building strong Christian homes and marriages.

Orientation

Building a base of understanding and relationship within the network.

Event 1: The Paradigm Shift

Learning to look at church ministries through the family friendly lens.

Event 2 & 3: Assessment

Defining family ministry and assessing family needs and congregational family demographics.

Event 4: Training Parents in Faith Formation

Training on the Family Friendly Tweak and how to help parents reclaim their place as the primary "faithshapers" of children.

Event 5: Marriage Ministry

Exploring the state of marriage in our culture and restructuring of pre-marriage and marriage enrichment ministries to reflect current needs.

Event 6: Parent Education

Focusing on "Why God created parents," Turansky and Miller's work in "Parenting is Heart Work," and the creation of parenting ministries through the lifespan.

Event 7: Human Sexuality

Developing a Christian, full life span sexuality education training system for the church and home.

Event 8: Non Nuclear Families

Discovering the necessity for and priorities in step-family, divorce and remarriage ministries.

Optional Event 9: Adulthood and Aging

Focusing on the caring for aging parents and their caregivers.

The Youth Committee of the CID is an outstanding group of individuals that are self-starters ready to serve the youth of the district. Their organization and energy level is refreshing and commendable. The committee is busy planning for events in 2012 and 2013 including:

- Sr. High day will take place June 28 at Knight's Action Park – Springfield.
- Early planning is already under way for the junior high lock-in event scheduled for November, 2012.
- Council of LYF Representatives (CLYFR) training workshop in April was attended by Rev. Aaron Schellhas and youth rep Elyse McCormick. They will now take up the task of sharing this training within our district.
- National Lutheran Youth Workers Conference will be held to prepare district representatives for the 2013 National Youth Gathering in San Antonio. Rev. Aaron Schellhas and Rev. Chris Decker are our CID reps.

Congregational Lay Leader Training workshops are available to circuits throughout our district. These workshops can provide some basic information for lay leaders as they serve on

congregational boards and other leadership positions. Any circuit, or group of circuits, can request a workshop by contacting the district office to discuss suitable scheduling.

Respectfully submitted,
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