



Social Networking for Congregations

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Who the heck am I?

The Center for Congregations was established in the fall of 1997, as a gift to the greater Indianapolis area from Lilly Endowment and founded for the purpose of helping to strengthen the congregations of our community. The Center now covers the state of Indiana. We are affiliated with the Alban Institute.

Mission

The Center's mission is to strengthen congregations by helping them find and use excellent resources for their challenges and opportunities. The Center and the Alban Institute will also share what we learn from our experience in Indiana with congregations nationwide.

What We Do

- Resource Consultation, Discovery & Referral (no charge)
- Resource Grants
- Educational Events
- Sharing What We Learn Nationwide

Responsive to the needs of congregations rather than prescriptive.

What We Did

- February of 1998, started looking to teach congregations, without implied or explicit theology, how to use technology to enhance congregational ministry
- Primary goal was to give a broad background of what's available for congregations in the area of technology but not to train congregations on the specifics of any hardware or software.

What We Did

- We assumed that someone else, somewhere, had already created such a program.
- We were wrong!

What We Did

- We began a process of interviewing congregations, researching trends, and ultimately created a curriculum.
- *Computers and Ministry: Making Technology Work for Your Congregation*

What We Did

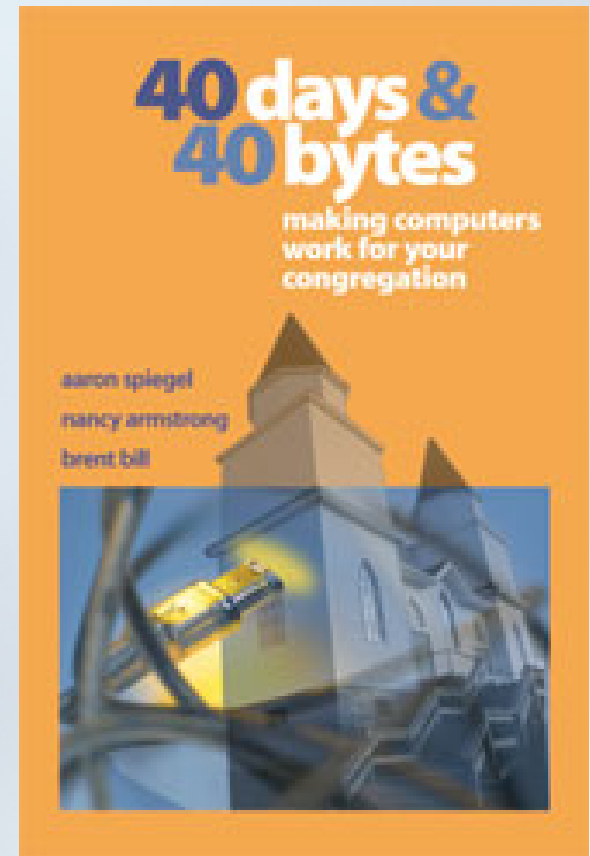
- Originally planned as a series of three all-day workshops with accompanying on-site consulting visits
- Evolved, thanks to Lilly Endowment, into *Computers and Ministry Grants Initiative* (CMGI)

What We Did

- Began CMGI 2000 ended in 2004
- Took 106 congregations through process
- Made grants of almost \$2M for technology (matching grants, leveraging over \$4M in spending)
- The Center has worked with over 500 congregations in the area of technology

What We Did

- Published book in 2004 about what we learned
- *40 days & 40 bytes: making computers work for your congregation*



Philosophy

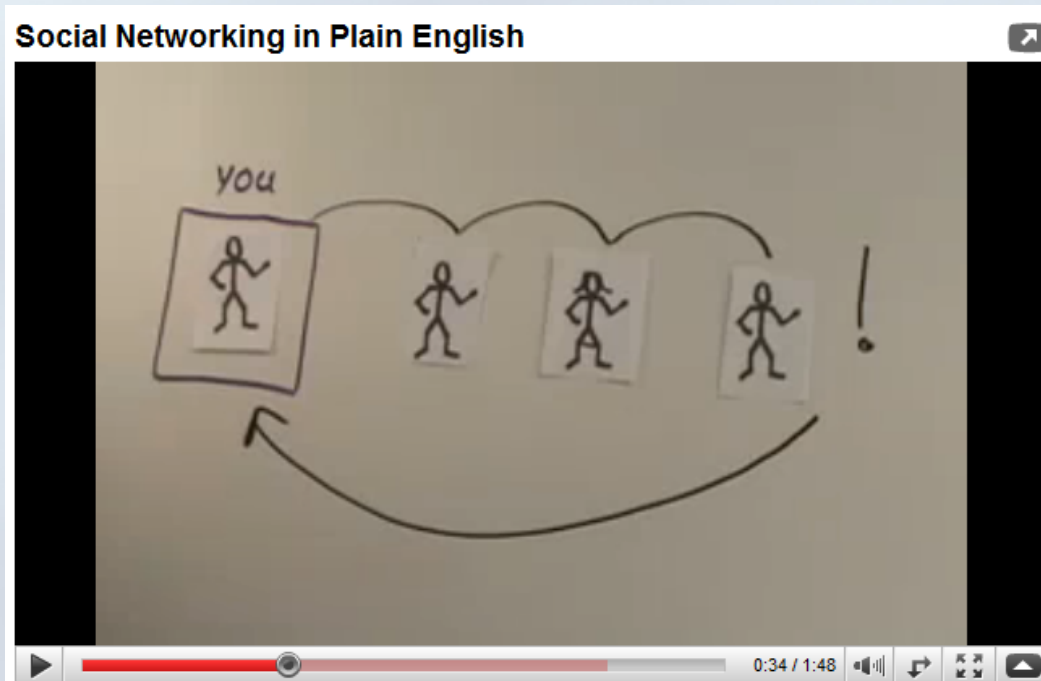
- Foundational philosophy – *technology without existing process will not work - you can't fix bad processes with technology*
- Technology for technology's sake doesn't work
- Technology is a means to the ends of enabling congregations to spend more time doing what they do best – touching the lives of their congregants

We're doing it again!

- Just launched Technology and Ministry Grants Initiative (TMGI)

Social Networking

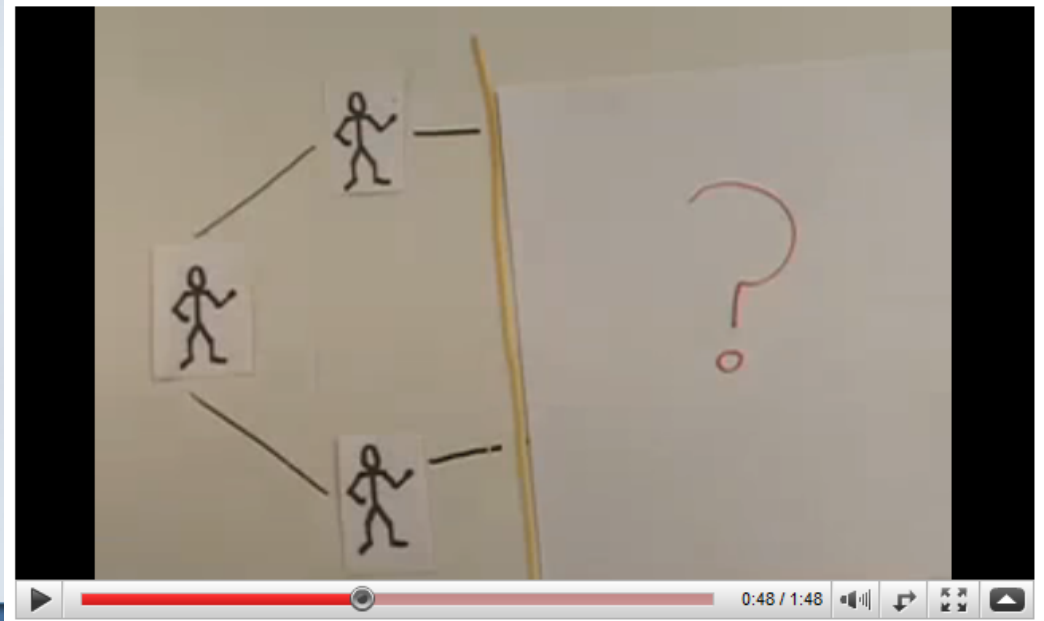
- YouTube video 'Social Networking in Plain English' claims networks are only as valuable as the people and connections one can see.



Social Networking

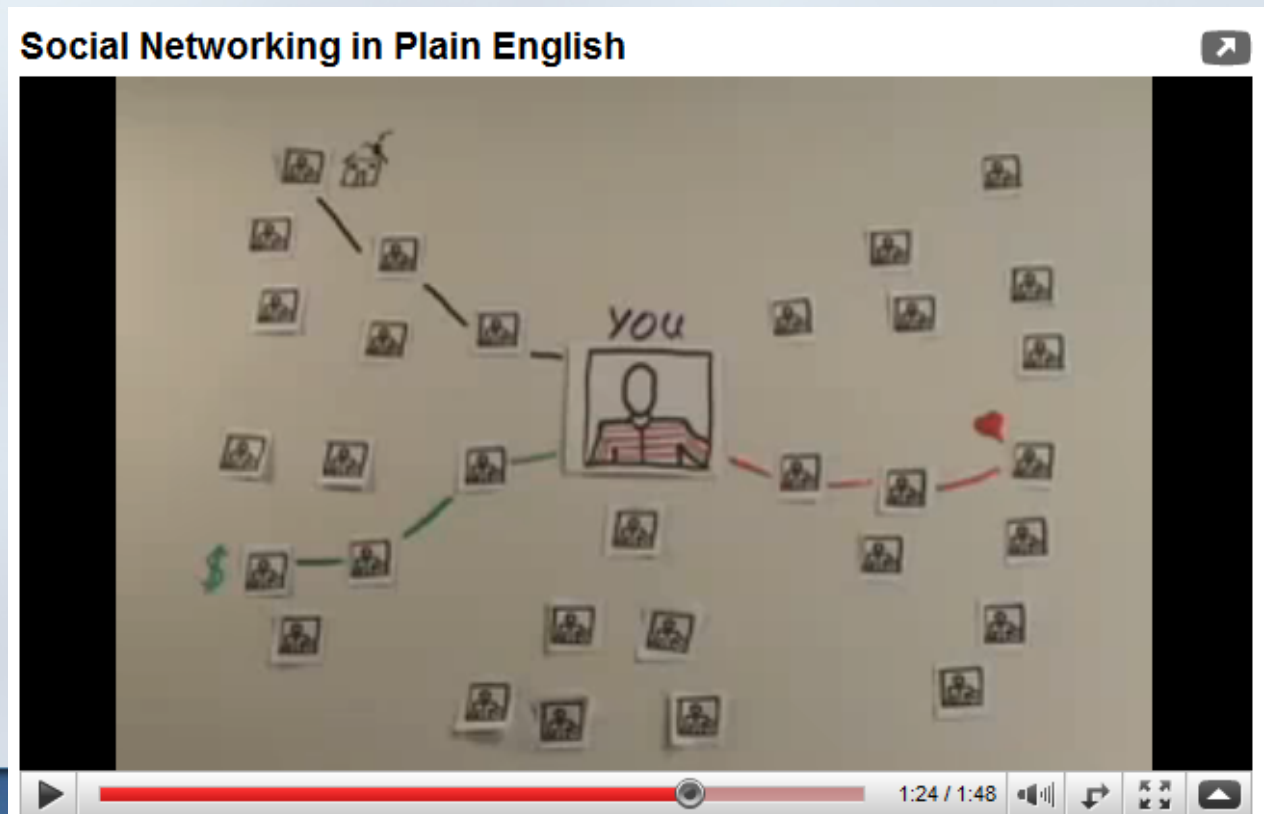
- Social Networking sites help us see the real world connections that are hidden. By allowing me to see whom my friend's, friends are I can connect with a broader community than the one I can 'see.'

Social Networking in Plain English



Social Networking

- Simplistic? Yes, but this is really the essence of social networking.



Social Networking

- In my other life...
 - Rabbi of Butler University Hillel since 2003

ALMOST

NCAA national champions



Social Networking

- In my other life...
 - Rabbi of Butler University Hillel since 2003
 - Would email students... sometimes take days to get reply
 - Joined Facebook in 2004
 - Facebook went public in 2005, I was hooked!
 - Joined Twitter in June 2008
(www.whendidyoujointwitter.com)

Social Networking

- Started thinking about how congregations could / would use social networking
- Center started getting calls from congregations thinking about social networking
- Hosted our first workshop early 2009
- Have hosted several workshops and conversations since then

Social Networking

- Created survey January 2009, sent email invitation to approximately 2,800 recipients
- Received 175 responses
- We found...



Social Networking

- 32% had a MySpace or Facebook group

Social Networking

- Why not? The responses for this question were wide ranging.
 - suspicion of the medium and a general lack of knowledge about its purpose or advantage.
 - Several commented that clergy won't support it.
 - Some report they're still trying to get a functional website up and running.

Social Networking

- Why not? The responses for this question were wide ranging.
 - One of my favorite “My church does not see the need to have a website. They still treat the internet like it is a novelty.”
(someone from that church saw this survey and thought it important enough and was interested enough to fill it out!)

Social Networking

- Why not? The responses for this question were wide ranging.
 - Many saw social networking as something to ‘keep up with,’ like maintaining a website. They reported a lack of administrative capacity to do this.
 - One reported, “We're probably not techie or hip enough.”
 - Several gave age as a barrier – average membership is ‘too old’ to use these tools.

Social Networking

- Why not? The responses for this question were wide ranging.
 - All based on false assumptions and ignorance

Social Networking

- Of the 32% who said 'yes,' 60% affirmed it enhanced communication

Social Networking

- 57% responded that social networking targets 20 to 30 something age range
 - Average age of Twitter users, 30 – 49
 - Fastest growing Facebook demographic is women over 55
 - “The biggest growth in terms of absolute new users over the last six months occurred among users thirty-five to forty-four.” The majority of U.S. Facebook users are now over twenty-five.

Social Networking

- Another favorite response, “Most folks here are introverts and writing thoughts down seems redundant.”
- ***Fear*** about security and privacy

Social Networking

- 42% of congregational leaders have personal Facebook, MySpace, etc. pages
 - But respondents don't consider this to be part of the congregation's communication strategy
- When we asked, "Do you think online social networking enhances or worsens congregation/member relationships?"
 - 90% percent responded that it enhances**

Social Networking

- One respondent, “Intuitively, I believe it has the potential to enhance it, but we have no experience to back that.”

Social Networking

- So what keeps congregations from using Social Networking?

FEAR

- As one event attendee said,
 - ‘Just do It’
 - Treat social networking like an extension of your congregational relationships

Social Networking

- The Annenberg Center for the Digital Future's 2007 report was entitled, "Online World as Important to Internet Users as Real World?"
- The 2008 study reported that membership in online communities has more than doubled in only three years

Social Networking

“I understand the reluctance of congregations to venture into the world of social networking. Caution is certainly warranted – but I don’t think we can wait too long. People are spending large parts of their time in the virtual world. We need to be there to greet them!”

Social Networking

- Hours online increasing, average 17
- 52% of Internet users say it's important or very important in maintaining social relationships
- Online community members are staying members
- 81% of online community members in the current study said they use the Internet to participate in communities related to social causes
- A larger percentage of users said their activism has increased since they began participating in online communities compared to 2007

Social Networking

Am I preaching to the choir?

Social Networking

- New job, Community Manager
 - People in this position are working to build, grow and manage communities around a brand or cause
 - 2007, Jeremiah Owyang posted “The Four Tenets of the Community Manager”



Social Networking

“The 2008 Digital Future survey reports that online community membership has dramatically affected participation in social causes. Several years ago I heard the prolific American religious scholar Martin Marty say that congregations need to lead societal change rather than respond to it. Well, we are way behind in the method and manner in which our congregants (and potential congregants) communicate and interact with their worlds.”

Social Networking

- Tracking congregations who are using Facebook, Twitter, etc.
 - <http://delicious.com/rebaaron/socialnetworkstar>
 - aspiegel@centerforcongregations.org
 - www.centerforcongregations.org

Social Networking

- Resources:
 - *The Four Tenets of the Community Manager*,
<http://www.web-strategist.com/blog/2007/11/25/the-four-tenets-of-the-community-manager>
 - *The Reason Your Church Must Twitter*,
<http://www.twitterforchurches.com>
 - *the blogging church*, Brian Bailey and Terry Storch
 - *Facebook for Dummies*
 - The Internet!



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