Why Community?
Three People of Praise Testimonies

Allendale and Praise Academy
The Long Haul

Northern Virginia
Campus Fellowship Grows

Running the Race
Photo Collage
Making name badges for the Servant Branch community anniversary extravaganza on September 19 were: (upper left, clockwise) Jim Cahill, Jeri Bartek, Elizabeth Limberg Hursch and her two children, Ruthie Grams, Tom Beckley, Lois Grill and Mary Limberg. Activities included a pig roast, a big band dance, a 5K run and bingo.

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Three community members tell their stories of finding and joining Christian community in the People of Praise.
Look Again

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

For me, the season of covenant celebrations always kicks off one long exercise in gratitude because it blends into the American Thanksgiving season and end-of-year reflections.

We’ve been waiting for such a moment to share the stories we heard from Kelly McMullen, John Slattery and Linda Allen about what brought them into the People of Praise. Their testimonies filled us with new awe and gratitude at the Lord’s call to us “to be a light to the nations . . . to participate in the mission of the church in our times, and to live our lives communally until the day when Jesus will be all in all” (Spirit and Purpose).

Elsewhere in these pages are other fresh perspectives on the radical life we’re living. You can see it through the eyes of a student as he encounters ecumenism and the charismatic gifts. You can see it through the eyes of a neighbor who watches her neighborhood being rebuilt. You can see it through the eyes of Sean Connolly, who visited Allendale and witnessed how the seeds planted years ago are now sprouting, most tangibly at Praise Academy.

I hope this issue will help you, as it did us, to remember and to see with new eyes what kind of life this is to which our God calls us.

In Christ,

ELIZABETH GRAMS, Assistant Editor
The houses and the households within them form the heart of a growing outreach to college students at “Mason” (as the locals call it). The outreach, known as Campus Fellowship, is sponsored by the northern Virginia branch. College students from Mason or any of the colleges in the D.C. area can come here for a Lord’s Day meal, a Spirit breakout session (prayer meeting), a movie, a cram session, advice from an older, wiser soul or simply to blow off steam playing with young children.

Living in the first house, 10201 Forest Avenue (a local landmark because of the turret on the second floor), are Tony and Nadia Fraga and their four children, Anthony, Isabelle, Andreas and Rafael, co-owner of the house Nanci Panos and college students John Crimmins, Patrick Eng and Peter Cassell.

The second house, 10203 Forest Avenue, includes four generations of the McNichol family: Tom and Therese McNichol, Therese’s father Don Cedergren, the McNichols’ daughter Therese, her husband Bryan and their two children, Sophie and Verity, as well as college students Alanna Crimmins, Emily Hunt, Nadia Busekrus, Rebecca Triplett and Barbara Brophy.

The two houses are only three blocks away from Nick and Polly Jayjack, their three children, Anna, Warren and Corey, and household member Jacqueline Magill. The Jayjack household also supports the outreach.

In total, the fellowship includes 20 underway college students, 12 other branch members who serve as advisors, and a rotating cast of students and friends who attend prayer meetings and Lord’s Day meals. Bob Magill is the coordinator responsible for the outreach, and Tony Fraga is the work head.

The northern Virginia branch has a long history of reaching out to college students. In the 1980s, Accepting Christ This Summer (ACTS) spread the baptism in the Holy Spirit to students from several Virginia schools. It had a lasting impact: 12 people who are currently covenanted came into the community through ACTS, and dozens more were baptized in the Holy Spirit. The branch’s campus outreach evolved during the 1990s and led to prayer meetings at George Mason, Marymount University and two area churches, but those meetings wound down in the mid-2000s.

Fast-forward to December, 2010, when Tony and Nadia, then in the branch’s Action division, began to wonder whether some of the students in Action might like to stay in the local area during their college years and continue participating in the branch. A vision began to take shape for a household near George Mason that would serve as a home for underway students and a center for outreach to the campus. The Fragas prayed, wrote up a plan and, in the spring of 2011, the branch coordinators accepted it.

Then they needed some students and a house.

The students came first. In fall, 2011, Mrika Kadeli and Alanna Crimmins, who both felt called by the Lord to join the fledgling outreach, moved in with the Fragas (then with two children) in a
three-bedroom townhouse in Falls Church, about 20 minutes by car from the Mason campus. “We had morning prayer together, and dinners and household meetings on Sundays,” Alanna recalls.

Then the Fragas began their house search in earnest, with help from the Jayjacks, who were already living in Fairfax. They drove the streets praying for the right place to open up and researched the housing market, but no doors opened.

“We put offers down on four houses and lost all of them,” Nadia says. “We couldn’t even find a rental. It was rough, and it felt like everything was against us.”

After 18 months of searching, the Fragas thought the Lord wanted them to have more faith. They put their townhouse on the market, a big risk for a young family. Three days later, it sold.

A few days after the sale, the 5,500-square-foot house on Forest Avenue came to their attention. The house had a second floor with five bedrooms and a finished basement with two more bedrooms and a fourth bathroom. The first floor had a large open space that could easily accommodate 50 people for a prayer meeting. It was perfect, but way too expensive.

That’s when Nanci suggested that they buy the house together. They would be co-owners, using a legal arrangement known as “equity sharing.” (In equity sharing, both parties can put money toward the down payment and share the mortgage payments and the ongoing expenses of operating the property, as specified in a detailed ownership agreement.)

Together, the Fragas and Nanci made a low offer, which the owner accepted after some negotiations. They moved in in October of 2012. By the fall of 2013, seven students from five different branches had agreed to be part of the outreach. Four men moved in with the Fragas, and two of the three women moved in with the Jayjacks. Everyone began to pray for the equally large house next door to Nanci and the Fragas to go on the market. It did, and Tom and Therese bought it together with Don in September, 2014.

What does life look like in the Campus Fellowship? For the students living in the households, there are meals together as a household, morning prayer, cooking, chores and, of course, homework. On the weekends, there are large Lord’s Day celebrations open to guests and prayer meetings where guests often have a chance to be prayed over. There are bonfires and trips to a nearby coffee shop.

Community members work hard to give the events a laid-back, family feeling that students seem to like. For Emily Hunt, a senior at George Mason, that family feeling was just the ticket. She grew up in an Anglican family in the northern Virginia area, but says she was lonely at the college she chose to attend an hour south of D.C.—so much so that she decided to return home. She enrolled at Mason and met Shannon Mehaffey at a church retreat. Shannon invited her to a Lord’s Day opening.

“I was struck by the hospitality and how genuine the friendships and relationships were,” says Emily. “I had been looking for that for a long time.”

Emily eventually came underway and now lives in the McNichol-Cedergren household.

Michael Hill, also a senior at Mason, thought a charismatic group was the last thing he would be attracted to. He grew up in what he calls a “traditional Catholic” home without much exposure to charismatic gifts or ecumenism. He even warned a friend against the prayer meetings because he feared that they neglected the differences between Catholics and other Christians and might be “borderline heretical.”

Later, though, he went to the Fraga-Panos house for a birthday party and liked the people he met. At the urging of Mirka Kadel, he read Pope John Paul II’s encyclical on ecumenism, Ut Unum Sint, and found that its theological language resonated with him. He began having long conversations about community, the charismatic gifts and ecumenism with Zach Busekrus, one of the underway students. Zach invited Michael to a branch meeting and to his parents’ house for dinner. Michael says the Lord spoke to him in prayer, asking, “Why can’t you be open to the Holy Spirit in this community?”

As the idea grew on him, he attended a community weekend, came underway and was baptized in the Spirit. Ever since, as Tony puts it, “Michael has been on fire for the Lord and for the community,” praying with several friends to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. He now lives in a household with Alex and Julia Shek in the Anacostia neighborhood of D.C.

The underway students are in touch with many more students at Mason and other local colleges and have prayed with dozens for healing, for spiritual gifts and for baptism in the Spirit. God has put others in their path, like Henriette, a young au pair from South Africa with a charismatic background. Shannon Mehaffey met her on the Metro on Henriette’s first day in the US.

Go to a prayer meeting at one of those large houses near campus, and you might find Henriette and a friend of hers, also a South African au pair, several young Fraga children, their parents, Tony and Nadia, Tom and Therese, other fellowship members from the branch, undergraduate college students from Oahu, Colorado Springs, the Twin Cities and New Orleans, along with numerous other guests.

“The Lord has worked many miracles,” says Tony. “We’re appreciative of that and blessed by it.”
Before my trip to Allendale last July, I felt like a man who would soon be seeing a relative he hadn’t called or written to for a long time. I had lived in Allendale for three years at the beginning of our work in the neighborhood, but six years had passed since my last visit. That was the first year of my marriage to Gretchen, and before the births of Gloria, John and Peter. My life had changed in those six years. But would my relative understand the man I had become?

I was traveling with Joe Gleason and Elizabeth Grams to film the summer camp, to interview neighbors and to capture what God is doing in the neighborhood. Near the end of our drive down from South Bend, we saw a glorious sunset over the rolling cattle fields of Louisiana that stoked my anticipation. We reached Allendale around 8:30 on Tuesday, July 14. In the waning light, I could make out the blooming crepe myrtles, the purple spiderworts, the sign that reads, “People of Praise: Where the peace of God reigns.”

Then on Wednesday morning we met up with David Zimmel, who gave us some gruesome news. The night before, Willie Latin, a 15-year-old boy from the neighborhood, had been stabbed by his uncle during a fight. Willie died in the hospital.

I knew Willie. Though I hadn’t seen him in years, I could picture him as a small child toddling around his grandmother’s house, the same house where he had been stabbed. In our early years, Miss Bertha, his grandmother, had hosted Action volunteers at her house for home-cooked soul food. On Wednesday afternoon several of us went there, to share memories and pray, to be with Miss Bertha in her time of suffering. In his teenage years, Willie had come to our camp, and he was well known by the staff and the children, who were also in mourning.

Seeing the children at camp was a revelation. There were about 50 children, divided into groups by age and sex, from three-year-olds to teenagers. Visiting one of the boys’ groups, I played a game that involves loosening the laces on your shoe, then tossing it with your foot at a hula hoop. Later, we went to the porch of 1434 Yale, where the girls were gathered with the youngest children. They sang “Take a Grip,” learned from the Jamaica branch, and then the girls and counselors honored one another. I can remember when our camp began, in 2003. We held it at a local park, where we didn’t have total control over the rules or the schedule. Kids would come and go and we had a hard time keeping order. This was different—a small community meeting, genuinely Christian, that everyone participated in, from the smallest child to the oldest counselor.

We went from camp to meet a 16-year-old named Zay. He told us that four years ago his mother was diagnosed with cancer. Soon afterward he met Sam Mertz, Dan Schwab and Nathan Barrett. Zay was a shy kid, but the brothers encouraged him to go to camp, and Zay did. They also got him some help at his house and they prayed with his mother. When Zay’s mother died in 2014, he felt lost. “After my momma died, I stopped going to church, I stopped playing basketball, I stopped doing everything,” he told us. Then Gerry Deakin and Dan told Zay about baptism in the Holy Spirit. They prayed with him and he began to receive words from the Lord. Within a week Zay was sharing those words with strangers, and he continues to do so. He also keeps coming to camp, where he is a leader in the oldest boys’ group and a standout player in the group’s basketball games. “Going to the People of Praise camp changed my whole life,” he says.

One of my hopes on this trip was to make contact with a young woman named LaCondra. I met her in 2002, when she was 11 or 12. She was raised by her mother and her grandmother, but now she is married with three children—her children are coming to our camp. Talking with her, I saw the tender way she cared for her children. She was eager to tell her story, and during the interview LaCondra recalled the impact the single women, including my wife Gretchen, had on her as a teenager. “When I felt I didn’t have someone to talk to, I could always go and talk to them—I mean about any and everything. I was shy and afraid to speak, and Gretchen broke me out of my shyness. They helped me to grow as a woman.”

She told us that her four-year-old...
daughter Mariah had come home from camp singing a song, “Hallelujah, salvation and glory, honor and power, he is wonderful!” LaCondra surprised her daughter by singing it along with her. “How do you know that?,” Mariah asked her mom. “Well, Mariah, I went to camp,” LaCondra explained.

On the last day of our visit, the Action team hosted a barbecue. The street in front of our houses was full of children jumping rope, playing ball and running around. Some girls did a praise dance in honor of Willie. Nathan also spoke about Willie and read from Isaiah 65: “No more shall be heard in [Jerusalem] the sound of weeping, nor the cry of distress. No more shall there be an infant who lives but a few days.” Then the children set loose some blue and white balloons in Willie’s memory.

The team members who knew Willie told me that he wasn’t a thug-type asking for trouble but more of a geek who liked computers. His death is the devil's handiwork; it cut short the life that God and Willie’s friends had wanted for him. Willie’s death also underscored for me the urgency of what God is doing in Allendale—with the kids who come to camp, with LaCondra and her children, with Zay. So many of those kids can now say the Lord’s Prayer. So many of them know how to resolve a disagreement peacefully by asking for forgiveness.

Because of my six years between visits, I was able to see something I wouldn’t have seen otherwise: God's long-term strategy, how the seeds we planted 13 years ago have borne fruit. From a once scrappy camp, a school is now growing—Praise Academy at Lakeside. I had worried about reliving the past, but God chose to give me something new: a new sorrow in my heart for Willie, for his grandmother and for his friends; and a new joy from seeing God’s strategy at work, the way he is winning in Allendale.

Before we pulled away from Allendale in the morning darkness, I stole a moment and kissed the ground in front of the Jewish cemetery across the street from our houses. It was hard to leave this holy place. “You have sorrow now,” as Jesus said in John’s Gospel, “but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.”

Praise Academy at Lakeside opened on August 11 at 1434 Yale in Shreveport with three pre-kindergartners, three first graders and two fifth graders.
PRAISE ACADEMY
PHOTOS BY NANO FARABAUGH

PRAISE ACADEMY AT LAKESIDE opened on August 11 with eight students. While the idea of the school dates back to at least 2006, in 2012, Paul DeCelless, Nano Farabaugh and Joan Pingel began laying the groundwork for the school. They were joined by Sarah Loughran in 2014. Joan, the school’s principal, now runs the school and teaches with Colleen Bowar and Kevin McShane. Other members of the Christians in Mission team and the Shreveport branch volunteer as they can with tasks such as cleaning and monitoring. Nano, who is responsible for the curriculum and teacher training, took these photos in September. “We are off to a great beginning,” she says, “and we are counting on your prayers.”
p. 8, top: Fifth graders Latisha and Shakiya interviewed Edna Malone for an assignment to calculate the average age and height of Yale Avenue residents.

p. 8, bottom: Jaylen played an arithmetic game on an iPad.

p. 9, top, seated from left: Colleen, D’Andre, Jayden, Macayla, Joan and Angel. Standing from left: Jaylen, Latisha, Kevin, Tylar and Shakiya.

p. 9, lower left: D’Andre recently cornered Kevin with questions about Jesus. The students often express eagerness to learn about God.

p. 9, middle right: The students are learning table manners and how to set a table.
p. 10, upper left: The children light up when it’s time to read or listen to stories with their teachers.

p. 10, upper right: The students and teachers have breakfast, lunch and snacks together every day. Meals are prepared by CIM team members and one of their neighbors.

p. 10, bottom: Each student is assigned a chore to do each day. Tylar is proud of his job loading the dishwasher.

p. 11, top: CIM team member and Suzuki violin instructor Libby Grondin teaches the fifth graders how to play the xylophone.

p. 11, bottom: Kevin leads a science class in an inspection of their growing seeds.
Kilian

One spring day Evan and Ellen were out talking to our neighbors in the projects when Evan struck up a conversation with four young boys. The ringleader, 11-year-old Kilian, looked bored and was casually throwing dirt at the other three as the missionaries walked up.

Evan tried telling the boys some stories about God healing people but Kilian cut in, “I don’t believe in God! I hate God. I love the devil!” When this didn’t succeed in getting Evan upset, Kilian threw some dirt at him, but that didn’t work either. Then Kilian crossed the line by lobbing some dirt at Ellen.

Evan turned towards Kilian and said, “Please apologize to my sister.”

But Kilian wasn’t apologizing. Instead, he pushed his chest into Evan’s and shouted, “What are you going to do? You can’t hurt me! I’m just a kid, and you’re an adult!”

“I’m not going to hurt you, Kilian,” Evan replied, surprised by the boy’s anger. “I just want you to apologize.”

Defiant, Kilian reached out, snatched Evan’s pen off his shirt, and stormed off. Thinking Kilian was gone, Evan tried continuing his Bible story to the younger three, but all they did was giggle and try to whisper crude jokes to him.

Then Kilian came back and asked for Evan’s Bible. Evan said no, and Kilian started circling him and punching him lightly, which Evan ignored as he finished telling the Bible story he’d begun.

Finished with his story, Evan asked Kilian for his pen back, which Kilian unexpectedly returned. One of the other boys asked to try on Evan’s glasses, which Evan cautiously handed over. Next Kilian wanted a turn, but when he got the glasses he turned and walked away!

Partially blinded, Evan realized that if he gave chase he would probably never see his glasses again. Instead of reacting, he just kept talking to the other boys, hoping Kilian would come back.

And he did! After a couple of tense minutes Kilian wandered back to the group. Evan bent over and let Kilian put his glasses back on his face. As he did, Kilian took Evan’s pen again, and this time buried it near a tree a few yards away.

Ready to leave, Evan asked for his pen back, but Kilian said, “I lost it.”

“Do you think you could find it?” asked Evan.

“Maybe,” replied Kilian, who promptly unearthed the pen but still refused to give it back.

Evan and Ellen said goodbye and walked back to their car, tired and a little frustrated. As they were getting in, Kilian came running up behind them. “Can you guys come to my house? I live right down the street!” Stunned, Evan and Ellen asked themselves, Was this the same boy?

Kilian & Aliyah

Two Missionary Stories

by George Kane

These articles originally appeared in the April 24, 2015, and July 10, 2015, editions of The Message, the newspaper of the Catholic Diocese of Evansville. This summer, George completed a two-year commitment to the Missionary Company. Evan Lent and Ellen Reed are missionaries in Evansville. Marty Willard is a member of Servant Branch.

Instead of reacting, he just kept talking to the other boys, hoping Kilian would come back.

Evan made a plan to get back with him as soon as they could. Delighted, Kilian tossed Evan’s pen back and sped off.

Two weeks later, Evan’s mission team knocked at Kilian’s house. Kilian bounded to the door and let them in. Visibly excited,
he quickly cleaned off the sofa and invited them to sit down, parking himself right next to Evan. With a Bible in his lap, Kilian stared straight up at Evan the whole time, drinking it in.

Pope Francis has said, “I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from . . . clinging to its own security” (Evangelii Gaudium 49). I think Evan’s decision to quietly endure Kilian’s pestering opened Kilian’s heart, showing just how effective a bruised, hurting and dirty Christian can be.

**Aliyah**

After a few slow conversations, Marty and I ended up at the door of a dirty blue duplex with a piece of red string for a doorknob. This was Marty’s first time going door to door with our group of People of Praise missionaries. A father of six, Marty had traveled to Evansville from Minnesota to visit us for a few days.

I jammed my fingers into the open handle-hole to keep it from opening as I knocked. A young white woman with blonde hair and suspicion in her eyes came out.

“Hi! I’m George and this is Marty, we’re some Christians.”

“I’m Shannon, and sorry, I’m a Muslim,” she said, getting ready to shut the door.

“Cool,” I said quickly, “do you want to hear a miracle story?”

“Well . . . sure,” she said.

I told her about the healing of Ruthanne, who had become a paraplegic 20 years ago when she slipped on a ladder, dislocating her backbone. Around Christmas of 2013, Ruthanne fell from her wheelchair while alone and prayed desperately for God’s help. “Then I felt these hands reach into my legs and straighten them out,” she says, “and I stood up and walked!”

“Wow!” said Shannon, “that really was God!”

When asked if she’d ever seen a miracle, she replied, “Every day! Here she is.” She reached down behind the door and picked up a little girl with bleach-blonde hair. “Aliyah was stillborn. After four minutes I asked God to save her. She started crying right away, and had a perfect Apgar score! Not a single complication since.”

“Wow,” said Marty, “Do you know what the name Aliyah means?” But Shannon didn’t know. We ended by praying over Shannon’s back (she had a degenerative disc disease) and thanking her for her story.

We only had time for one more conversation, and I really wanted to follow up with a mission contact in a neighborhood across town. When we arrived, however, they weren’t home.

After a quick prayer, we knocked at a nearby house I was moved by. A young white woman came to the door and said, “Oh, I’m a Christian, too!”

“Where have you seen the Lord?” we asked her. “Right here,” she said, picking up her young daughter. For the second time that day, I found myself face to face with a little blonde girl. She had cerebral palsy and epilepsy, her mother told us. And like the first girl, had been born amid life-threatening complications and amazingly survived.

“I love her to death, wouldn’t change a thing,” her mom said.

“She’s beautiful!” said Marty, “what’s her name?”

“Aliyah. It means ‘God raised up.’”

What do I make of these stories? Of course, it’s an incredible coincidence that we met these two girls on the same day, in different parts of town, both named Aliyah, and both with mothers who thanked God for raising up a beloved daughter after a tumultuous birth. I see God using these startling circumstances to encourage Marty and me. Even though we may have many slow and difficult missionary conversations, God’s there, out in front of us, already working in people’s lives. It isn’t the coincidence that is most amazing but God himself, who, as Pope Francis writes in Evangelii Gaudium, “is at work in everyone” and “seeks to penetrate every human situation” (178).
We covenant ourselves
to live our lives
together in Christ.
More, Lord!

TESTIMONIES ON COMMUNITY

The three testimonies in this section are based on interviews with Kelly McMullen, John Slattery and Linda Allen conducted by the Vine & Branches staff. Kelly, John and Linda come from different backgrounds and live in different branches of our community, but in their own ways each of them came to experience the Lord’s call “to live our lives together in Christ our Lord” (The Spirit and Purpose of the People of Praise).

Kelly’s head, Kara Hrbacek (right), was one of the first members of the People of Praise Kelly met after she moved to Colorado Springs in 2000.

Fifteen years ago, I traveled back to Houston for a meeting. On Sunday morning I went to Mass at a church I had attended when I lived in Texas. I loved that church because the music was so lively there. At one point the congregation was blessing the people who were preparing to join the church, extending their hands in prayer. For me, this was an awkward gesture, one that Catholics rarely used. But there I was, standing against the back wall with my hands up, blessing the candidates.

Just the week before, it had become clear that my husband of 14 years and I were going to get a divorce. And my daughter Jayme was in the process of being diagnosed as autistic. And we had just moved to Colorado Springs and I needed a job. So . . . divorce, autism, bar exam, find a house—all this stuff!

I just prayed, Lord, if some of this blessing could be for me too, I just really need it right now. I was kneeling there on the floor, and I felt Jesus’ arms around me like he’d knelt down behind me and cradled me. It was a physical sensation, a most personal experience. I couldn’t stop crying. In the back of that church, the Holy Spirit saved me and never left.

I was born in the San Francisco Bay area, but my parents were farm people from Iowa. Gradually they decided that working in the electronics industry in California wasn’t what they wanted to do—they wanted to get out of that crazy, worldly place. My dad found work in a small rural town in Nevada. My family went to church every Sunday, but that was all. We had no prayer at home.

Off I went to college and into life. I got engaged, and a few weeks before the wedding my fiancé told me he had decided to become an atheist. (I thought I was marrying a Baptist whose grandfather was a preacher.) I thought it was too late to back out, so I got married.

During my marriage I think I only went to church at Christmas and Easter until June, 1995, when my daughter was born. But once Jayme arrived
I could not entertain the notion of raising her outside of the church. Since her birth I have only missed Mass three times, including one time after a car accident.

• • •

After our move to Colorado Springs, and then my experience of the Holy Spirit in Houston, I managed to find a job at a law firm. It was the same firm where Pat Hrbacek came to work two months later. At the office I noticed that Pat did this unheard-of thing for a young lawyer—he left at 4:45 every afternoon. That was bizarre behavior. Was he working at home?

Pat walked past my door every day to get to the elevator, and he developed this habit of sticking his head in and asking if there was anything I wanted him to pray for. A few times he even came in and prayed with me. I told Pat that I was going through a divorce. He put me in touch with Mark Elio, who was doing a family ministry. Mark invited me to my first public meeting.

So I went, and then I went the next month, and the next month and the next. I didn’t go to their picnic because I was too shy, but I went to the meeting after that. Then Pat said he and Kara were going back to Minnesota for Thanksgiving, and asked what I was doing. I said I figured I’d be on my own, and he told me he wasn’t comfortable with that. I thought, What? Whose business is it of yours? I’m fine with being alone, why aren’t you fine?

“I know some people and I’ll see if they can ask you over,” he said.

He gave me this address, 99 Raven Hills, and I showed up at Louie and Nancy Grams’s house because Pat was “not comfortable” with me sitting around watching TV on Thanksgiving! And of course Louie did what he does. He told me the story of the People of Praise and all the things the community has done, and about what it is to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, and about the Sisterhood and Grenada, and all the charismatic conferences. I’m a history person, so I loved all this. (By the way, that was a Thanksgiving that tasted right. I’m Iowa people at my roots, so there’s a certain way food should taste.)

Anyhow, I was there all day and finally it was night. Louie said, “So you’ve come to a lot of our public meetings. What do you think?”

“It’s good, it’s cool. I appreciate getting prayed with.”

“When are you going to make it official and join us, so you can come every week instead of just once a month?”

I took a deep breath and asked, “Am I invited?”

“Of course you’re invited.”
I don’t go where I’m not invited, so I started thinking about it.

Then Pat and I were laid off together from the firm, and I was getting ready to move. In the confusion the process of joining the community took a couple more months. Then in April, 2002, a group of women showed up at my apartment to clean it and pack my stuff, and the following weekend I met with my new head, Patti Deakin.

* * *

When you come underway, you learn a lot. For someone like me, not growing up in community, I had to learn all the context. There was one moment in 2006 that made things a lot clearer for me. I was planning to take my daughter to Disney World because she was 11 and old enough to handle walking through Disney, and she still loved princesses. I was at a wedding reception telling John Brophy I was looking up hotels because I was about to take my daughter to Disney. He said, “Hotels?” I said, “Yeah that’s what you do.” But in 15 minutes he had gotten on his cell phone and reported to me that I was going to stay at Pat Benito’s house (Tampa). He set it all up. So we went and spent a few days at Pat’s home on the coast, with a swimming pool, which I loved. That was the first time that I didn’t just do my own thing.

That trip started a tradition—every year I travel somewhere in the People of Praise. In 2008 my big trip was to Allendale. Gerry and Patti Deakin had moved there in February. I needed to go to Texas in March, and Allendale was just a couple of hours away, so I drove there and visited Patti. (Patti, by the way, taught me ecumenism because she lived it with me. She walked me through getting an annulment of my marriage in the Catholic Church soon after I joined the community—and she isn’t even a Catholic!) She was already in a walking group with ladies in the neighborhood, along with fellow Mission team members Laura Brummer and Jeanette Zimmel (now Duddy). The Seitzes were living there too. So I got involved in their life. I went on a shopping trip for the household and did the walk with the neighborhood women and got myself right into a fast day and meditations with them. On that trip, I started to get more of a grip on this community thing—we do real things, like fasting and meditations and living in common and living simply. I came home and incorporated some of that in my life. I started fasting on Fridays just to be in unity with them, even though we’re a thousand miles apart.

I worked with Action from about 2007 to about 2014. Now I’m working with the middle school girls here (they call themselves Sparks of the Fire.) I think I’ve made four official Action trips plus my visits to the Deakins in Allendale and my visit to Evansville.

My daughter Jayme has practically grown up in the community—she started attending public meetings when she was six. When Jayme was in the eighth grade I moved her into an online school, so I became her primary teacher. Online learning is something that works for her. Because of her autistic behaviors and stilted speech, I think school is perhaps more difficult for her in person than online. She’s going to college now, enrolled in a community college program. She’s learning and growing. Vocational certification in library technology is what she’s working toward. She loves it when she gets to do real jobs at the library, so my role is to help line up job applications and job support resources.

This young adult, who is not supposed to understand anything abstract, has an absolute belief that God is with us and it’s worth praying for people and over people. People at one of our meetings prayed with Jayme after a knee operation. One of them, Kara Hrbacek, had a sprained wrist, and Jayme turned around and prayed with Kara. That was more important to her than receiving prayer herself.

I just celebrated my tenth anniversary of being covenanted. Every year, about a month before celebration week I pull out the Spirit and Purpose and pray through it in a personal way, asking, Lord, what more is there that you want me to understand about this life I’m promised to? What new, deeper thing do you want me to know or do? I really seek the Lord’s word and exhortation about it.

This year I spent time reading through my own words—what I’d written about the covenant in years past. I’m in such a different place now. I’ve learned new ways to pray. I’ve experienced friendship with Jesus and fellowship with people. I’ve learned a lot about service, and my life is so much richer because of it. As I do each year, I rededicated myself to living out our covenant ever more deeply.

* * *

One day my daughter Jayme was looking at an icon of the Holy Family.

I asked her, “How do you feel about that?”

Her reply: “Mom, the Holy Family is for everyone, even single people.”
I first bought in to the People of Praise during the hot New Orleans summer of 1998. It began with a desire I had expressed to my parents (Phil and Liz Slattery, New Orleans) to play drums for the Sunday branch meetings. I wasn't a big fan of my high school’s marching band and I was looking for another musical outlet. A fellow community member had an old drum set in his attic, and I had the drive to fix it up and take a few lessons.

This was the time of Brownsville, of public meetings, of upbeat music and the fire of the Spirit. Among all the crazy things going on in my life as a teenager, I nearly always enjoyed my time drumming with the music ministry and I appreciated the authenticity of our worship and the ease with which emotions and intellect came together as we raised our hands in praise. And I, from my drum stool, would play for something other than the sound of my own beat.

Music ministry tied me firmly to the People of Praise, so it became one of the more difficult parts of home to leave when it came time for me to go off to college. My faith had been built on that experience of giving of myself to God through music—the loud and fast kind especially.

Starting in 2000, I carried that faith across the
country for four years to Georgetown University. I still played music—as a drummer at Sunday night Masses, plus two years as a guitarist at a weekly InterVarsity Christian Fellowship meeting—but I also experienced something new: the beauty and joys of the intellectual pursuit of theology. I discovered God in the quiet, in the struggle, in the search to discover why—why suffering, poverty, disease, despair . . . why beauty, harmony, miracles, creation . . . why Christ.

• • •

After I graduated from Georgetown, I spent two years in the Air Force in San Antonio. Then I taught high school in Dallas, worked full-time as a music minister, got married to Kristen and headed back to school for a master's degree in theology at Saint Paul School of Theology, a methodist seminary in Kansas City. In 2012 I somehow found my way back to the People of Praise. That summer, Kristen, our two children (we now have four) and I moved to South Bend, so I could begin a doctorate in theology at the University of Notre Dame. We also came underway in the South Bend branch.

I saw that many things about the community were the same, and those things, which had earlier brought so much definition to my childhood, began to bring an abundance of blessings to our young family: weekly men's and women's groups, worship music filled with joy and prayer, social gatherings for Christian fellowship, a strong experience of the Holy Spirit, and the hopeful expectation of finding God in even the most mundane facets of life.

But there was also something more, something that hadn't been there when I'd left the People of Praise 12 years earlier—our missionary work in Allendale, South Indy and Evansville. When I read in Vine & Branches about how God is calling the
community to go to the poorest part of Evansville to live among our neighbors there, it resonated with something deep within me.

...During my theological studies, I had come across a particular style of theology called “liberation theology.” It developed in the 1950s and 1960s in Latin America and spread there all over the world, including to the United States. Liberation theology offers a way to answer a question as old as the world: “Why do people suffer?” Jesus came, say the liberation theologians, not to give philosophical answers, but to stand next to the suffering and proclaim the good news, practically and spiritually.

Through my reading, I came to see how the Holy Spirit calls Christians to participate actively in the lives of those who have less, so that we can see the beauty of Christ revealed in the weakest and most vulnerable in society. By actively participating in the lives of the poor—those rejected and forgotten by society—Christians can come to know anew the truth, beauty and mercy of God. These themes also appear in the speeches and writings of Pope Francis, as when he told journalists in 2013 that he desired “a poor church for the poor.”

When I returned to the People of Praise in 2012, I saw with joy and amazement how this vision I had been studying had come to life in Allendale, South Indy and Evansville, transforming lives of high school students, neighbors and missionaries alike.

I think it is no coincidence that the Pentecostal movement has grown concurrently with liberation theology over the past 50 years. The same Holy Spirit who seeks to set the world on fire also stirs Christians to serve the poor and to be present with those who need God’s mercy and love. During my years growing up in New Orleans I had learned so much about this first desire of the Spirit for renewal. When I returned to the People of Praise in 2012, I saw how the community had changed in response to this other desire of the Spirit—to be present with the poor, a desire that had also moved and changed me during my studies. I am so thankful to be able to be part of the work of the Holy Spirit, along with my wife and my growing children, within the strong Christian family that is the People of Praise.
My husband Brad was diagnosed with ALS in September, 2010. I think most people would find it hard, to say the least, to go from being healthy and running every day to not being able to scratch an itch without help. But Brad had such a strong faith.

By the time the missionaries decided to invite a group of us to come underway in the People of Praise here in Evansville, Brad was very sick and I was maxed out. Brad was saying, yes, let’s do this, let’s join the community. I thought, I’m taking care of Brad 24/7, I can’t do everything I’ve been doing plus meetings plus community service. Then Nick Holovaty told me that the community didn’t expect me to do any more, that my community service was right there at home! I looked at Brad and said, “Let’s do it.”

Brad and I had lived our whole lives in South Bend, but we had never heard of the community until 2008, after Brad got a job here in Evansville. We knew Jim and Emilie Grondin (South Bend) because my sons had taken cello with Emilie. Their daughter Libby (now in Allendale) had lived in Evansville for several years and I remember telling her if she was ever in our area again and needed a place to stay, she could stay with us. Then one day she called and asked if three guys could stay with us for a few days. She said they were with the People of Praise. That’s when I started asking about the community. I was not ecstatic about three strange men staying with us, but Brad said, “Well, if Libby trusts them . . .”

When Nick and Rus Lyons and Ryan Hardin came, we fell in love with them, and our kids fell in love with them. We noticed the way they talked to
Linda’s husband, Brad, died of ALS in December, 2013.

I don’t think the kids would have gotten through this as well without the community. One another, the way they supported one another and built one another up. The songs they were singing were wonderful. They brought so much life into the house.

After we came underway, the community scheduled a work day to clean up the yard for me and cut back the bushes. A men’s group started meeting in the living room. We had women’s group in the sunroom, so if I heard Brad in the other room I could go to him.

Brad couldn’t leave his chair, but he began praying for the missionaries while they were on mission work. Sometimes some of the brothers and sisters would come over and Brad would read something that really struck him that day and they would say how perfectly it fit with what had happened in mission that day.

It was three years and three months from the time Brad was diagnosed till the time he died. The night he died, people in the community came over and we started singing and praying and praising God. Nick and Chris Vieck organized everything about the services, both the Friday wake and the homegoing service at our church. The sisters were in my home, cleaning, making sure food was getting set out and put away, and people were bringing things in so I didn’t even have to think about it.

Since then my women’s group has gotten me through—if there’s something wrong I can cry and it’s just fine. Sometimes I’m at women’s group and I’m feeling horrible, like a failure, and one of them will say, “But Linda, I see you doing this…” That’s so refreshing.

My situation is a little different from the other People of Praise families in Evansville (the Sullivans and the Johnsons). I don’t live close to the neighborhood the missionaries live in, so my family goes to the missionary houses for special things, plus we all meet at the Sullivans’ house every Sunday for formation meetings. The neighborhood they live in is rough, and that was a little bit of a shock to us at first. In fact, when they first moved in and they were showing us around, a police car zoomed by and stopped a few doors down, and the officers got out
and put their rifles on the roof of the car, so we had to get inside quickly. That really upset the kids. Since then, though, a lot of the gang members have left the neighborhood.

Currently I’m working four hours a day, starting at 10. Four of the seven children are at home and I’ve been homeschooling for 11 years. (When Brad and I got married it was the second marriage for both of us. I brought two girls and he brought a son that he was raising.) It’s interesting that the three families underway in the community here are all homeschooling, so we share that perspective. The kids aren’t afraid to talk to the other parents. Everybody has the utmost respect for everyone else. I don’t think the kids would have gotten through this as well without the community. My daughter Lydia just loves the missionary sisters so much. All of our kids love the Johnson kids and the Sullivan kids.

Everybody talks about the first year. We got through that, but now I’m finding that the second year might be harder, because it’s day-to-day life now. This is it. This is how it will be from now on.

That’s when I realize that Brad isn’t there. There are so many days when I think, okay, God, another day without him, how am I going to do this?

But knowing I have the People of Praise with me gets me through a lot of days. I don’t even have to see them face to face. There’s just so much hope knowing I’m a part of them. It’s hard to put into words. After Brad’s services, Nick got us all together in a circle and we talked about what had happened the previous week. He said, “I feel like I’ve lost a brother but I’ve gained a family.” That meant so much to me. I’m down here in Evansville with my children, and the rest of my family is in South Bend. They were saying I have to come home, but they didn’t understand that my family is down here. My family is the People of Praise.

Now we’ve got a community garden going. It’s actually a pretty big project. Last spring, we were discussing it and Nick asked what this means. I said it means we’ve got a future. I think it was a word from the Lord. There is a future here.
RECIPE

BUTTERNUT SQUASH SOUP

RECIPE BY JIM GRILL
PHOTO BY JENNIFER KENNING
In Minnesota, a state known for the hot dish (which is called a casserole in many places), Jim Grill's specialties of soups and wild game are fitting fare for cold winters.

“I’ve always cooked,” Jim says. “Part of the way my mom and dad raised us, the boys had to learn how to cook, too. I remember always enjoying being in the kitchen. When I was in the military I got jobs in restaurants. Maybe it’s the name ‘Grill.’”

His butternut squash soup is a favorite of family and guests. Jim recommends a green garnish such as parsley, and adjusting the ratio of cream to broth to achieve the desired color (more cream results in a paler orange). “My favorite,” says Jim, “is to brown large sea scallops in a pan and serve them over the soup!”

The soup may be refrigerated or frozen when prepared in advance and simply reheated before serving.

**BUTTERNUT SQUASH SOUP**
**SERVES 4 TO 6 PEOPLE**

**Ingredients**
- 3 butternut squashes
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 3 cups vegetable broth
- 1 ½ cups heavy whipping cream
- ½ cup (1 stick) butter
- 2 cups white wine
- Salt and pepper to taste

**Directions**
1. Heat the wine in a medium saucepan on low until reduced to ¼ cup, approximately 50 minutes.
2. Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Cut each squash in half and scoop out the seeds. Place halves cut side down on a rimmed baking pan. Place in oven and pour ¼ inch of water into the pan surrounding the squash. Bake 30 to 40 minutes or until the squash is tender when poked with a fork. Remove from pan and set aside to cool.
3. In a large saucepan, melt butter. Add the onion and cook until translucent. Add wine reduction and squash, scooping squash out of the skins.
4. Add the vegetable broth and the heavy cream and cook over medium heat until warm. Whisk occasionally until well mixed, making sure that the squash doesn’t burn.
5. Working in batches, ladle the soup into a blender to puree. Transfer pureed soup into another large saucepan over very low heat to keep warm while pureeing additional batches. Mix soup back together and season with salt and pepper to taste.

**THE PENTECOST SEMINAR**
**A Different Kind of Life**

Editor’s note: The Pentecost Seminar contains the community’s official teaching on baptism in the Holy Spirit. In this excerpt, St. Paul’s words on how to live together as brothers and sisters still ring true in our community life today.

St. Paul’s letters give us a glimpse into what God was doing in Corinth and Ephesus and Rome. The Christians lived a different kind of life. Here are some of the reminders St. Paul gave to his brothers and sisters about how they were to live.

Outdo one another in showing honor (Rom. 12:10).
Live in harmony with one another (Rom. 12:16).
Welcome one another (Rom. 15:7).
Admonish one another (Rom. 15:14).
Wait for one another (1 Cor. 11:33).
Be servants of one another (Gal. 5:13).
Bear one another’s burdens (Gal. 6:2).
Comfort one another (1 Th. 5:11).
Build one another up (1 Th. 5:11).
Be at peace with one another (1 Th. 5:13).
Do good to one another (1 Th. 5:15).
Bear with one another lovingly (Eph. 4:2).
Be kind and compassionate to one another (Eph. 4:32).
Be subject to one another (Eph. 5:21).
Forgive one another (Col. 3:13).
Confess your sins to one another (Jms. 5:16).
Pray for one another (Jms. 5:16).
Love one another from the heart (1 Pt. 1:22).
Be hospitable to one another (1 Pt. 4:9).
Stir up one another to love and good works (Heb. 10:24).
Have fellowship with one another (1 Jn. 1:7).

To read the rest of the Pentecost Seminar, visit peopleofpraise.org/file-library/110/ and log in to the file library.
**PHIL SHERIDAN**  
By Phyllis Varevice

In 1973 Phil started attending Servants of the Light prayer meetings and soon he was baptized in the Holy Spirit. Then he joined Steve and Carolyn Becker in a move to Hastings to help establish community life there. It was because of Phil’s generosity that the Beckers were able to buy the house in Hastings.

Phil prayed with many people to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, and Carolyn recalls that, as an older brother who loved the Lord, Phil was a wonderful role model for the young boys, taking time to build relationships with them. Carolyn also notes that Phil built bunk beds that possibly even an exploding bomb couldn’t destroy!

After a couple years in Hastings, Phil moved with the household back to the Twin Cities. Then he purchased a house on a block with other community members and started a single men’s household, where he shared life with many brothers. He also loved spending time alone with the Lord and made it a priority to take a silent retreat at St. John’s Benedictine Abbey every year.

During his later years Phil cared for his adult son with special needs. He enjoyed taking vacations in Mexico with his sister-in-law Leone Eichten and her husband Don, also Servant Branch members. Jackie Berg remembers Phil as “a quiet man and a faithful friend.” Ralph Laven adds that Phil stayed aware of the needs of his friends and was generous in serving them. Maintaining branch relationships was always a high priority for Phil, and his dedication to the Lord and to his brothers and sisters stood the test of time.

**facts**
- Phil was born September 5, 1927, in Faribault, Minnesota, and died February 7, 2015, in Minneapolis.
- He was a single father, devoted to his three children: Julie, Steve and Dan.
- Phil was a Navy veteran of the Korean Conflict. He later worked for Honeywell as an electrical inspector, then for the federal government until retirement.
- He made the covenant of the People of Praise January 27, 1985.

**JACKIE ISBAN**  
By Karen Heintzelman

When my sister Jackie (Colorado Springs) was young, our family moved to South Bend, where our parents later joined the community. After Jackie married Don Isban in 1967, they moved to Brownsburg, IN, with their daughter Kathy. In 1979 they moved back to South Bend to join the community, and were blessed with a son, David.

In her youth, Jackie was a very active person who loved people, Nancy Drew books and cats. She enjoyed telling her two younger sisters about books she read—we were always enthralled.

Patti Deakin (Allendale) and Jackie were special friends for 30 years. In South Bend they helped their sons, Paul and David, develop a friendship based on love and forgiveness.

Jackie never dwelled on her health limitations. She simply desired to do the Lord’s work. Sometimes she couldn’t do a lot, but she was creative, and even when she was housebound she always reached out and kept herself in the loop.

In 2000 Don and Jackie moved to the Colorado Springs branch—a big decision to leave family and go to a higher altitude, not knowing how it might affect her health. Still, they were determined to do the Lord’s work.

In 2004 Don’s employer asked him to move to Utah. It meant leaving the people they loved, but Jackie used email to keep in touch with branch life and with friends like Patti. She and Don regularly invited co-workers over to dinner, and neighbors joined them for holiday festivities. She always loved cooking for others.

Jackie went home to her Father in heaven on January 10, 2015.

**facts**
- Jackie was born in Longmont, Colorado, September 7, 1945.
- Her parents, Don and June Renaud, who died in 1998 and 1999, were longtime covenanted members of the South Bend branch. Also members of the community are her sister Karen, her nephew Eric Heintzelman and her niece Sarah Niedbalski (all South Bend).
- Jackie made the covenant of the People of Praise June 7, 1981.
By Tad Bornhoft

Colin wrote about his faith in a 2014 article: “I have seen God’s power; there is a strong intellectual component that’s appealing to me; and I’ve got a personal relationship with the Lord in which I hear His voice and we can talk to each other.” Colin began that faith journey early, despite minimal religious direction at home, and once he gave his life to the Lord and was baptized in the Spirit there was no turning back.

Just out of college, he joined Resurrection Community in Seattle, working for them full-time. In 1977, the family moved to Minnesota to join Servants of the Lord.

Colin loved people and loved being with people—to converse, play cards, celebrate. For many years the LaVergnes hosted their post-Easter Vigil party (lasting well into Easter morning). They lived simply and opened their large, unadorned house to dozens of community singles. In 1994, even while grieving the loss of Barbara to cancer, Colin heard the Lord prompting him to introduce household member Paul Hrbacek to Barb Ofstead. He did, and they later married.

While devoutly Catholic, Colin had, as Dan Gleason put it, “a joyful abandon in not letting any kind of human division keep him from being a brother and friend.” Harold Coulter, a Lutheran, appreciated Colin as a source of information about Catholic beliefs, and longtime neighbor Bill Mitchell often witnessed Colin’s door being wide open to anyone in need: “Sharing his love for Jesus was Colin’s life.”

Joe was a man with a constant smile. Louis Grams describes him as possessing “a burning, simple love for Jesus that came through in every single thing he said or did.”

His son Jerry recalls, “I had a real eye-opener when we did a project together at Northwest several years after he retired. We were going through the hangar, and people treated him like a rock star! My dad was never a foreman, but he’d trained numerous young foremen and had been something like the shop overseer. No one questioned his decisions. If he tore down the girlie posters, they stayed down. He could fix anything on an airplane except the engines.”

Joe never tired of sharing his talents with community brothers and sisters. When the branch was moving into our first River Ridge building, Joe volunteered hundreds of hours: cleaning and repairing recycled light fixtures, doing hard hauling and construction work, and sparring with the contractor to keep him on track.

Joe also shared his abilities with individuals in the branch, especially the elderly. He was so generous you couldn’t eat a restaurant meal with Joe without him picking up the tab. During his last four years, Joe never lost his kind and gentle spirit, despite kidney disease and growing dementia. The hospital staff told Jerry that Joe was perhaps the kindest man they ever met. Jerry says, “My dad’s body disintegrated, but his love and appreciation for others did not. He still knew us all to the very end, when all that was left was love. He’s now home in the arms of God.”

By Mary-Jo Koplos

Joe was born May 27, 1928, and died January 31, 2015, in Minneapolis.

He married Lorraine Lehner on June 10, 1950, and they raised five children. Their son Jerry and granddaughter Emily are members of Servant Branch.

Joe and Lorraine joined Servants of the Light (which later became Servant Branch) in the 1970s and were covenanted members of the People of Praise for many years.

Joe worked for over 40 years as a sheet metal mechanic at Northwest Airlines.

Joe was born May 27, 1949, in Seattle and died June 25, 2015.

He and Barbara Linscott were married June 12, 1976, and raised seven children. Both made the covenant of the People of Praise in 1985. Barbara died in 1994.

In 1982 Colin created Resurrection Books—a Christian bookstore—and Resurrection Communications, through which he recorded and sold cassette tapes (later CDs and videos) of talks at charismatic and religious conferences nationwide.

Colin and Tina Matthews were married July 10, 2010, bringing the number of children in their family to 13.

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Covenant
Congratulations to these brothers and sisters who recently made the covenant of the People of Praise:

Colorado Springs, September 13:
Katie Maslow.

Northern Virginia, October 11:
Marcos Brackins, Kristen Brackins.

Servant Branch, September 13:
Kristin Elliott, Eric Luckjohn, Sarah Stapp.

South Bend, October 18:
Joe Bulger, Sarah Niedbalski, Annie Putzier.

Vancouver-Portland, October 18:
Sam Mertz, Irene Robinson.

Births:
Welcome to our youngest brothers and sisters in the community:

Aiden Lattimer and Adeline Rose, born July 3 to Ricky and Allesha Thomas (South Bend).

Colleen Anne, born July 23 to Eric and Liz Bomkamp (South Bend).

Sebastian Cristobal Raymond, born July 30 to Mark and Maria DeMicoli (northern Virginia).

Rowan Adelaide, born August 8 to Brian and Mary Couch (South Bend).

Tobias Francis, born September 8 to David and Cathy Smedberg (northern Virginia).

Andrew George, born September 9 to Pete and Megan Sgroi (South Bend).

Michael William, born September 16 to Becca (northern Virginia) and Billy Brophy.

Charles Robert, born September 16 to Jamey and Sandi Ware (Rockford).

Julia Siobhan, born September 19 to Abraham and Patricia Olson (Indianapolis CIM).

Weddings:
Congratulations to Justin Lokke and Katie Raggio (both northern Virginia), who were married July 25 at Saint James Catholic Church in Falls Church, VA.

Congratulations to Paul Conlon (Muncie) and Deb Hartig, who were married September 19 at St. Mary Church in Muncie.

Best wishes to Kevin Daly (Servant Branch) and Sarah Schaefer, who were married October 17 at Saint Clement of Rome Catholic Church in Saint Louis, MO.

Anniversaries:
Russ and Ruth Sanford (South Bend), 45 years on July 5.

Kevin and Maggie Murray (Servant Branch), 35 years on July 12.

Dan and Anne Brewer (South Bend), 40 years on July 12.

Randi and Tami Raciti (South Bend), 25 years on July 21.

Tom and Cheryl Schmitt (Muncie), 50 years on July 31.

Bob and Claire Pintozzi (Servant Branch), 55 years on August 6.

Dan and Mary Kay Gleason (Servant Branch), 45 years on August 22.

Bill and Cheryl Imes (Muncie), 50 years on September 4.

Zig and Karen Mazanowski (Indianapolis), 60 years on September 23.

Graduations:
Congratulations to these brothers and sisters who recently graduated:

Abby Olson (Colorado Springs), M.A. in liberal arts, St. John's College.

Michael Madden (Appleton), M.A. in pastoral theology, St. Joseph's College, ME.

Retirements:
Best wishes to Fr. Dave Russell (northern Virginia), who retired in June from his position as pastor of St. Anthony's Catholic Church in North Beach, MD.

Best wishes to Geoff Myers (Corvallis) who recently retired after 30 years as a chef.

Best wishes to Anna Shacketton (Corvallis), who retired after 22 years of teaching at Good Samaritan School, an Episcopal preschool.

Congratulations to Jim Sgroi (South Bend), who retired at the end of June after serving the People of Praise as an accountant for 30 years. He spent 18 years as controller at the LaSalle Company and also served as controller at the People of Praise headquarters at Greenlawn.

Congratulations to Mike McFarland (South Bend).
Vine and Branches, October 2015

PHOTOS: LEFT: TOM BOWAR, ABBY OLSON, RIGHT: COURTESY OF JOSE GARCIA, JANET SPANGLER.

Bend), who retired October 1 after 32 years as a manager of instructional resources in Notre Dame’s Department of Physics.

Work and Achievements:
The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has awarded Janice Lamanna (northern Virginia) the Paul G. Keough Award for Administrative Excellence. Janice is in the Office of Program Accountability and Resource Management.

Last May, Justin Walters (Indianapolis CIM) began a new job as an application developer at Project Lead the Way.

Liz Argus Meehan (New Orleans) starred as Dolly Levi in Tulane’s Summer Lyric Theatre’s production of Hello, Dolly! in New Orleans July 30 to August 2.

Carl Stohlquist (Rockford) has started a new job as an EMT with ATS Ambulance Service, which transports wheelchair-bound individuals.

In May Abraham Olson (Indianapolis CIM) began work as a systems engineer at Beckman Coulter, a manufacturer of biomedical laboratory instruments.

Mike Oxley (Muncie) took a new position this summer in New Castle, IN, as quality manager for Crown Equipment, a forklift truck manufacturer.

Tom Seasly (South Bend) was recently presented with the Silver Beaver Award, the council-level distinguished service award of the Boy Scouts of America.

Congratulations to Joe Feeks, son of Mike and Bridget Feeks (South Bend), who attained the rank of Eagle Scout at a court of honor on August 8.

Congratulations to Tom Noe (South Bend), whose play Talk about God, Five Cents, was performed June 11 to 14 at Barn Swallow Theatre in Edwardsburg, MI. The play had premiered in Chicago, and Tom was able to get a local theater to stage it so more branch members could see it.

IBM gave Bob Brickweg (Servant Branch) the opportunity to go to Nairobi, Kenya, for 30 days this past summer to work on a project to help people with the country’s water problems. While there, his wife Christine joined him and they were given the chance to talk about the Marriage in Christ Seminar.

Congratulations to Bill Bolka (Muncie), who was promoted in August to vice-president of logistics and distribution at Ardagh Glass.

Deaths:
We’ve received word that Terry Grismer (Corvallis) died September 11, 2015. We pray for her family and friends in this time of loss. A tribute article will follow in an upcoming issue.

Executive Office Announcements:

Buffalo:
Mary Ann Dudek was released from the covenant of the People of Praise on August 13, 2015.

Corvallis:
Phil Monaco has been appointed to a second six-year term as principal branch coordinator, effective October 1, 2015.

Tom Melton has been appointed to a three-year term as area coordinator, effective October 1, 2015.

New Orleans:
Phil Slattery has been appointed to a third three-year term as area coordinator, ending on June 3, 2018.

Oahu:
Ron Gouveia has been appointed to a six-year term as principal branch coordinator, effective October 1, 2015.

Harlan Klein has been appointed to a second three-year term as area coordinator, effective October 1, 2015.

South Bend:
Pat Mooney was appointed as division coordinator for the branch’s campus division on August 6, 2015.

Joe Cramer was transferred from Servant Branch to the South Bend branch on February 22, 2015.

Mary Dohrman was transferred from the South Bend branch’s Indianapolis missionary work to the northern Virginia branch on July 27, 2015.

Kate Zenker was transferred from the campus division of the South Bend branch in South Bend to Servant Branch, effective June 20, 2015.

Lisa Ficker was transferred from the campus division of the South Bend branch in South Bend to the Vancouver-Portland branch, effective July 18, 2015.

Left: Liz Argus Meehan (New Orleans) belted out a tune as Dolly Levi in a summer production of Hello, Dolly! Right: Tom and Cheryl Schmitt (and grandsons) celebrated 50 years of marriage at a party thrown by the Muncie branch on August 29.
From her front porch on Union Street in Indianapolis, Jackie Velasquez has seen it all: boys in red bandanas fighting with boys in blue bandanas, young teenage girls pushing baby strollers, houses falling apart. She dreamed of having a million dollars so she could build a safe and lovely place for the children to play. A widow for 15 years, she resisted the pleas of family members who urged her to move to a safer neighborhood. About eight years ago, she started noticing the small groups of men and women walking down her street, knocking on doors and talking to people. They knocked on her door, too, but she was often at work and frequently missed their visits. She found out that they were missionaries, and that they lived a block south of her on Union. She remembers bringing some bread to their homes to welcome them. She noticed how they brought in crews of high school students to fix up distressed properties, to put on summer camps and block parties.

She became friends with Rachel Osterhouse, one of the single women who lived across the street, and they talked often about the Lord. Jackie asked Rachel about the People of Praise. Soon she started coming to weekly prayer meetings and delighted in the babies who crawled around on the floor. She knew the missionaries lived simply so she began offering them food or extra clothing. The missionary men helped her replace some old fence posts in her yard and they removed the raccoon that was living in her porch rafters.

Rachel’s housemate, Ellen Putzier, told her about a neighbor she knew, a mother who wanted new Easter dresses for her daughters but couldn’t afford them. Jackie gave some money and suggested where they could find a bargain on the dresses.

Rachel told Jackie how Ann, a long-time neighbor whom Jackie knew, had recently lost her sister. Jackie and Rachel walked over to Ann’s together and the two old neighbors embraced.

Last spring, Jackie told Rachel about her neighbor, whose mother had come to live with her during her time of dying. Jackie’s neighbor was working at the same time as she was taking care of her grandchildren and taking care of her mom. Jackie wanted to help out, but she was afraid of coming into such close contact with suffering. Rachel suggested that they go over together and offer to bring some meals. They went, and Jackie quickly grew more comfortable. She heard that the neighbor wanted to bring her mother outside, so she recruited the missionary brothers to help her neighbor’s family spread some gravel in the backyard, making a safe path for a wheelchair to travel from the house into a car.

“He didn’t give me my million dollars to redo the neighborhood. He sent me people.”

“Christ said we should love our neighbor,” says Jackie. “I appreciated their going with me, to break that fear I had.”

The view from her porch is different now. “You can see the Lord bringing his kingdom down to this earth: the sadness that was in the house across the street, and now the new life. I can see the Lord at work within the People of Praise: I’ve seen them come from being single to married, how the elderly people shore up the younger people and help with the young babies, how it works together. And the oppression is lifting in this area. You see people out a lot. The puzzle pieces are coming together to make the whole picture of eternity with Christ.”

She smiles. “He didn’t give me my million dollars to redo the neighborhood. He sent me people.”
We Have Run the Race(s)

Upper left: This summer Bob O’Connell (center, Servant Branch), age 71, ran a three-mile obstacle run, something he had last done 50 years ago as a Marine.

Upper middle: Colin Whelpley (Evansville) ran cross-country for Trinity School at Meadow View last fall.

Upper right, from left: Indianapolis residents Dave Porter, Ellen Putzier, Trish Olson, Jen Torma, Mary Dohrman (now northern Virginia), Terri Porter and Cathy and Justin Walters (holding son) at the 2014 Drumstick Dash races on Thanksgiving.

Center right: Pete Gaffney (South Bend) ran the Borgess Half-Marathon in Kalamazoo, MI, in May, 2015.

Bottom right: Jim Bittner (Servant Branch) participated in a Tough Mudder competition in July, 2014.

Bottom center right: Jenny Ridenour (Vancouver-Portland) held her son at the Reindeer Run half-marathon at St. Helens, OR, in December, 2014.

Bottom center left: George Kane (Evansville) on a 56-mile bike ride, part of a half-ironman race organized by the Southern Indiana Triathlon Team in August.

Bottom left: Lisa LaChance (Shreveport) in April, 2015, at her tenth half-marathon, the Big D in Dallas, TX.

Center, from left: Liz and Phil Slattery (New Orleans) and their son Stephen participated in Women’s New Life Center’s Born to Run 5K in May, 2015.
"Break forth into singing, O mountains, O forest, and every tree in it!" (Is. 44:23).