We Are One Body
46 Years of Covenant Love

Marriage in Christ
Our Movement Grows

Community Celebration
Rejoicing Everywhere!
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Mark Bendele raced down a set of stairs representing the Rocky Mountains and the Colorado Springs branch during the Shreveport and Allendale community celebration on October 8. This was part of the “Obstatrivarades” (obstacle course/trivia/charades), a relay race on an obstacle course built by Joe Bulger with features representing various branches. In this round, each team wrote the answer to a trivia question on a balloon matching the color of the team. The first team to reach the end of the course with an intact balloon and correct answer won the round.

PHOTOS: LEFT: ELIZABETH GRONDIN; RIGHT: TOM BOWAR, MARGARET ANDERSON.
It’s just about 6:00 on a Sunday evening, and Lou Giovannini, a deacon at St. Pius X Catholic Church in Granger, Indiana, is standing in a small hallway, shaking hands and giving hugs to departing churchgoers. With a stack of sign-up forms in one hand, he encourages men he knows to come on the parish’s next Marriage in Christ seminar. Already 86 couples from St. Pius have attended the seminar, including Lou and his wife Lori. “Before attending Marriage in Christ, I was used to praying for my wife,” he explains. “The seminar helped me to pray with her.”

At the back of churches like St. Pius, in homes and on the Internet, momentum for Marriage in Christ (MIC) is building. Sometime in November, couple number 1,000 will complete the five-week seminar, and 400 more couples are expected to be added to that number in the next two years, thanks to a new collaboration between MIC and the Catholic Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis. (The MIC seminar, a five-week program of video talks, discussions and prayer, was developed in Servant Branch in 2011, and the board of governors adopted it as a work of the People of Praise in 2013. The videos were produced by Greenlawn Films. It teaches couples practical skills for growing in friendship—forgiveness, prayer and conversation—all animated by the power of the Holy Spirit.)

The goal of the new collaboration is to bring Marriage in Christ to younger couples—newlyweds and those in the first five years of marriage—helping them to establish strong habits in the window of time between the wedding and the intense child-rearing years. To achieve this goal, MIC will train host couples in how to give the seminar in up to 20 parishes around the archdiocese. So far, 12 parishes have signed on. Host couple training is underway, with community couples Bob and Christine Brickweg, Pat and Patricia Ficker, Jim and Norma Cahill, Tad and Kim Bornhoft, Bill and Adella Wacker, and Ed and Phyllis Varevice serving as trainers. The first round of seminars will begin in January.

There is a financial component to the collaboration as well. Thanks to some generous donations, the cost for younger couples attending the seminar has been lowered from $85 to $25, or free, if necessary. MIC has hired a part-time staff member, Emily Hayden, a graduate of the seminar, who is helping to manage the effort and divides her time between the MIC office and the archdiocesan office.

Archbishop Bernard Hebda wrote a letter introducing the collaboration, calling Marriage in Christ “a concrete way we can accompany young married couples beyond the wedding day.” He sees MIC as a way for the archdiocese to respond to the call of Pope Francis, who has been asking the Catholic Church to put
more effort into strengthening marriages.

Bill Wacker, who directs Marriage in Christ, calls it “a gift to the church from the People of Praise,” and said he hopes the collaboration with the archdiocese will be a model that MIC can use to forge relationships with other dioceses and churches.

Progress with Marriage in Christ also continues around the community:

In New Orleans, Lloyd and Kathy Mehaffey and Tom and Diane Evans recently put on a seminar for leaders from two African American churches. Attendees included Bishop Otis Kenner, the pastor of Fresh Faith Worship Center and the author of several books, including a book on marriage. “My wife Tyra and I had been happily married for 22 years, but serving in ministry and pastoring all that time took its toll on my performance as a husband and father,” he said. “I needed to get myself back on track, and Marriage in Christ helped me to do that. We’ve requested the leaders’ training kit in order to be prepared to conduct a seminar ourselves in my church.” (See the sidebar for more of Bishop Kenner’s testimony.)

In Hawaii, Tom and Mary Duddy and Don and Alana Busekru have put on two seminars in 2017 at St. John Vianney Parish. After hearing the Busekruses speak at the end of mass, parishioners Mickey and Carol Surban took an interest in the seminar, but they were concerned about the cost of childcare for their six-year-old son. Then Don and Alana offered the services of their daughters as babysitters. “Marriage in Christ was a game-changer for us,” Mickey said, “especially the talk on forgiveness. We treat each other with more respect and thoughtfulness. We’ve established a consistent home prayer life together.” The Surbans went on to share their own testimony after mass, urging others to attend the seminar.

Stephen Laudise, a retired pastor at Hope Chapel, affiliated with the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, also
attended one of the Hawaii seminars with his wife, Dawn. “I have been through or put on many programs for marriage enrichment, and Marriage in Christ was as good or better than any other. I especially appreciated the openness to the Holy Spirit, and the questions and prayers provided were beautiful. We hope to help out with future seminars and invite some of our friends,” he said.

Marriage in Christ has taken hold in several places where the community has branches, but Bill wants it to spread everywhere. “Our biggest challenge is getting started in places where there is no branch, getting a core group of people that understand and experience life as we do,” he said. God is opening some doors. Lucy Cunningham, the Marriage in Christ program manager, points to an article about Marriage in Christ by Bob and Christine Brickweg in The Word Among Us magazine that led a couple from Australia to contact the MIC office. Now they are going through the host couple training. Julie Conroy (northern Virginia) told her brother in Vermont about MIC, and now he and his wife have been trained. This training can take place via phone or Skype, so there’s no need for couples to travel to Minnesota.

Julie and her husband John have made their own commitment to spread Marriage in Christ. They’ve hosted two seminars in their home, where, as Julie says, the atmosphere is cozier than it can be in a chilly church basement. One of the couples on their most recent seminar came to them through the Brickwegs’ magazine article.

Like so many others working to spread Marriage in Christ, the Conroys are MIC graduates. “My husband John and I thought hosting seminars was something we could work on together to help people, but we realized it was good for us too. We’ve been getting up earlier to pray together rather than leaving it to the end of the day.

“We plan on running Marriage in Christ seminars until we run out of people!”

Marriage in Christ Brings Racial Healing

BY BISHOP OTIS KENNER

For Rev. Otis Kenner, pastor of Fresh Faith Worship Center, presiding bishop of Kingdom Growth Fellowship of United Churches in New Orleans and vice-president of River Regions Theological College, Marriage in Christ has not only been helpful in his marriage but also a source of racial reconciliation as well.

I had been serving a national pro-life organization as a liaison to African Americans, often as a sidewalk counselor, trying to rescue those unjustly sentenced to death. My duties also involved traveling around the country speaking at national conferences, seeking to wake up African-American pastors to the disproportionate numbers of black children being killed. After some time in that position events convinced me that I was the group’s token black person—admittedly anointed by the Holy Spirit, but useful only because of my race. It came to a climax when I experienced what I took to be a moment of socially acceptable racism at a conference in Kansas.

I couldn’t take it anymore, and feeling betrayed by white people in general I left the group in anger and disgust. I’d had enough of white people. I remembered the time years before when a burning cross had been placed in the lawn of my family’s home. I had two uncles who were murdered by the KKK. The house in which my wife and I lived had been vandalized three times and the police did not act against the known culprits. I had endured 40 years of racism in the world, but this incident of racism was in the church, for goodness sake!

I only bothered to get to know Lloyd Mehaffey (New Orleans) because mutual friends, fellow pastors, introduced us. Lloyd invited me and my wife Tyra to a MIC seminar, where we met his wife Kathy and Tom and Diane Evans. The kindness and dignity with which they treated us totally eradicated the pain I had been experiencing. Their words and actions demonstrated that they understood how awful some of our experiences had been. We shared bread and passed the cup. Relating to the four of them has been a healing experience. We’re looking forward to working with them on bringing the Marriage in Christ program to many in the African-American community.
Our Covenant Commitment

By Paul DeCelles

October 15 marked the 46th anniversary of the founding of the People of Praise, when 29 men and women first made the covenant. Below is an explication of the covenant, which Paul gave at the 1976 covenant-making community meeting in South Bend. At the end of the talk, Paul read the covenant aloud. You may notice that it differs slightly from the version we use today. In January, 1986, the board of governors approved two revisions to the covenant. The first is that the word “basic” was omitted to avoid confusion with other unrelated groups known as “basic communities.” The second is that the word “Church” was made lowercase, to better reflect the diversity of our various denominations. We hope that reading and discussing this will deepen your appreciation of what the Lord has called us to.

Praise the Lord Jesus Christ!

Now and forever!

Amen. Hallelujah.

This is our basic commitment with one another:

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has called us to be a people, a body, a community, brothers and sisters in him. He has called us together and united us so that we might serve him and glorify him as a body, and so that we might love one another as brothers and sisters, and encourage one another to love and serve the Lord above all. He has entrusted us as a body with a mission, and he will lead us by his Spirit to know that mission and to be faithful to it.

Our relationship as a body rests, first of all, upon what the Lord Jesus has done to make us one. He has reconciled us through the blood of his cross with God, and in making us one with his Father he has brought us into a relationship with one another, making us brothers and sisters in one body. We are one body because Christ has made us one, and because we accept that oneness from him as his gift in receiving our redemption.

Our relationship as a body also rests upon our covenant together. We are solemnly committing ourselves to the Lord and to one another to be a body, to love and serve the Lord together. We have committed ourselves to the mission the Lord entrusts to us, to all those things which make our life together possible, and to one another as our brothers and sisters.

Our commitment is no longer a matter of our own individual decision, but we have bound ourselves by a covenant commitment to the Lord and to one another, out of love for the Lord and one another. We wish to fulfill that commitment with the same steadfast love and faithfulness that the Lord shows in his commitment to us. We are committing ourselves to the Lord as his people and to one another as brothers and sisters.

Our commitment is a full commitment, a commitment that involves our whole lives. We are not simply committing ourselves to certain activities or obligations, but we are committing ourselves to a relationship which reaches to everything in our lives. We may not do everything together or live together in one place, but we do put our whole lives in common and make them available for the mission the Lord has called the body to, and to the service of our brothers and sisters.

Our commitment is, first of all, to love and serve God himself. We wish to love him fervently and serve him with full dedication. We wish to obey him unrestrainedly and to do all that we do with full faith in him. We desire to give our whole lives to him to follow his Son, Jesus, and to live more fully in the Holy Spirit. We come together to pledge our lives to him. We agree to seek the Lord with our whole heart, with all our heart and soul, and to be his people.

We commit ourselves as well to one another. As we pledge ourselves to love and serve the Lord and to be his people, we receive one another as brothers and sisters, members of the same body. We gladly commit ourselves to love one another in purity of heart fervently. We commit ourselves to be one another’s servants and to lay down our lives for one another. We recognize that, because we are part of the same body and have put our lives in common, we are no longer masters and owners of our own lives, but our lives belong to one another. We are ready to meet one another’s needs by our personal help and resources. We will look upon one another’s welfare as our own.

We commit ourselves further to be a people that the Lord can use as a body. We therefore commit ourselves to be one: one in heart and mind and soul. We will put that oneness above our personal concerns, and we will pursue peace within the body, guarding our unity against every threat. We commit ourselves to support those things that make life in one body possible. We will be present at the gatherings of the community. We will respect and support the pattern and order of our life together. We will support the life together and the mission of the community with our personal lives and resources, and be ready to sacrifice to the degree that is necessary for the community to fulfill the call of the Lord.

Finally, we commit ourselves to live our lives in true righteousness and holiness. All of our lives must be worthy of the calling to which we have been called. None of our lives is lived by ourselves alone, but all of our lives belong to the Lord and to our brothers and sisters. Therefore, our faithfulness to our commitment to live personal lives of righteousness and holiness is a concern of the whole body, and we are willing to give an account of the way we live our lives to our brothers and sisters. We wish to walk as children of the light.

We recognize that, when our lives are in community with those of our brothers and sisters, our lives are under the order of the community as a whole. In everything we do, we are members of a body, and not
just isolated individuals. Therefore, decisions about our lives are decisions which are the concern of the whole body, and we are ready to make them according to the order of the community with the good of the whole body and of our brothers and sisters in mind. At the same time, we can expect the support of our brothers and sisters in everything that we do, and not just in those things that we do together as a community. We are committed to support one another in all the commitments we have made in good order, including those commitments such as family and occupational commitments that may involve people outside of our community. We have put the entirety of our lives in common. Therefore, we can have the support of the body in everything we do, and we serve as members of the body wherever we are.

We recognize also that the commitment we have to one another comes primarily because we are Christians. Our commitment is to love one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, the way any group of Christians would. Yet, at the same time, we do belong to this particular body of Christians, the People of Praise, a body which has a particular call and a mission from the Lord. Our commitment will lead us in different ways from other Christians because it is a commitment to this particular body, and not all Christians belong to it. We do wish to serve the Lord in this body, to love these our brothers and sisters and follow the Lord in whatever call and mission he has for his body. Our desire is to relate to all Christians as our brothers and sisters in the Lord because they are our brothers and sisters in the Lord, yet we recognize that we cannot relate to them that way until they are ready to enter into such a relationship with us and be faithful to it. We therefore pledge ourselves to work for a full unity among Christians, and we commit ourselves to relate in as brotherly a way as possible to all who believe in the Lord.

Our desire is to relate to all mankind as brothers and sisters in the Lord because God loves them all and wants to unite them all to himself in his Son. We therefore pledge ourselves to share the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ with all those we can, and we commit ourselves to relate in as loving a way as possible to everyone until God is all in all.

Therefore, we covenant ourselves to live our lives together in Christ, our Lord, by the power of his spirit. We agree to be a basic Christian community, to find within our fellowship the essential core of our life in the spirit, in worship and the sacraments, spiritual and moral guidance, service and apostolic activity. We accept the order of this community, which the Lord is establishing with all the ministry gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially with the foundational ministry gifts of apostles, pastors, prophets, teachers and evangelists. We agree to obey the direction of the Holy Spirit manifested in and through these ministries in full harmony with the Church. We recognize in the covenant a unique relationship one to another and between the individual and the community. We accept the responsibility for mutual care, concern, and ministry among ourselves. We will serve one another and the community as a whole in all needs: spiritual, material, financial. We agree that the weekly meeting of the community is primary among our commitments, and that we will not be absent except for a serious reason.
Page 8, clockwise, from top left: Members of the Corvallis branch celebrated with a wine tasting at a nearby winery. Children in South Bend enjoyed a balloon lady’s handiwork at their indoor field day. Andy Bowar made the covenant in Servant Branch. The Oahu branch’s celebration included a hike for young families. Servant Branch had a festival featuring a pig roast, games, live music, dancing and more.

Page 9, clockwise, from top left: Mary Limberg (left) and Kathy Coleman enjoyed serving at Servant Branch’s pig roast. Bea Lumma made the covenant in South Bend. David Zimmel dashed through a traffic tunnel in Chicago between South Bend and Appleton during the Shreveport and Allendale joint celebration. Don and Debbie Runyon, Kathryn Elliott and Joe and Mary Ridenour made the covenant in northern Virginia. Elyse stopped to help Jonathan at South Bend’s indoor field day celebration. John and Maureen Jerackas and Corina Friedrich (all in the front row) posed with Buffalo branch leaders after making the covenant.
PHOTOS: LEFT CONNIE HACKENBRUCK, JON BALSBAUGH, TOM BOWAR, A PASSERBY, ANDY BOWAR; RIGHT: MARGARET BERNS, MARGARET ANDERSON, COLLEEN BOWAR, JULIE CONROY, JON BALSBAUGH, ARLENE MEYERHOFFER.
KELLY HOWARD
By Elena Flynn and Anne Brewer
Kelly had a very strong personality yet was very gracious and welcoming. She was a lady, beautiful and elegant, reflecting the joy and love of the Lord in her eyes.

Many visitors stayed with Steve and Kelly while discerning whether to join the community, and the Howards were consummate hosts. They were also very generous. One couple shared that the Howards, without wanting anyone to know, paid for their daughter’s braces. At Kelly’s wake, one branch member described the financial help that he and his wife had received from the Howards, and how that had a profound impact on their lives.

Kelly loved Steve’s gourmet cooking. They traveled to exotic places and brought back works of art to display in their home.

Kelly worked at many service-oriented jobs in her career: with the IRS, Veterans Affairs and REAL Services, which assists elderly, disabled and low-income individuals. Her self-reliance, loyalty and determination served her clients well.

After Steve died it was harder for Kelly to deal with her lifelong diabetes and she moved to a retirement community. Always positive and rarely complaining, she endured much discomfort with patience and grace. Her great sense of humor remained intact even when she didn’t feel well.

The Lord allowed two long-time friends and branch sisters to be with Kelly in her final moments. They were able to pray with her and read Scripture and comfort her. It was a blessed time of sharing with a good woman and a faithful sister.

facts
- Carolyn “Kelly” Marie Senske was born in Ardmore, Ohio, on August 8, 1936.
- Both Kelly and Steve Howard were single and almost 40 when they met at John the Baptist Charismatic Renewal Community meetings in San Francisco. They joined the community together, and were married on Valentine’s Day, 1976.

JUDY HEPP
By Mary Jo Koplos
Judy had a sense of adventure. A few years after high school, she and a friend moved to Hawaii, where she lived and worked for many years until the tug of family brought her back to Minnesota.

That Judy was a member of Servant Branch is fitting, because she was always ready to serve. She helped countless people pack and move, lent her painting and wallpapering prowess to beautify homes, and was among the first to volunteer whenever a need was articulated. She was also a prayer warrior and a faithful participant in the branch intercessor group.

Diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in October, 2015, Judy’s last 15 months were a witness to all. She tackled her situation head on and refused to let it slow her down. Each day, no matter how she felt, she got up and dressed, still ready to serve. She trusted God for a miraculous healing, becoming a bright presence in the chemotherapy unit, always cheerful and funny.

Judy was close to the Lord and heard him clearly. A rosary was always close at hand and, once she stopped working, she delighted in attending daily mass.

At Judy’s funeral, Bernie Schwab praised God for all she was and meant to us, ending with, “We are grateful to God for the gift that she has been to us. Well done—our sister and our dear friend.”

facts
- Judy Marie Hepp was born August 25, 1946, in Jackson, Minnesota, and died March 10, 2017, in Minneapolis.
- She made the covenant of the People of Praise March 31, 1991.
- Other community members in her family include sister-in-law Jane Hepp (Servant Branch) and niece Jennifer (Hepp) Busk (South Bend). Her brother Jim, also a covenanted member of Servant Branch, died in January of 2012.
- She spent most of her career in the banking industry, reviewing commercial loan applications for completeness, and was much sought-after for her expertise and attention to detail. She also spent several years working for the national office of Christians in Commerce.
Weddings and Anniversaries:
Best wishes to Elizabeth Doffing (Colorado Springs) and Kyle Grey, who were married September 23 in Rosemount, MN.

Congratulations to Howard and Lillian Wiebeld (Tampa), who celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary on October 10.

Best wishes to Theresa Bulger (Servant Branch) and Eric Arlien, who were married October 20 at Maternity of Mary Catholic Church in St. Paul.

Covenant:
Congratulations to these brothers and sisters, who recently made the covenant of the People of Praise:
Buffalo, October 15:
Corina Friedrich, John Jerackas, Jr., Maureen Jerackas

Corvallis, October 15:
Audrey Rebar

Northern Virginia, October 15:
Kathryn Elliott, Joe Ridenour, Mary Ridenour, Debbie Runyon, Don Runyon

Rockford, October 15:
Jamey Ware, Sandi Ware

Servant Branch, September 16:
Andy Bowar

South Bend, October 8:
Bea Lumma

Vancouver-Portland, October 15:
Patrick Gaffney

Work and Achievements:
The last weekend in September, 600 people attended a national conference jointly sponsored by the two largest charismatic groups in Jamaica and the People of Praise. Members of the Kingston branch worked on registration, food service, music, ushering, logistics, prayer support and workshop presentation. Locksley Robinson helped compose the theme song for the gathering.

US Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos has named Trinity School at Meadow View a National Blue Ribbon School for 2017. It’s the second time that the Meadow View campus has received this prestigious award that recognizes academic excellence.


Mike Hass (Servant Branch) retired this June after spending most of the last 48 years as a draftsman.

Matt Rubio (Indianapolis) started a new position as an associate research electronics engineer at the Air Force Research Lab Sensors Directorate near Dayton, OH.

David Gruber (Servant Branch) took a position as an inventory control coordinator at a medical equipment company, Owens & Minor, last June.

In July Tony Kuplic (Servant Branch) started working as a process development engineer at Boston Scientific, a manufacturer of medical devices in Maple Grove, MN.

Chuck Wood (Vancouver-Portland) has a small role (videotaped, not live) as a Protestant minister in a new play, *Tolton: From Slave to Priest*, by Leonardo Defilippis.

Fr. Augustus Tolton (1854-1897) was the first African-American Catholic priest ordained in the US. The play began a national tour in October, and the schedule of performances is at StLukeProductions.com.

Bruce Berning (Corvallis) retired on September 1 after almost 40 years with the US Postal Service.

Tim Wagner (Corvallis) retired at the end of March after more than 37 years at Hewlett-Packard.

Congratulations to Tom Noe (South Bend), whose play *House of Pardon* received staged readings by Acting Ensemble in South Bend on September 22 and 23. The play is about a young man whose Catholic Worker ministry falls apart after a donor gives him a million dollars.

Death:
We’ve received word that a sister in the community has died. We pray for her family and friends in this time of loss:
Rita Biondo (Buffalo) died October 2, 2017.

Executive Office Announcements:
John and Jo Zimmel have been transferred from Servant Branch to Christians in Mission in Allendale, effective October 1, 2017.

Oahu:
Tom Duddy was appointed to a three-year term as area coordinator, beginning October 1, 2017.

Muncie:
Jim Schenkel has been appointed to a third six-year term of office as principal branch coordinator, effective October 1, 2017.

Vineanbrances.org
“You will delight yourself in the Almighty, and lift up your face to God” (Job 22:26).