Building the Kingdom
Piece by Piece

Recipe
Green Chile Stew

Servant Branch
Living with Brain Tumors

Shreveport
Retirement Destination
LATE WINTER 2019

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FRONT COVER
On January 16, Jon Balsbaugh (South Bend) captured a different view of a classic Trinity School event at the Greenlawn campus: the annual Project Fair, where students present their projects to the whole community of learners for evaluation. For the senior project, students carefully build bridges, with the aim of making the strongest structure they can. During the presentation, they test them to see how much weight each bridge will hold until it breaks.

BACK COVER
A shed in the downtown Lockerbie neighborhood of Indianapolis. Photo by Maria Porter.

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Four-year-old Lucia and five-year-old Reuben, who live in Washington, D.C., and whose families are in the northern Virginia branch, celebrate the unusual 10-inch snowfall—twice the predicted amount—on January 13. Photo by Mary Durand.
A semi-truck hit me. God saved my life.

BY TERRY SCHMITT

On the night of January 22, 1998, at about 11:30 p.m., I was driving a snow plow on an icy snow-covered highway in Minnesota. I was traveling at about 20 miles per hour and in the process of changing lanes. The last thing I remember is checking my mirrors and seeing no vehicles in the other lane.

I later learned that a semi-truck loaded with cars was attempting to pass me at about 55 miles per hour. Faced with the decision between hitting me and swerving into oncoming traffic, his cab hit my cab on the driver’s side.

My plow partner was on the scene within a couple of minutes. He said I was talking and trying to take off my seatbelt, but my head and eyes were so swollen with injuries that he didn’t recognize me.

I was taken by ambulance to the nearest hospital, where I was diagnosed with multiple head injuries. From there I was loaded into a helicopter and transferred to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. A prayer hotline message about my accident went out to my brothers and sisters in Christ in Servant Branch.

In Rochester I was diagnosed with a closed head injury, with a brain hemorrhage and small facial fractures. I also had pieces of glass removed from my eyes. I was in a semicoma for two days. It was as if the Lord put my mind to sleep and saved me from the trauma of the accident. Even so, I was able to respond to the medical teams so that they were able to diagnose me.

I remember waking up, looking around and seeing all this strange equipment, then I noticed that it was all attached to me! I raised one leg, then the other. My legs were both there and seemed to be okay. I then slowly checked my arms. I thanked God that whatever happened had not taken any of my limbs. Soon a nurse came in the room and told me I had been in an accident, but she didn’t know any of the details. She suggested I use the phone next to my bed. I called the first number that came to mind, my brother in Christ Earl Stodden. When he answered, I greeted him with “How are you doing, Earl?” He was shocked to hear my voice. He told me he had just visited me the night before while I was still in a semicoma, and that I had been thrashing in bed. He had prayed over me, and so had several other brothers and sisters from the east area.

From the time I woke up, I did not experience any pain from the accident. My condition improved so rapidly that within a week I was medically stable and was discharged from the hospital. When I left the hospital, I still had swelling in my head and eyes, but within two weeks my appearance was back to normal.

At my first follow-up appointment, two weeks after the accident, they found that my eyes and ears were in good condition and had sustained no damage. The doctor who examined my eyes that day was the same doctor who had removed glass from my eyes when I first came in. He told me that he had no explanation for it, but that my vision was 20/20. A CT scan showed that the right side of my brain was swollen and that there was a blood clot from the hemorrhage. I was told that I would need to be patient because brain injuries take a long time to heal and that I would be on an antiseizure medication for six months as a precaution.

On March 6, six weeks after the accident, I had another CT scan. All brain swelling was gone, the blood clot and fractures were gone, and the doctors said my brain looked like it had not been in an accident. They told me I could go back to work. Within two weeks, I was off all medications.

Since I experienced this healing, my faith has come alive. Whenever I see people, I’m not afraid to ask them if they’d like to be prayed over. I’ve also been called on to speak publicly about the healing, including to several large Minnesota Department of Transportation gatherings. I’m not a speaker, but God has given me an inner strength to overcome that fear of talking in public and share about what he has done in my life.
Retirees Move to Louisiana to Serve at Praise Academy

BY DAVE HRBACEK

Miss Joan, my daddy’s in jail. They came and picked him up this morning.”

A child delivered this news to his principal, Joan Pingel, at a small school in Shreveport, Louisiana, before the beginning of the school day.

Her job for that day became figuring out how to help the student and his three other siblings at the school navigate their trauma, while trying to focus on the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic.

That particular event happened about two years ago, but that kind of occurrence is common in the Lakeside neighborhood of this low-income city, population 194,000. Lakeside lies within the poorest ZIP Code in the state, where torrential downpours throughout the year pound homes to the point of collapse, yet many people, including the school’s families, don’t have running water.

Such squalor is why Joan, 52, lives in Shreveport, not just to run the school, Praise Academy at Lakeside, but to live two houses down from it. Joan, a lifelong educator, moved in 2004 from South Bend, Indiana, to serve the poor in the Lakeside neighborhood and then took the principal job when the Christian school opened in 2015.

The owners of the house where she lives are John and Jo Zimmel from St. Paul, who decided to use their retirement years to, as they put it, “serve the Lord.” They moved to Shreveport a year ago, and they have committed their lives to volunteering at the school and in the surrounding neighborhood, which is plagued by violent crime, prostitution and drugs. Jo, 64, is a retired physical education teacher, John, also 64, is a retired chemist. They wear many hats in the course of a school day, which begins with breakfast at 8 a.m. and ends at 3:15 p.m.

Family reunion

The Zimmels’ arrival in Shreveport last October was a reunion of sorts. They joined two of their four adult children, David Zimmel and Jeanette Duddy, who already were living there and serving the neighborhood as part of the People of Praise, to which all four belong.

All of the Zimmels knew what they were getting into when they chose to live in Shreveport. They accepted the poverty and hardships of inner-city life, wanting simply to make a difference. They feel they can best do that by living and serving in the midst of people they know are in need of God’s love—and their help.

“To me, that’s connected with what Pope Francis is saying,” said David, 35, a leader of a division of the People of Praise called Christians in Mission, which serves in Shreveport and several other low-income neighborhoods in the United States. “The poor are a holy people. We talk in America so much about fixing the poor and fighting poverty. [But] there is a thing that’s called ‘holy poverty.’ And, while we need to really help people who are destitute and do good acts of mercy, our goal is not riches. Our goal is being with Christ. The people that I’ve met in this neighborhood have something that I would never want them to lose—a real genuine faith, the Spirit of God.”

What their neighbors wanted

That’s what he discovered when he went door-to-door several years ago to ask
the people what kind of help they wanted from the missionaries. It was already obvious they needed economic assistance. Dilapidated houses dotting the neighborhood—some on the verge of collapse, with gaping holes in their roofs and crooked foundations—were clear signs of the perpetual poverty plaguing the people in this mostly African-American district of Shreveport.

When the People of Praise started offering a four-week summer children’s Bible camp in 2003, neighborhood parents and guardians responded enthusiastically. More and more children came each year, and now the camp draws as many as 150 participants each summer.

Seeing this, the missionaries decided to focus their outreach efforts on children. But, instead of relying on their own ideas, they queried people in the neighborhood. David was part of a team that hit the streets to visit residents.

“We went out and talked to every single person within two blocks of our homes with an open-ended question: What does God want us to do?,” he said. “As I talked to more and more people, I was surprised that it wasn’t just one person with one idea. It was the whole neighborhood with one idea. It’s like everybody had the same idea, which was a neighborhood school—in the neighborhood, for the neighborhood—where kids would learn how to pray, they’d learn how to read. Every child would be taken care of, it would be a safe place.”

In the middle of a block with seven People of Praise houses, they turned the largest home into a school. It opened with eight children. There are now 25, all African-American. The adjacent home has been turned into a second school building.

Tuition is $7,000 a year per student, with families paying what they can afford under the school’s “fair share” tuition policy. Some pay as little as $5 a month, some pay nothing. None pays anything close to full tuition. It costs $325,000 per year to run the school, which includes modest salaries for the staff. All of the funds come from private donations. Overall neighborhood outreach is supported by the People of Praise Mission Fund.

Educating children who are economically, socially and educationally disadvantaged is hard work, sometimes exhausting, staff members say. During nearly every classroom session, someone is misbehaving. Arguments and fights are common. Near the end of a school day in September, Jo proudly proclaimed that she did not have to break up a single fight in her three physical education classes.

**Enjoying modest gains**

Small victories like this are celebrated. Any progress, no matter how small, fuels the drive she and her husband have to work with these children.

“When they have a success, you’re super-excited,” John said. It can be as simple as the time he was working with a student who finally learned that six plus three equals nine. Instead of counting it on her fingers, the student calculated it in her head. When she blurted out the answer twice in a row, her joy became his.

It spreads to the parents, too, who notice what the school does for their children. Shameka Blair is a 27-year-old single mother of nine who lives in a small home a few blocks from the school. Four of her children, ages 4 to 9, attend Praise Academy, and David often drives them home when classes are done for the day.

Top: Three of the older students enjoy their daily reading time. Middle: A common sight in the neighborhood. Bottom: Jo Zimmel rejoices with a kindergartner over a successful beanbag throw. Photos by Dave Hrbacek for The Catholic Spirit.
“I like this school,” Blair said. Her children “are doing great since they’ve been there. When they first went there, they didn’t know how to spell their names. Now, they know how to spell their names.”

At first, Blair didn’t trust the white people who moved into her neighborhood, David explained. All of the People of Praise members who live there now are white, and he said there is a general distrust of white people in Lakeside among the neighborhood’s African-American majority. But she warmed up to the missionaries over time. After many interactions, she now says, with palpable warmth in her voice, that she “loves them people.”

And they love her. Joan has become a go-to for Blair whenever a need arises, even driving Blair to the hospital to deliver three of her babies, including Zechariah, who was born Labor Day weekend.

“They have helped me out a lot,” said Blair, who first met them at neighborhood barbecues hosted by the People of Praise. “Especially Mr. David and Miss Joan. Out of everybody, I know them the best. They’ve been good to me and my family. . . . They do a good job, and they come down and they show love.”

**Spreading love and help 24/7**

For Joan and others at the school, which has six full-time teachers plus regular volunteers like the Zimmels, their work in the school and community is not so much a job as it is a lifestyle. It’s a calling that is lived out from dawn to dusk, no matter the need.

That’s evident when the weather gets cold during the winter months and the above-ground pipes of many houses freeze. Joan has learned to call around when this happens to ask if people have running water. If they say no and need to do laundry, her reply is always the same: “Come on over.”

There are other times when families have run out of food, and Joan and others have gone to the store and brought several bags filled with groceries back to their houses. One time, she went into the house with one of the children because there were other adults, not family members, in the house, and she feared they might hijack the food. After walking into the living room, she sat down on the floor with the children while they ate.

This act, meant to provide security for the children, symbolizes something deeper. As much as the People of Praise members want to help neighborhood residents, they also want to get to know them. It means spending time under each others’ roofs. That is why Joan and the Zimmels often invite families over for dinner.

Overall, they want to live a common life and bring the people of Lakeside into it. David feels the addition of his parents has helped this process along.

**“Like family”**

“We treat each other like family here,” he said. “It’s like one big community that’s all one big family. And the fact that some of us are actually family has made it a lot easier to explain what it is we’re doing.”

One current Praise Academy parent was a teenager when the People of Praise arrived in Lakeside. Laconda Woodson, 28, had just lost her best friend to cancer when the first People of Praise families moved in just a few doors down from her family’s home. She opened up and shared her grief with her new neighbors, and a bond was formed. She now is married with three children, all of whom attend Praise Academy.

Woodson made a big sacrifice to live near the school, as she works two hours away. She drops off her kids at a friend’s house at 4 a.m. before leaving for work so that she can get there at 6 a.m. She has no complaints about spending four hours on the road every day.

“It’s a school, but it’s more like home to my kids because we kind of grew up around here,” she said. “Just seeing the smile on my kids’ faces when they get home . . . makes me happy. I want the best for my children, and I feel that they have the best [at Praise Academy]. I don’t want to take them out of [the school].”

One of the school’s foundational principles is one-on-one time with students. It starts with a half-hour of reading with the children, symbolizes something deeper. As much as the People of Praise members want to help neighborhood residents, they also want to get to know them. It means spending time under each others’ roofs. That is why Joan and the Zimmels often invite families over for dinner.

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Students receive more individual attention throughout the day, especially when there are disciplinary issues. Teachers or volunteers will pull a struggling student aside to talk through problems and conflicts. Often, the discussion centers on teaching students nonviolent
ways to resolve conflicts with other students. It’s challenging because this method is not taught or modeled in most of the homes, Joan said. She said she has had to tell some parents that “we don’t fight; we’re not a fighting school. . . . That’s not what we do.”

The students’ academic success is coming in small increments, enough for staffers to get excited about the future of the school’s graduates. In a neighborhood where some children never get beyond the third-grade level and end up incarcerated, Praise Academy students can dream of graduating from high school and even going to college.

The school’s lone eighth-grader has declared she wants to go to medical school and become a surgeon. A Praise Academy board member—who spent several decades as an instructor in a college nursing program—has made time to talk with her about the medical field. At the moment, there is discussion about trying to raise money so the girl can attend a private high school. Potential donors have shown interest, and Joan is optimistic about getting tuition help for the student.

Here to stay
Regardless of the outcome for this student and the other 24, the People of Praise members in Lakeside are there for the long haul. John and Jo have no other retirement plans; they merely say they will reevaluate in a few years. Even if they ever felt like leaving, they might have a hard time convincing Joan to let them go. She wanted them to come even before they had made the decision.

“When they had decided that when they retired they wanted to look into whether they’d like to move into the missionary field, I started praying that they would come to Lakeside,” she said. “And when they said they had discerned that this was where they were going to go, and they were invited to come, I said, ‘Wow.’ This huge relief came over me . . . because I know they have a lot of gifts that they could offer.”

The list of the ways they serve continues to get longer. John has become a handyman and also has developed teaching skills, as he dutifully helps Jo in her physical education classes and spends a half-hour every school morning reading with students.

It’s all part of doing whatever they can to advance the kingdom of God in a poverty-stricken area that can seem forgotten by not only the State of Louisiana but even the rest of Shreveport itself. David Zimmel explained how, decades ago, a freeway was built in Shreveport that essentially cut off this part of the city. At one time, the area was home to a robust Jewish community. One of the few signs of that past life is a Jewish cemetery across the street from Praise Academy.

Poor residents here continually ask the city and state for help, but it’s slow in coming, David said. Some local churches, including a Catholic parish, have offered assistance, while others are reluctant to come into the neighborhood.

“I really believe these are God’s people,” Jo said. “My job isn’t much different than Jesus’, which is to keep on loving them. When I get up in the morning, I pray for the love of the Lord to keep on keeping on. It’s not my strength, it’s not my feeling, it’s my love for the Lord, that he’s called me to serve these people at this time. And I’ll give it my best shot, with his grace.”

This legacy is stretching into the third generation for the Zimmel family, as their daughter Jeanette, 33, and her husband, Thomas Duddy, are raising their two children in the Lakeside neighborhood. Like all of the other People of Praise adults—and even some children—the Duddys put in regular volunteer hours at the school, cleaning and helping wherever needed.

“It’s a real privilege to get to live with the poor,” Jeanette said. “Jesus said, ‘Blessed are the poor.’ So I feel really blessed to get to live here and be part of our work, living next door to people who really need a lot of help, need the Lord.”

Already, Jeanette has seen racial barriers start to fall, with some of the neighborhood children keeping pictures of her daughter, prompting their friends to ask: “Do you have a white sister?”

“I think we’re forming those kinds of relationships with our neighbors,” she said. “But it’s taken a while, and the opposition is real. There’s been really horrible things that have happened in our [American] history, which makes it hard to earn trust and to be friends together. But, when you live with people, that makes a big difference. If we didn’t live here, it would be totally different.”
It’s a drizzly day in mid-October when I ring Geriann Raway’s doorbell for a chat. She greets me with a smile and a hug. Inside, she’s making a microwavable muffin for me in a coffee cup. Geriann has always fed her guests. She asks me cheerily to take a look and see whether it’s done. She can’t see well enough herself to tell.

Pouring some tea, she overflows her cup with hot water, yelping a bit when it hits her hand. I ask if she wants my help. “Oh, no, I overfill my cup about three times a day.” These more severe consequences of her vision loss began recently, but in her manner and bearing she’s just the same Geriann I’ve known for some time. If anything, she’s noticeably happier.

With her fifth brain surgery since 2002 (not including two gamma knife radiation treatments) pending in November, Geriann had used her new white cane to walk up to the microphone at a Servant Branch meeting a few weeks earlier. Her face lit with enthusiasm, she drew an analogy between her life and a book with many chapters. “There’s not blindness for me in the final chapter. There aren’t brain tumors in my final chapter. There’s no suffering; there’s no worry; there’s no anxiety. All that fills me now that is horrifying is not there. The final chapter is total glory. It is more than my mind can fathom.

“But now we have to go back to what I call the filler chapters. Those are what lie ahead of me.”

And in these middle chapters, one of the key plot lines involves a tumor called a meningioma, located in the lining between the brain and the skull, or the meninges. The tumor tissue doesn’t grow very fast but it does grow, and it can spread in a process called tumor seeding, spawning multiple tumors in various locations in the brain. Left unchecked, these growing tumors push on parts of the brain, which can result in a variety of symptoms. Geriann’s largest tumor causes vision disturbances by pushing on the part of the brain that processes visual information, and it’s been as large as an egg when removed during surgery. Her other tumors aren’t operable because they’re close to vital brain structures, but don’t currently cause symptoms.

After a previous surgery in February, 2017, Geriann had experienced some improvement in her vision, but around Labor Day in 2018 her vision suddenly worsened. The tumors were growing again.

“The doctors say there’s no cure for this . . . no hope. They want to keep me from becoming totally blind—that’s the number one priority—but the tumors won’t stop growing. They will affect major organs. There’s a huge risk of stroke and seizure. So, medically, they don’t have any answers.”

As Geriann sips her tea, she tells me the story of her recent conversations with the Lord about her situation.

“When I found out that the tumors were growing this last time, I felt like I had an agony in the garden, a time of seeing myself in the night, in the dark, at this rock, praying, ‘Father, you love me. How could...
When Jesus was in the garden, he sweated blood. I don't feel like I've ever sweated blood. Here I am, I just have a little medical crisis. It is not like people hate me or people are out to kill me. Everybody I know is out to help me. But Jesus knew he was facing death. How could his Father, who loves him, allow that? I was just trying to wrap my mind around that.

"I trust God more than I ever have. This is not the first time I've faced the possibility of blindness. It's not the first time I've faced the possibility of death. And to look back and see God's faithfulness, I'm embarrassed to say that I don't trust him fully. I can look back and say, 'Why am I not just fully, fully trusting in him?,' because I have a history of him being faithful to me."

The brain tumor part of Geriann's story began in 2002, when the Raways lived in Prescott, Wisconsin, in the branch's east area, with five kids at home between the ages of five and twelve. Geriann had struggled through months of debilitating headaches and had received several unsatisfactory diagnoses. Then her primary care doctor noticed an elevated white blood cell count and decided to run more specific tests.

While waiting for the results, Geriann was out shopping at a store with her kids and suddenly felt like she was going to pass out. She rushed home. Laid out on the couch, she happened to get a call from Janice Mertz, just wondering what she was up to that day. On hearing about the situation, normally mild-mannered Janice threatened, "You call the doctor right now or I'm calling him."

In the ambulance ride to the hospital, Geriann overheard the driver say, "She's doing really well for someone with a brain bleed." But it wasn't a brain bleed, it was tumors—requiring immediate surgery. "I didn't have time to react then, other than to be super-concerned for my children. I begged God to keep me alive for their sake."

While the surgeries over the years have helped, Geriann says, "I've always been a very capable, independent person, and right now I am not capable. I cannot be independent. While that's frustrating, there's also a real freedom. I'm stiller than I've ever been. The Scripture verse, 'Be still and know that I am God,' was given to me years ago. That's a major change for me—being okay with being uncomfortable. Now, I can say that, but I'm not really okay with being uncomfortable. I'm just trying to live more in the Spirit and less out of who I am and my own capabilities."

Geriann squirms, leaning forward in her chair, as if to emphasize her discomfort with the very idea of sitting still.

Another thing that Geriann had to relinquish to her tumors was her job. She had spent several years working as a legal assistant in a small-town law office in Prescott, putting her organizational skills to good use by keeping files and appointments in order for a busy lawyer—until her vision symptoms had made computer work and driving no longer possible.

When I spoke to her husband Chris in January to confirm some medical details, I asked him what he sees the Lord doing with Geriann in this process. He didn't hesitate at all. "I see her submitting to God in ways that none of us ever want to. As she loses the ability to do things that are dear to her—reading, crafts, sewing, biking, driving, things like that, or even enjoying a sunset—she can still see God in it and be in a state of detachment: 'Lord, you're the one. I live for you. It doesn't matter what happens to me.' That's amazing."

"It's crazy," she said, "but I told Chris that I don't know that I've ever been happier in my life. All this stuff is going on, but I am filled with joy. Really, I am filled with joy."

In 2014, Chris and Geriann relocated from Prescott to the West Side neighborhood of St. Paul to join Servant Branch's outreach there. They have five adult children, all of whom have moved out of state to join various works of the People of Praise.
“I thought the work here would be much more active, and I’m finding that, because of my health situation, I’m much quieter. Actually, that has opened more doors. I’m physically here in the house during the day, and there are a lot of neighbors around. If I still had a job, I would miss a ton of opportunities. A lot happens just because I’m here and a neighbor can drop over, or I can drop over to a neighbor’s, or I can see someone across the street and walk over. So that’s been surprising to me. I didn’t think about being available in that way.

“I sit out on the porch a lot, and it feels like every time I sit there someone will come by and a conversation happens, which is a very fun thing. People walk by and they will stop and talk. Here on this block, we had a couple who were renting part of a house. They had several children, and we met them just as neighbors, not really knowing their situation. I invited the woman to come sit on the porch with me, and she began to talk about her life. She kept referring to herself as ‘a signer.’ I finally had to say, ‘I don’t know what a signer is.’ Well, it turns out a signer is a person who stands on the side of the road with a sign saying ‘homeless,’ begging for money. She said, ‘Now that you know I’m a signer, do you want me to get off your porch?’ I said, ‘Absolutely not!’

“This family had been homeless for years, sometimes living out of a car. Winter in Minnesota is terribly, terribly hard, and somehow they were able to rent space temporarily in this house nearby. Then she began to share about herself. She has some mental health issues, and she was raised in a totally unstable situation.

“I think it was partly God’s way of helping me recognize all that I’ve been given. I didn’t choose the family I grew up in. I didn’t choose my parents. Those are gifts to me. Here was someone who was not given those gifts. And she was struggling, struggling, struggling, and I was seeing the confusion in her life.

“One night Matt and Mary Brickweg, who live next door to us, invited this family over for supper. They couldn’t remember ever, ever sitting down as a family for supper. Anywhere. Or ever being invited to anyone’s house for supper. Can you imagine? Not even really knowing what a family meal should look like?

“So, a couple weekends ago, I felt like, ‘Lord, they’re here. What can I do?’ I knew that the mother was trying to get the kids in school, and that meant she was trying to work, and I felt I should just make them a pot of soup. It was a thought that I felt came from the Lord. It’s not much, but I thought I could feed them something simple and basic, give them something so that when she comes home from work she can put a meal on the table for them. So I made a pot of soup and a pan of cookies. I wasn’t comfortable delivering them alone because the situation they’re living in is not a good situation, so I called one of the neighbors who loves them a lot and asked, ‘Would you be willing to go with me to deliver the soup?’ She said, ‘Oh, they moved. They packed
up their vehicle over the weekend and left. So now they are states away, and we don't really know where they're going. But then I felt like the Lord said, 'Don't worry about it. You still have prayer. That will always be a gift. You can always intercede for them.'

"As it turned out, another neighbor stopped by that day who had recently had a baby, and I was able to give the soup and the cookies to her, and it all worked out—all because I was just sitting on the porch."

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After surgery on November 15, 2018, in Arizona, Geriann cracked jokes and made phone calls in the hospital room, but during the next few weeks she had her most difficult recovery yet from a surgery. Beginning in September she'd been on steroids to reduce swelling in the brain, and she experienced disturbed sleep and very low energy. She says it took a big effort to move each leg in order to walk. She had a persistent hacking cough for which the pulmonologist couldn't find a specific cause. Not only that, but two weeks after surgery Geriann's vision was worse than it was before, which was a big disappointment because she'd expected to see some improvement by then.

"I felt an invitation from the Lord to walk with him into darkness, and him saying that he would take my hand the whole way, that I would never be alone."

On Christmas Eve, she was able to stop taking the steroids, and from then on she started to see gradual improvements. On December 29, she was riding in the car with her kids to a family party and noticed that she could read some street signs, something she hadn't been able to do for months. She hadn't expected to have any vision improvements so long after surgery.

"That's been super-encouraging," said Geriann. "It means I can read my calendar. I can pick up my phone and push buttons on it. I can even read a recipe out of a book, which I hadn't been able to do. I can tell if I'm putting my shoes on the right feet." She also said she's gaining a little bit more energy every day.

Geriann's oncologist hopes to slow the tumor growth using drugs, but he wants to allow her three months for healing before starting anything new, which Geriann sees as a relief. "For me, I'm always going back to this: I'm a child of God. Children don't have to understand everything that's going on or be in charge of the environment. That's God's part. I just need to cooperate with what he's doing."
RECIPE
GREEN CHILE STEW
RECIPE BY CAROL EHEMANN
PHOTO BY JENNIFER KENNING
In the southwest, entire festivals are dedicated to the chile pepper and chile pepper stews. Green chile stew, or green chili, usually includes pork, tomatoes, spices and, of course, plenty of those green chiles.

A niece in Colorado Springs gave Carol her recipe when the Ehemanns moved there a dozen years ago, but Carol is constantly experimenting with ingredients and adjusting seasoning to taste. She frequently serves guests hot bowls of this popular stew in the winter months. Former household member Hannah Couch (South Bend) recalls that both Carol and her husband Phil’s soups were never exactly the same from one time to the next, but they were always outstandingly good.

Carol serves the stew with tortilla chips or cornbread and freezes any extra. She typically uses mild green chiles, but for those who like more spices she sets out hot sauce or adds more spice to the stew.

**GREEN CHILE STEW**

**SERVES 12**

**Ingredients**
- 1 teaspoon or more vegetable oil
- 3 cloves garlic
- 3 pounds pork tenderloin or boneless shoulder (fat removed)
- 4 onions
- 28 ounces crushed tomatoes
- 16-ounce can diced tomatoes with green chiles
- 27-ounce can green chiles, drained
- 3 14-ounce cans (5 ¼ cups) chicken broth or stock
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin
- ¼ to ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 2 teaspoons salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 3 bay leaves
- 1 cup salsa
- ½ - 1 cup good lager

**Directions**
1. Mince and brown garlic in vegetable oil. If cooking the stew less than the full length of time, chop and saute onions along with garlic to ensure that they will be soft.
2. Chop pork into bite-sized pieces. Chop onions and green chiles, then place with garlic and tomatoes in a large crockpot (7-quart or larger).
3. Add broth, spices, salsa and lager to crockpot. Cook on high for 3-4 hours or on low for 6-8 hours.

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Ralph Rath’s (South Bend) book *God Is at Work in You: A Practical Guide to Growth in the Spirit* was published in 1989 by the community’s Greenlawn Press. It is out of print, but used copies can be purchased on Abebooks.com or Amazon.com for a reasonable price.

The Bible should not only speak to our minds, but also to our hearts. We should ask ourselves: “What difference will this text make in my life? How can I conform to the pattern of God’s plan for the Christian life insofar as it is revealed here in the word of God?”

This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success (Josh. 1:8).

The end result of our daily Bible reading should not be merely to say: “Oh, isn’t that interesting!” Our wills should be affected by the word of God. As we meditate on Scripture, our emphasis should be on conforming our wills, under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, to obey what God has said to us personally through his word. We should begin our meditation on Scripture with a prayer and keep the prayerful spirit as we read.

Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, and I will keep it to the end. Give me understanding, that I may keep thy law and observe it with my whole heart (Ps. 119: 33-34).

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to all men generously and without reproaching, and it will be given him (Jas. 1:5).
TRIBUTES

AMALIA LIM
By Mary Duddy

When her husband Guillermo died in 1964, Amalia was 44 but chose not to remarry. “I was lucky once. I might not be lucky again.” Instead, she devoted herself to God and prayer and to raising her five children. Every morning she got up early to spend two hours in prayer. She also attended Catholic mass daily.

She was a teacher in the Philippines, and she continued teaching after moving to the U.S. She also worked for Catholic Charities for many years, teaching English and citizenship classes to Vietnamese students, who loved her and came over to her house to cook meals and share life.

Amalia loved children, and she watched a family friend’s daughter for a couple of years before she went to school. Amalia also became “Grandma Lim” to my daughter, Mary Kathleen. mary frequently visited Grandma Lim while growing up in Kailua, and Amalia took Mary places—such as a bus ride to Honolulu for lunch.

Ron Gouveia describes Amalia as “prayerful, holy, loving and joyful.” Haidy Busekrus adds, “She had so much wisdom.” Indeed, everyone in our branch knew Amalia as a woman who smiled and laughed easily, and who blessed us over the years with her example of a life focused steadfastly on God.

facts

• Amalia Gregorios was born September 18, 1920, in Iloilo City, Philippines, and died there September 13, 2018.
• When she was a young woman her family escaped the Japanese in World War II by hiding in the mountains.
• She and Guillermo Lim were married March 1, 1943, and they had five children within a family that now extends to six grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.
• In 1977 Amalia immigrated to the United States and lived with Linda in Kailua. She made the covenant of the People of Praise December 9, 1984. After Linda married David in 1994, Amalia lived with them until returning to the Philippines in 2016, at the age of 96, to be cared for in the family home.

JACK BUSEKRUS
By Mike Busekrus

Trying to honor the life of Jack Busekrus—a man who danced with abandon when the Holy Spirit moved powerfully during Cursillo meetings, Life in the Spirit Seminars and More of the Lord prayer meetings—is like trying to describe sunset to a blind person. Words cannot capture the passion with which he lived. Jack was a spiritual warrior, a pillar of hope for others, one who would pray for the street person through the laying on of hands and tell the drug dealer and homeless of a better way of life in Christ. A true patriot, Jack not only honored soldiers but also adopted orphans, mentored young men and challenged us all to selfless love.

His love was radical. At times, his expression of this love was challenging, complicated and painful. He knew he could be hard on people, especially his own family, but his passion and faith compelled him to live without exceptions, without excuses, without cutting corners, without giving up and without ever taking the easy way out. Jack’s witness to the Lord influenced many to join the People of Praise, where he was a tenured coordinator and head of men’s groups, served in music ministry and Life in Spirit Seminars, led prayer groups and joined Action trips to Allendale and Indianapolis. He was all in. The Oahu branch and the Busekrus family will not be the same without him. Good and faithful servant, as you said in the best song you ever composed, “There is no better place than to dwell in the house of the Lord. . . . The table is set. The wine is poured. Let the party begin. Amen!”

facts

• Jack was born April 20, 1934, in East St. Louis, IL, and born to eternal life at his home in Kailua, HI, September 6, 2018.
• He and Haidy Guerrero were married June 28, 1974, and their family includes 16 children, 40 grandchildren and 26 great-grandchildren.
• Jack worked as a civil engineer and master planner for the U.S. Navy in Pearl Harbor.
• He made the covenant of the People of Praise in 1986, with the original members of the Oahu branch. Other community members in his immediate family include children Donald and Mike and grandchildren Nadia, Nikaela, Annalise and Cassie.
Births
Nora Margaret was born December 7, 2018, to Erik and Mary Clare Luckjohn (Servant Branch).
Noelle Elizabeth was born December 8, 2018, to Peter and Christine Gaffney (South Bend).
Joseph Sean was born December 14, 2018, to Sean and Hannah Couch (South Bend).
Madelyn Rose was born December 19, 2018, to Eric and Liz Bomkamp (South Bend).

Wedding and Anniversary
Congratulations to Francis Mutidjo (Tampa) and Christina Sutinah, who were married November 20, 2018, in Santa Maria Immaculata Catholic Church in Mataram, Indonesia.

Best wishes to John and Sara Arthur (Servant Branch), who celebrated their 20th anniversary on January 9.

Work and Achievements
Jim Reinhardt (Servant Branch) who currently serves as a permanent deacon at Holy Family Catholic Church in St. Louis Park, MN, has been assigned by Archbishop Bernard Hebda to serve also as coordinator between the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis and the Marriage in Christ program.

Mayor Paul Hicks of Hastings, MN, declared January 6, 2019, Elizabeth Langenfeld Day in honor of the Servant Branch member’s valuable contributions to the people and culture of the local community. The official proclamation cited her many acts of service to others, all accomplished while raising five children with her husband, Tony, serving her church in a variety of positions and living with epilepsy. In particular, she was always a friend to those in need, beginning in her youth during the Great Depression, continuing for years to collect food from local supermarkets to feed the poor and eventually adopting a Hmong family of refugees in the ‘80s.

Jon Cassady (northern Virginia) has started a new position as director of advancement at Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church in Edina, MN.

On January 1, Kevin McShane (South Bend) and his wife Paula Hubbard started their own architectural consulting firm, Hilltop Designs, LLC.

Paul Langenfeld (Servant Branch) and the organization he started, The Langenfeld Foundation, were honored last year as a Point of Light, the highest U.S. civilian honor for volunteer service. Founded by President George H.W. Bush, Points of Light is the world’s largest organization dedicated to volunteer service. The award recognizes The Langenfeld Foundation’s efforts for disaster relief after Hurricane Harvey in 2017, as well as 13 years of helping people with disabilities enjoy a better quality of life.

Deaths
Since our last reporting, we’ve received news of the deaths of several members of the community. Please keep their family and friends in your prayers at this time of loss.

Barbara Sahut (South Bend) died December 10, 2018.

Ralph Whittenburg (South Bend) died December 19, 2018.

Peggy Yorey (South Bend) died January 14, 2019.

Executive Office
Servant Branch:
Dick Stauble was granted tenure as a coordinator of the People of Praise December 19, 2018.

Ed Mertz was appointed to a three-year term as area coordinator, effective January 26, 2019.

Gerald Rynda was appointed to a three-year term as area coordinator, effective January 26, 2019.

Matt Brickweg was appointed to a second three-year term as area coordinator, effective January 26, 2019.

South Bend:
Tim Pingel was granted tenure as a coordinator of the People of Praise December 6, 2018. He was also appointed to a third three-year term as area coordinator, beginning January 17, 2019.

Pat Kottkamp was appointed to a one-year term as nonvoting coordinator for purposes of training, effective January 17, 2019.

Larry and Katy Connor were transferred from the South Bend branch to the Appleton branch on October 31, 2018.
“Brethren, stand firm” (2 Thess. 2:15)