Binging Jesus
Will a TV Show Spark a Revival?

Portland
A Chance Encounter

Pope Francis
How to Evangelize
Marcel D’Eon (Saskatoon) and John Boughton (South Bend) remove carpet staples to prepare for new flooring in a house on the South Side of Indianapolis. The photo was taken during the annual Indiana Service Trip which took place in Evansville and Indianapolis February 13 to 15.
A Chance Encounter Helps Save a Life

BY CHRIS MEEHAN

Jenny Ridenour (Vancouver-Portland), a mother of two and a hospice nurse, was out for her usual Saturday morning run. As she ran across the St. Johns Bridge, a steel suspension bridge that spans the Willamette River, something caught her eye: a well dressed young woman, about 30, standing still at the railing, staring into the distance over the Portland cityscape. When she returned across the river a little while later, Jenny noticed that the woman had barely moved. As she ran by, she felt a prompting from the Lord: You could stop and see if she's okay.

Jenny made an abrupt turn and returned to the woman. She put a hand on her shoulder and asked if she was all right.

“No,” said Susannah (not her real name). She looked pale and drawn.

“Can I pray with you?” Jenny asked. Susannah agreed, her tears beginning to flow as Jenny prayed. “God, we know how much you love Susannah. She knows you are here with her and that you want to comfort her.”

Jenny asked if Susannah wanted to talk about what was troubling her, and hesitantly Susannah shared that she had had an abortion. She didn’t feel right with it. Didn’t think she could deal with it.

Jenny was aware of the tall bridge they were standing on, the long drop to the river. She asked, “Were you thinking you didn’t want to live anymore?”

“No,” said Susannah, she did not want to live.

At that moment, a fire truck and ambulance arrived, followed by police cars. A passerby had seen Susannah put her leg on the handrail and called 911. The firefighters blocked off one lane of traffic, and the police approached Susannah and Jenny. As one of the officers talked to Susannah, trying to assess the situation, he kept a tight grip on her arm. The scene attracted a lot of attention from passing cars, with people gawking. Susannah, agitated, clammed up. She wouldn’t give the police a straight answer. She seemed overwhelmed by all the commotion.

Eventually, Jenny asked the police officer if they could leave the bridge and get out of the spotlight. Susannah allowed Jenny to accompany her off the bridge. The police, as well as Jenny, wanted Susannah to go for a medical evaluation. Susannah was reluctant. She wanted to go home without calling anyone and without seeking help. Jenny said, “Look how much God loves you, that he sent all of us here, people who can help you. He loves you!”

Finally, Susannah agreed to be taken to a hospital that assists people in mental health crises. Jenny gave Susannah her phone number, saying, “Once they let you go, text me, and I’ll take you back to your car.” Jenny went home, praying Susannah would text.

Susannah did text later that day. Jenny asked her husband Andrew what he thought of Jenny taking Susannah out for coffee. Andrew responded, “Yes, and get her something to eat too.” Susannah agreed, and they went to a coffee shop together.

Susannah said she was a nonpracticing Christian. “I know better. I know abortion is wrong.” Jenny says, “I strove to show her the truth. I told her, ‘We all make mistakes. Yes, it breaks his heart, but the Lord can redeem anything.’” The Lord brought back to me pieces of my history and my life in the People of Praise which might be useful. There was no fluff. She and I were open.

When Jenny dropped Susannah back at her car, which was parked near the bridge, Susannah asked her to pray with her once more. “I didn’t even know God was still doing things in this world,” she said.
On October 6, 2006, Louis Grams (now Servant Branch) was pulling weeds in his Colorado Springs garden when he felt a pop in his lower back. He wondered if something had suddenly gone wrong with a spinal fusion he’d had 19 months earlier. Louis took it easy and the pain subsided, but then a few days later his blood pressure began fluctuating wildly. He couldn’t stand up for more than a few minutes without feeling faint.

“Soon every system in my body was causing trouble,” he says. “I was seeing 18 different doctors, who struggled to try to treat their share of my 85 different symptoms.”

A number of tests eventually led to a diagnosis of multiple system atrophy (MSA), a rare disease affecting the autonomic nervous system, that is effectively untreatable, incurable and, ultimately, terminal.

It wasn’t the first time Louis had faced the threat of a terminal disease. In 1997, he was lying in a hospital room, close to death from a rare autoimmune disorder. He had congestive heart failure, respiratory failure and kidney failure. Then a nurse’s aide he didn’t know entered his room and told him, “Today, right this moment, Jesus is beginning to heal you.” Over the course of weeks, Louis’s heart, kidneys and lungs all returned to normal, amazing his doctors.

Louis eventually went around the country proclaiming his healing and praying with others.

But in 2006 Louis’s health continued to deteriorate. Eventually, his breathing weakened so much that he was tied to an oxygen tank 24/7. In late 2010, he and his wife Nancy made the decision to move from Colorado Springs to Minnesota with its lower elevations.

The move helped Louis’s breathing, but other symptoms worsened. Louis began using a walker, and he started producing “dozens and sometimes hundreds of kidney stones every day.” He had more surgeries, and lived with constant pain. He began losing sensation in his arms and hands.

In 2018, he had two spine surgeries. As a result of the second surgery, he says, “I regained full use of my arms and hands plus about six inches of height.” But complications in the recovery from that surgery led to extremely intense pain. “The pain was so bad he was immobilized,” Nancy recalled.

“By March of 2019, Nancy and I were exhausted from it all and were crying out to the Lord for some relief,” Louis said.

Relief began in the form of a spinal injection, which helped block the pain. Then, slowly, Louis began to recover more normal daily function, and his mind, which had been in a fog from the pain and the medication, began to clear. By late spring, he could take walks again with Mick Coleman, using his walker, and could get around the house without it.

In late May, recalled Louis, “when my
men’s group prayed with me—as they had every week for the previous eight years—I felt a sense of peace and hope that I hadn’t experienced before, and I knew something was happening."

In June, Louis and Nancy went to a graduation party. They decided to leave Louis’s walker in the car, and Louis walked up the driveway, holding Nancy’s hand. They planned to stay only a few minutes, but they began a conversation in the driveway that continued for 45 minutes.

“I had not been able to stand without support for more than three or four minutes for the previous 13 years,” Louis says, “and here I was, standing for the better part of an hour. That was the last day I used my walker.”

Since that party, there have been many more of both firsts and lasts.

Firsts: Walking three miles. Climbing stairs. Standing for more than two hours. Singing with full voice. Consistently normal blood pressure.

Lasts: Kidney stones. Diabetes medicines (thanks to significant weight loss). CPAP breathing machine at night.

“All my systems are working better. I notice things I didn’t notice before, for example, when reading a book or watching a movie. I’ve started studying Spanish.”

In September, 2019, Louis took a trip to Glacier National Park with some community brothers, and hiked at 6,500 feet without needing supplemental oxygen.

Louis’s doctor told him, “This hasn’t happened in the way your healing did in 1997, but there is no doubt that this is a miracle all the same.”

“I have been surprised that Louis’s healing is so total, especially at age 74,” Nancy says. “The fun part is telling everyone, because you know that this is a faith-builder. I tell people all the time: neighbors in our condo building, the clerks in the grocery store, the ushers at our church. They say, ‘Wow, Louis is really looking good.’ They can see the miracle.

“We have an old friend who saw Louis playing the piano at Deb O’Connell’s funeral. He came to me in church the next day, and said, ‘Nancy, are his kidney stones gone too?’ I looked straight at him and said, ‘Yes, Dave, they are.’ He was speechless, just dumbfounded. It brought me to tears of joy.”

Louis adds, “In late January I had a checkup, and all my systems are almost boringly normal. I haven’t had normal in so long that it’s still exciting. Every day, whatever I do is new, and there’s a sense of adventure to it all.

“I love seeing people’s reactions when they see me, looking healthy, without my walker. Joel Kibler (Vancouver-Portland) was in town, and he walked right past me, did a double take and said, ‘Oh, it’s you! I almost didn’t recognize you.’”

In August, Louis gave a sharing to Servant Branch about his healing. He normally sits at the piano bench for the whole meeting, but now everyone saw him walk to the microphone unaided by a walker. The branch spontaneously rose to its feet in a burst of praise and gratitude to the Lord.

Louis said in that sharing, “Fortunately, a lot of people believed that God had not used up his healing mercy for me in 1997 or any of the other times he healed me.

“In the end, all I know how to say is, ‘Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, my brothers and sisters who have prayed for me so faithfully through the years. Thank you for your persistence. Thank you, Lord, for your mercy. Thank you for your love.’

Louis and Nancy Grams with their daughters Mary (left, Mission Shreveport) and Elizabeth (South Bend) in Shreveport’s Allendale neighborhood in November, 2019.
A HIDDEN LIFE

Two Perspectives

Introduction by Sean Connolly

Since 2016, Joe Gleason (South Bend) has been on assignment from the community to work as an editor for the film director Terrence Malick. (Malick’s 2011 masterpiece The Tree of Life was recently named the number one film of the decade by the Associated Press.) The film Joe worked on has been playing in theaters since December. It’s called A Hidden Life.

A Hidden Life tells the story of Franz Jägerstätter, an Austrian farmer and devout Christian who was executed by the Nazis in 1943. The title of the film comes from the 19th-century novel Middlemarch, by George Eliot, “for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs.”

Writing in The Wall Street Journal, critic John Anderson said, “With A Hidden Life and the story of Franz Jägerstätter, the director [Malick] has found the ideal vehicle for his cosmic inquiries, and has created a film that is mournful, memorable and emotionally exhilarating.”

He added, “The editing, by Rehman Nizar Ali, Joe Gleason and Sebastian Jones, is superb.”

In a note to community members, Joe wrote, “I cannot adequately express my gratitude for the gift of this amazing community. I may be temporarily in a different city, but my heart is and always will be with the People of Praise. Thank you for your prayers, love and support as I’ve worked on this once-in-a-lifetime project.”

In this issue of V&B, we are delighted to publish two essays about A Hidden Life written by community members Andrew Zwerneman (northern Virginia) and Elizabeth Pease (Servant Branch).
Speech and Conscience in *A Hidden Life*

BY ANDREW J. ZWERNEMAN

*Sprechen Verboten* (Speaking is forbidden). Stenciled on the interior wall of a Nazi prison yard, these two words loom over Franz Jägerstätter, the protagonist of Terrence Malick’s latest film, *A Hidden Life*. They are part of the crucible employed by the regime to bend this one, seemingly insignificant, Austrian conscript to its will. A prohibition on speech is a terrible experience for any man because it undercuts his freedom and responsibility. This is true of its counterpart as well, which demands that one speak against one’s conscience. The weight of the oppression grows heavier when a man is isolated from those who would inform his conscience. Everyone needs to speak in true freedom; every conscience needs to hear from faithful companions. Genuine speech is neither violent nor servile; it is expressed as understanding, memory and love. Nazi ideology stood in sharp contrast to what is true about our humanity, so it is no surprise that Hitler’s Reich imposed great suffering on anyone who, for reasons of conscience, refused to speak what was commanded. Still, how does one film the work of the conscience, hidden as it is? How does one capture the internal struggle to speak when confronted by the demand for conformity? Malick successfully recreates this struggle for us, and, while his story focuses primarily on the struggle of one historical individual, the experiences Malick captures on film deepen our understanding of and sympathy for the precarious condition we all share.

Franz and his wife Fani live in the remote Tyrolian village of St. Radegund. Early in the film, their existence is Edenic. At the village’s edge, bells toll from the tiny church where Franz serves as sexton. The villagers live in neat, wooden cottages crafted seamlessly into the ancient, ascending mountainscape. Most of the film’s dialogue is spoken in English, but the villagers greet one another with “Grüss Gott” (God bless you). Life here is verdant and without want, their land and abundance shared in peaceful harmony as if the mountains have raised St. Radegund beyond the veil that separates heaven and earth. As Fani says in a voice-over, “We lived above the clouds.”

Still, St. Radegund is not quite beyond the world’s reach. In the opening minutes of the film, Malick weaves in black and white footage of a Nuremberg rally. The Nazi faithful parade from the central market square’s Frauenkirche (Church of Our Lady) to the rally grounds at the city’s edge. Hitler plays the messiah, descending by plane from the clouds above, then processing down the wide stadium stairs with his acolytes flanking him in liturgical formation. He is the high priest in a massive concrete temple. His congregation is vast and overwhelming; column upon column of brownshirts and stormtroopers assemble beneath Roman standards and banners marked with the twisted cross. The orchestrated ritual heralds the instantiation of Hitler’s millenarian vision. There is nothing hidden: These forces, rallied and sharply arranged, are poised to execute their savage mission across Germany and beyond its borders.

Malick juxtaposes the Nuremberg scene with one in which the camera pans across the majestic mountains surrounding St. Radegund. We hear the mechanical grind of a plane engine invading the clouds and Hitler’s percussive voice cracking across the high valleys. Each signals a new form of speech for Franz, the hidden man, and for St. Radegund, the hidden village. Neither can avoid the Third Reich’s
arrival; each must respond. Malick has set his stage.

Surprisingly, it takes little time for the peace that once graced the village to collapse. At the center are two emerging opponents. There is Franz, who, as a conscript in the Wehrmacht, contemplates a refusal to take the oath to Hitler. On the opposing side are the villagers who wholeheartedly embrace the Anschluss. Home for now and in between training sessions with the army, Franz knows that his next time in uniform will bring the dreaded ceremony. His disinclination to embrace the Nazi culture, now gathering steam in St. Radegund, evokes contempt among his neighbors. The hostility deepens with the growing recognition that Franz will likely not take the oath. The hotheads goad him; the mayor shames and reviles him. How quickly they have forgotten the manners of grace; how little their hearts stir now at church bells and mountain peaks.

What is yet more compelling is Franz’s struggle to speak his mind regarding his decision and to hear some kindred voice. The parish priest counsels him to take the oath: Consider the “consequences,” he warns. Even his bishop in Linz is clearly afraid for himself if he were to encourage Franz in any way that opposes the Reich. The few villagers sympathetic to Franz offer no significant help to their friend, caught as they are between worry and despair. Fani remains true to her husband from beginning to end, and their love for each other proves a great source of freedom for Franz, but there is no doubt that her ability to understand him is limited. All this means that the demands on Franz’s conscience increasingly isolate him.

Franz, we learn, objects to the killing of innocents in the Nazi invasions, which he witnesses in a black and white newsreel. It is a factor that weighs on him; he cannot ignore that knowledge if he is to be true to his conscience. At the same time, there is the seeming emptiness of his refusal to take the oath. Once he finally refuses and begins his journey through prison to trial, Franz is repeatedly counseled that his choice will make no impact on the Reich, or on the outcome of the war. He is counseled in other ways too, with weapons of persuasion: beatings, isolation from his family, and the prohibition on speech in the prison yard. For his part, Franz judges no one for taking the oath and makes no denunciation of his captors. Outside of St. Radegund and the narrow corridors of the military penal system, no one even knows of his plight. As he is driven from prison to courtroom through the streets of Berlin, he passes unnoticed. The accumulated effect of these facts is that his refusal appears to have no significant weight outside of the consequences it bears for his life and his family.

For all of the heavenly, mountainous imagery captured for our viewing, there is no clarion sound from above, no audible voice we can say is God’s. Still, there is a moment where it strikes us that Franz hears a calling: While waiting to return to the army, he is walking by the woods near St. Radegund, and something in the depth of the trees seems to hold him. The camera angle at this juncture is not, as it might well be in a Malick film, ascending upwards to the treetops. Franz is not gazing heavenward; rather, the angle is on his profile, facing the woods, seeking out or responding to something hidden from us but clearly sensed by Franz. He is focused but agitated. The moment is a definitive crossroads: He can act on what he hears in his conscience, hidden like the voice in the woods, or he can leave the woods behind in order to avoid the measurable consequences in store if he refuses...
Franz Jägerstätter was a man whose motivation came from the constant conversation he had with an invisible and inaudible friend—the God he chose to follow to the cross. Drafted to serve in the Nazi army during World War II, Jägerstätter refused to take the required oath of loyalty to Hitler and was guillotined for it, leaving behind his wife, Franziska (Fani) and three small daughters.

On the surface, this outwardly clear-cut plot (the brutal ending is never in doubt) accompanied by a complex inner struggle seems an unlikely fit for the visual medium of film. But in Terrence Malick's *A Hidden Life*, a combination of effects—scenes of rural beauty, snatches of real letters between Franz and Fani, crescendos of music and the oppressive drones of Nazi planes—forms a symphony that helps those of us on the outside see and understand what's happening within. Malick's latest film shows us the hidden life of a Christian couple, two ordinary people deciding with God how to respond to the good and evil of their time.

Since his 1978 *Days of Heaven*, Malick has become famous for exactly this—letting us in on the inner landscape of his characters. We hear their fragmented thoughts and bits of what others have said to them in voice-over. Repeated images or phrases of music become symbolic triggers associated with a particular emotion or idea, like the way a certain smell can put us immediately back in a memory.

*A Hidden Life* opens by introducing some of the notes that will be used to create the symphony. There's a voice-over from Franz, "I thought we could build our nest high up . . . fly away like birds to the mountains . . . " His voice is interrupted by Nazi propaganda footage—a plane, Hitler inciting the crowd, a giant bonfire. Then we see the Jägerstätters at work on their farm, and the Austrian mountains bathed in sunlight. There's the sound of
wind, and there’s running water: a waterfall, a river. These are the symbols of the heavenly nest birds fly away to.

Another early sequence provides our first introduction to the voice calling Franz. With the camera inside a dark doorway looking out to the sunlit mountainside, Franz enters the town’s small church and pulls the bell rope. He walks alone to the edge of a field where the forest begins. There’s a soft swell of music. The camera sweeps away from Franz and upward to the treeline, to the sky and sunlight. Franz looks sharply over his shoulder, and we wonder, who’s there? What has he heard? On the mountainside, a blindfolded and smiling Franz stumbles after Fani and the girls, who creep silently around him, hitting metal jugs with spoons. He knows they’re present, if just out of reach.

Later, Franz stands in the light outside a dark doorway, and walks away from it. Storm clouds gather over the mountains. Hearing thunder, Franz looks up from his work in the field and over his shoulder into the distance. A moment later, he paces in the sunlit vestibule of the church. This time, Franz acts on his experience with that voice—he’s made a decision. He walks with his parish priest on the road outside and voices the fateful words for the first time, “Father, if I’m called up, I can’t serve.”

Doorways from darkness to light loom over Franz’s decision. He stands inside doorways peering out to the light. Looking out the doorway of a sawmill to a bright orchard, he and Fani discuss his choice. A neighbor asks, “What are you going to do?” over a shot of the dark doorway, looking out to sun-drenched cows outside.

The cross Franz is choosing comes into stark focus as he approaches his church one day. On the way he pauses to gaze at a crucifix beside the road. Inside the church, Franz listens to a painter who bemoans the sentimentality of his murals. “I paint their comfortable Christ, with a halo on his head...” At the word “halo,” there’s a shot over Franz’s shoulder, with the dappled light through the leaves playing on his cheek. Malick is linking Franz to the halo and, by extension, the cross. “Someday,” says the painter, “I’ll paint the true Christ.”

Fani is the first one to notice a change in Franz. “These last weeks you’re different,” she says. It hurts Franz to see Fani endure the slights of their neighbors, who spit on her in the town and throw mud at her children. Her opinion is vital to him, and we see her react to his dilemma more than once hoping for some other outcome. Again he’s looking out a doorway, and next to him she looks out too and asks, “When have our prayers not been answered?” She questions him in the orchard, “You could work in a hospital. There’s nothing wrong with that, is there?” But while Franz stands in a doorway to light, Fani is repeatedly shot in the dark against the inside wall of the barn without a doorway—only chinks of light coming in through the slats.

Images give us the presence of evil too, harkening back to the bonfire in the black and white Nazi footage. Early on, we see Fani at a bonfire with drifting smoke. Then later, the mayor moves frenetically
around a bonfire, gesturing to gathered men in Nazi uniforms. Franz tells Fani of his dream about a train hurtling forwards to some unknown destination, and, as he goes from home to the army to prisons on trains, we see the coal fires that burn at the heart of the locomotives.

The conversation between Franz, Fani and God crystallizes in a dark moment in the Berlin prison. We see Franz brutally beaten by the prison guards while we hear him praying in voice-over. He’s riffing on Psalm 23: “You, my shepherd . . . You make me lie down in green pastures . . . by the river of life.” The camera floats down the dark prison hallway, looking in at each man in his cell lit from the barred windows. This point-of-view shot can’t belong to Franz, who is cornered by the guards in his cell. Another blow. “You, our light . . .,” he prays, again from the Psalms, “Darkness is not dark to you.” The music swells, and the camera rushes down the hallway and up the stairs to the light streaming in from a window on the prison’s top floor.

In that same moment, Fani is also praying. We see her kneeling in the barn, where she’s positioned blocking the light from the doorway. She pleads, “Lord, you do nothing. Where are you?” As if in answer, a shot of flies swarming in Franz’s cell cuts to Franz and Fani at the edge of a ripe wheat field with their daughters in the mountains.

When Fani learns that Franz has been condemned to death, she rushes to Berlin to see him. There are few cuts away to images in this scene, and the music is an Agnus Dei. It’s Franz’s last chance to change his mind, sign the paper and swear loyalty to Hitler. Disregarding the arguments of the attorney and the priest, who start the scene standing in front of the small room’s two windows as though blocking the light, Franz looks into Fani’s eyes and asks her, “Do you understand?” Her answer isn’t yes, but it is vibrant in its power. “I love you. Whatever you do, whatever comes, I’m with you always.”

In *A Hidden Life*, Franz speaks rarely and shows only subtle emotion on his face. Still, his character is anything but flat because we’ve seen the motions of his interior life. He will give up his beloved mountains and wind, the aching beauty of flowing water and sunlight, and even his wife and daughters not to sign that evil oath, and to follow the Christ he’s heard and looked for over his shoulder. Fani’s sacrifice of love means everything because we’ve heard the cries to God she hasn’t shared with Franz and seen the obstacles she’s overcome to say those words. In Malick’s swooping camera to the sky, there’s a third character in this marriage, the God whose voice calls Franz. To echo the painter—in *A Hidden Life*, Malick has painted a true Christ.
“Join me in spreading the news, together, let’s get the word out” (Psalm 34:3, MSG).

Mike Wacker (Servant Branch) estimated he’s told 45 people about it. A sister here in my branch (South Bend) said eight people told her about it in a week, arousing her curiosity and her skepticism. I tested it out on my kids, who begged for more of it. The Evansville missionaries are sharing it with their neighbors. One neighbor, a woman who struggles with drug addiction, reported that it helped her have her first-ever personal encounter with Jesus. Nancy Grams (Servant Branch), after witnessing amazing health improvements in her husband Louis (see pp. 4-5), remarked that she’s living right in the middle of a life-changing encounter with God, to be at the end of your rope in the middle of an ordinary life that includes sickness and health, riches and poverty, weddings, death and taxes—all features of daily living that we share with our first century forebears.

Just as heart-ful as the show’s existence is the story of how it came about. I spoke with Dallas Jenkins, the creator and director of The Chosen, to get the lowdown. Jenkins is an evangelical Protestant by background. He’s also the son of Jerry Jenkins, the author of the Left Behind novels, and seems to have inherited the story-telling gift.

He starts the story of The Chosen in 2017, when he was working on a faith-based comedy called The Resurrection of Gavin Stone.

“I had an opportunity to make a movie with some of the biggest production companies in Hollywood. Everything came together really well. It was clear that God was behind it. The investors loved the movie and the plan was to do multiple movies for the next 10 years. I was a director with a very bright future. Then the movie bombed at the box office, and I immediately became a director with no future.”

The weekend when it became clear that Gavin Stone was a flop, Jenkins recalls crying and praying with his wife, then staying up into the wee hours of the morning working on a 15-page memo about everything that had gone wrong. During that same early morning he received a message on Facebook from someone he barely knew in another part of the world. “Remember, it’s not your job to feed the 5,000. Your job is to bring your bread and fish.” The message hit home.
“That realization is what allowed me to get to a place where I was open to whatever God had in front of me,” Jenkins said. “I wasn’t going to worry about the results or about trying to prove anything. I was just going to listen and obey and make sure that whatever loaves and fish I did have to offer were as healthy and as good as they could be.”

Jenkins returned to his church in the Chicago suburbs, where he had filmed video testimonials for Sunday services. There, a long way from the big Hollywood investors, he decided to make a short film for the church’s Christmas Eve service.

His goal was to tell the story of Jesus’ birth from the standpoint of a lame and struggling shepherd. He filmed the story at a friend’s farm. In terms of his directing career, he says, “It was a step down for sure. It was humbling in many ways.” And yet, working on the project Jenkins got a new idea: an entire TV series that would tell the story of Jesus through the eyes of those who knew him.

A friend gave the 18-minute film he produced, dubbed “The Shepherd,” to executives at VidAngel, a company with a website that allows viewers to filter profanity, sex and violence from popular TV shows. VidAngel had been embroiled in lawsuits, and wanted to get involved in producing their own content. They suggested that Jenkins use “The Shepherd” as a pilot episode and turn to crowdfunding to raise the millions of dollars that would be needed to produce the series.

Jenkins brought his loaves and fishes. God did the multiplication. “The Shepherd” went viral. The Chosen’s website says “The Shepherd” has been seen by more than 20 million people around the world. The Chosen itself attracted more than $10 million in funding from 19,000 donors.

“How to Watch

1. To watch on a Smartphone or tablet, download “The Chosen” app from the Apple or Google Play app store.
2. To watch on a computer, Go to www.thechosen.tv. The first episode is available for free.
3. To watch on a TV, you’ll need a TV with an internet-connected device such as a Chromecast, Apple TV or Roku. First download the app to your smartphone or tablet, then use that app to broadcast the show to your TV.
4. DVDs are available at www.thechosen.tv/store.
the miraculous catch of fish from Luke 5) that they couldn’t film directly.

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I asked Jenkins how he and his team of writers developed their characters. He said they began with the Gospels and looked to identify personalities that would work well on a TV show that they hope will run for eight seasons.

“With Simon Peter, you’re looking at how temperamental he was and how passionate he was. He was brave about Christ and he also denied Christ, and so you think, that’s a really unique person, a bit of a rollercoaster ride of a personality. He’s also married. So what must it be like to be married to Simon? And if he was a little bit crazy after he met Christ, he must have been a little bit more crazy before he met Christ.”

The Simon Peter of The Chosen does have a fiery personality. He gets in fights and lands himself in deep trouble with the Romans after failing to pay his taxes. When he finally meets Jesus in the fourth episode, it’s clear that he needs a miracle, and it’s easy to understand why he would fall to his knees before Jesus and say, “I am a sinful man.”

Jenkins said he is deliberate about a slow build up to bigger emotional moments. He didn’t want to make a show like others he’d seen that “go from miracle to miracle, Bible verse to Bible verse, and there’s no back story or connection to the people Jesus impacted.” A TV serial gives him time and freedom that a feature film director wouldn’t necessarily have.

He adds, “I remember when we were filming a scene between Simon and his wife, and they were arguing, and I realized, I’ve never seen a marital argument in a Bible show before. And then I realized, I’ve never seen a marriage portrayed in a Bible show before!”

For all the emphasis on humanizing, Jenkins credits God with inspiring some of his best lines and most creative ideas. He mentions a moment when Jesus winks at a character across a dinner table. Another time, after Simon has cast his fishing net into the sea, he looks back at Jesus with exasperation, and Jesus teases him a bit with his expression. “When people talk about how these moments impacted them or brought the stories to life in a way they’ve never experienced, I react by saying ‘Wow, that’s exactly how I reacted when God first gave that to me.’”

Jenkins said the show has drawn criticism from people who worry that audiences won’t be able to distinguish what’s in the Bible from fictionalized scenes. He responds, “All I can tell you is that we hear from literally hundreds of people daily and thousands of people overall who say, ‘This show has made me read Scripture more than I ever have. This show has made me love Jesus more than I ever have.’”

Some have criticized the show, but an audience Jenkins didn’t expect has welcomed it with open arms—children. “I’ve been shocked by how much kids love the show. I didn’t think the show was for kids because it has a kind of complicated plot. It moves quickly. Yet I hear every day from parents who say their kids as young as seven or eight years old want to watch every episode.” (Parents should be advised that the first episode contains some adult themes.)

Jenkins said that the writing for season two is underway and they hope to film it later this year, but a lot will depend on funding. VidAngel’s app gives viewers the chance to “pay it forward” by contributing funds that allow others to watch it for free and that will help finance the second season. According to The Chosen app, the show’s episodes have been viewed 7.1 million times and they’ve raised $1.2 million from 75,479 people toward their goal of $10 million for season two.

Jenkins’s own heart for the project is clear, and he wears it, if not on his sleeve, on the front of a grey sweatshirt with bright aquamarine letters that reads, “Binge Jesus.”

“At the end of the day, it’s always going to be about drawing people closer to Christ and to the word of God. But I also think it’s a great thing if people have a show that they can binge-watch that speaks to their faith, because that’s really rare right now.”
Holy Father, you said that as a young man you wanted to go to Japan as a missionary. Can we say then that the Pope never became a missionary?

I don’t know. I joined the Jesuits because I was struck by their missionary vocation—of always going to the frontiers. At the time I could not go to Japan. But I have always felt that to proclaim Jesus and his gospel always involves a certain outgoingness and being on the move.

You always repeat: “A church that is on the move.” Many have picked up this expression, and sometimes it seems to have become a hackneyed slogan, used by a growing number of people who spend their time lecturing the church on what she should or should not be.

“A church on the move” is not a fashionable expression that I invented. It is Jesus’ command, who in the Gospel of Mark asks his followers to go into the whole world and preach the gospel “to every creature.” The church is either on the move or she is not church. Either she evangelizes or she is not church.

If the church is not on the move, she decays, she becomes something else.

What does a church that does not evangelize and is not in movement become?

It becomes a spiritual association, a multinational that launches ethical and religious initiatives and messages. There is nothing wrong with that, but that is not the church. This is the risk of any static organization in the church. We end up taming Christ. You no longer bear witness to what Christ does, but speak on behalf of a certain idea of Christ, an idea that you have appropriated and domesticated. You organize things, you become the little manager of ecclesial life, where everything happens according to an established plan, to be followed only according to instruction. But the encounter with Christ never happens. The encounter that touched your heart at the beginning doesn’t happen anymore.

Is mission itself an antidote to all this? Is the will and effort to “go out” on mission enough to avoid these distortions?

The mission, the “church on the move,” is not a program, an intention to be carried out by sheer force of will. It is Christ who makes the church go out of herself. In the mission of evangelization, you move because the Holy Spirit pushes you and brings you. And when you get there, you realize that he is already there and is waiting for you. The Spirit of the Lord arrived first. He has already prepared the path for you and is already at work.
Societies, you suggested that they read the Acts of the Apostles, as a habitual text to pray over.

The protagonist of the Acts of the Apostles is not the Apostles. The protagonist is the Holy Spirit. The Apostles are the first to recognize him and testify to him. When they communicate the decisions established by the Council of Jerusalem to the community in Antioch, they write: “We have decided, the Holy Spirit and us.” They realistically acknowledge that it was the Lord who daily added to their number “those who were saved,” rather than the persuasive efforts of men.

And is it the same today as it was back then? Has nothing changed?

The experience of the Apostles is like a paradigm that is always valid. Just think of how things happen spontaneously in the Acts of the Apostles, without coercion. It is a human story, in which the disciples always arrive afterwards, they always arrive after the Holy Spirit has already acted. He prepares and works on hearts. He upsets their plans. It is he who accompanies them, guides them and comforts them in all the circumstances they find themselves living. When problems and persecutions come, the Holy Spirit works there too in an even more surprising way with his comfort, his consolations, as happens after the first martyrdom, that of Saint Stephen.

What happens next?

A time of persecution begins, and many disciples flee Jerusalem, going to Judea and Samaria. And there, while they are dispersed and fugitives, they begin to evangelize, though they are alone and without the Apostles who remained in Jerusalem. They are baptized and the Holy Spirit gives them apostolic courage. There we see for the first time that baptism is enough to become evangelizers. That’s what mission is. Mission is his work. There’s no point in getting agitated. There’s no need for us to get organized, no need to scream, no need for gimmicks or stratagems. All we need to do is ask to be able to repeat the experience today that makes us say, “We have decided, the Holy Spirit and us.”

And without this experience, what do the calls for missionary mobilization mean?

Without the Spirit, wanting to do mission becomes something else. It becomes, I would say, a plan to conquer, the pretext that we are conquering something. A religious, or perhaps an ideological conquest, perhaps carried out even with good intentions. But it’s another thing.

Quoting Pope Benedict XVI, you often repeat that the church grows by “attraction.” What do you mean? Who attracts? Who is attracted?

Jesus says it in the Gospel of John, “When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself.” And in the same Gospel, he also says: “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draw him.” The church has always recognized that this is the proper form of every movement that brings us closer to Jesus and the gospel. It is not a conviction, a rationalization, it’s not taking a position; not a pressure, or a constraint. It is always an attraction. The Prophet Jeremiah already said, “You duped me, O Lord, and I let myself be duped.” And this applies to the Apostles, to the missionaries, and to their work.

How does what you have just described take place?

The Lord’s mandate to go out and evangelize comes from within, by falling in love, by loving attraction. One does not follow Christ, and even less become an evangelizer, because of a decision made sitting around a table or by one’s own activism. Even missionary thrust can be fruitful only if it takes place within this attraction and transmits it to others.

What is the meaning of these words with respect to the mission and the proclamation of the gospel?

It means that if you have been attracted by Christ, if you move and do things because you are attracted by Christ, others will notice it without effort. There is no need to prove it, let alone flaunt it. Instead, anyone who thinks he or she is the protagonist or manager of the mission, with all the best intentions and declarations of purpose, often ends up attracting no one.

In the apostolic exhortation Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel), you
recognize that all this can give us a certain vertigo. It is like those who dive into the ocean not knowing what to expect. What did you want to suggest with this image? Do these words also concern mission?

Mission is not a tried and tested company plan. Neither is it a public spectacle organized to flaunt how many people are associated with it thanks to our marketing. The Holy Spirit works as he wills, when he wills and where he wills. And this can cause a certain vertigo.

Yet the high point of freedom rests precisely in this letting oneself be carried by the Spirit, renouncing the need to calculate and control everything. This is precisely how we imitate Christ himself, who in the mystery of his resurrection learned to rest in the tenderness of the Father’s embrace.

Mission’s mysterious fruitfulness does not consist in our intentions, in our methods, in our impulses and in our initiatives, but rests precisely in this vertigo: the vertigo we perceive when we hear Jesus’ words: “without me you can do nothing.”

You also often repeat that the church grows “by witnessing.” What are you trying to suggest by insisting on this?

The fact that attraction makes us witnesses. This witness testifies to what the work of Christ and his Spirit have really accomplished in our life. After his resurrection, it is Christ himself who reveals himself to the Apostles. It is he who makes them witnesses. In addition, this witness is not self-serving. We are witnesses to the Lord’s works.

Something else you repeat often, in this case in a negative sense: the church does not grow through proselytizing, and the mission of the church is not proselytism. Why do you insist on this so much? Is it to maintain good relations with other churches and dialogue with other religious traditions?

The problem with proselytism is not only the fact that it contradicts the ecumenical journey and interreligious dialogue. There is proselytism wherever there is the idea of making the church grow by putting less emphasis on this attraction on the part of Christ and the work of the Spirit, focusing everything on any type of “wise discourse.” Therefore, proselytism first of all cuts out Christ himself and the Holy Spirit from the mission, even when we claim to speak and act nominally in Christ’s name. Proselytism is always violent by nature, even when it is hidden or exercised with white gloves. It does not tolerate the freedom and graciousness with which faith can be transmitted from person to person by grace. This is why proselytism is not only something of the past, of bygone colonialist times, or conversions forced or bought with the promise of material advantages. Proselytism can also exist today even in parishes, communities, movements, religious congregations.

So what does it mean to evangelize?

To evangelize means delivering Christ’s own testimony in simple and precise words, like the Apostles did. But there is no need to invent persuasive discourses. The proclamation of the gospel can even be whispered, but it always passes through the overwhelming power of the scandal of the cross. And it has always followed the path indicated in the letter of the Apostle Peter, which consists in simply “providing reasons” of one’s hope to others, a hope that remains a scandal and foolishness in the eyes of the world.

How do we recognize a Christian missionary?

A distinctive feature is that of acting as facilitators, and not as controllers of the faith. Facilitating, making easy, without us placing obstacles to Jesus’ desire to embrace everyone, to heal everyone, to save everyone, not being selective, not imposing “pastoral tariffs,” not playing the part of the guard at the door controlling who has the right to enter. I remember parish priests and communities in Buenos Aires who set up many initiatives to facilitate access to baptism. In the last few years, they realized the number was growing of those not being baptized for various reasons, even sociological ones, and they wanted to remind everyone that being baptized is something simple, that everyone can request it, for themselves and for their children. The path taken by those parish priests and those communities had one
objective: not to add burdens, not to make claims, to remove any cultural, psychological or practical difficulties that could push people to postpone or drop the intention to baptize their own children.

Some tend to drive a wedge between the transparent proclamation of the faith and social work. They say that we must not reduce mission to a type of social activity. Is that a legitimate concern?

Everything that is within the scope of the Beatitudes and the works of mercy is in agreement with mission, is already proclamation, is already mission. The church is not an NGO, the church is something else. But the church is also a field hospital, where everyone is welcome, as they are, where everyone’s wounds are healed. And this is part of her mission. Everything depends on the love that moves the heart of those who do things. If a missionary helps dig a well in Mozambique because he is aware that those he baptizes and evangelizes need it, how can it be said that that work is separate from evangelization?

Today what are the new focuses and sensitivities to put into practice in the processes aimed at making evangelization fruitful in the various social and cultural contexts?

Christianity does not embrace only one cultural model. As John Paul II acknowledged, “While remaining completely true to itself, with unswerving fidelity to the proclamation of the gospel and the tradition of the church, Christianity will also reflect the different faces of the cultures and peoples in which it is received and takes root.” The Holy Spirit embellishes the church, with the new languages of persons and communities that embrace the gospel. Thus the church, taking up the values of different cultures, becomes “sponsa ornate monilibus suis,” “the bride bedecked with her jewels,” of which the Prophet Isaiah speaks. It is true that some cultures have been closely linked to the preaching of the gospel and to the development of Christian thought. But in the period we are living it becomes even more urgent to bear in mind that the revealed message is not identified with a particular culture. And when meeting new cultures, or cultures that have not accepted the Christian proclamation, we must not try to impose a determined cultural form together with the evangelical proposition. Today, in missionary work as well, it is even more important not to carry heavy baggage.

Mission and martyrdom. You have often recalled the intimate bond uniting these two realities.

In Christian life the realities of martyrdom and evangelization both have the same origin, the same source: when the love of God poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit gives strength, courage and consolation. Martyrdom is the maximum expression of the recognition of and the testimony rendered to Christ, which represents the fulfillment of mis-

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Credit: The Pope and Mission: “Without Jesus We Can Do Nothing” by Gianni Valenti with Fides News Agency is licensed under http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/deed.en. It has been edited slightly from the original.
LOYD FORTENBERRY
By Jim Hinkle

Loyd served for 26 years in the U.S. Army, which included overseas service during the Korean and Vietnam Wars. He received the Army of Occupation Medal and numerous other medals.

In civilian life he owned an air-conditioning company in Wiggins, Mississippi, where he was a member of Veterans of Foreign Wars. In Wiggins he was a devoted member of Saint Francis Xavier Church, served as eucharistic minister, lector and parish council president and was involved with ACTS retreat ministry and RCIA.

After closing his air-conditioning business, Loyd bought a good used truck and pulled camper-trailers from the east coast to the west coast and from Texas to Saskatoon, where the branch provided him with hospitality. (Regina sometimes rode shotgun.) Loyd could connect with people of all ages. One summer, helping out in Allendale, Loyd and some young adults were repairing the main support beam of a house. Loyd and the crew fabricated a new beam, using dimensional lumber from the local lumberyard, rented some house jacks, jacked up the house and replaced the main support beam. When the Allendale projects were being reviewed and their project was brought up, the crew rose as one and applauded Loyd in tribute to his leadership and hard work.

Polly notes, “Loyd was such a good husband to my mom and was very loving toward me and my siblings. He was one of the most nonjudgmental persons I’ve ever met. Mom and Loyd supported many outreaches of the community and hosted Bible studies in their home. Loyd was never afraid to share his faith, hope and treasure with others.”

ELINOR THOMPSON
By Tom Finke

Starting in 1981, Elinor created and ran the art program for Trinity School. She had applied for the job hesitantly, because she had no art degree and was working as a fashion illustrator at a department store. She started teaching part-time, then a few weeks into the semester she told me she saw God’s hand in our work and wanted to teach full-time. So she left the illustration job behind—a bold step for a widow with three children—and added life science and religion to her courses. She had no credentials in life science, but she excelled at it. Because she was an artist, she always observed the world around her, and she taught others to do the same—in biology as in art. While students were drawing, she would sometimes sketch their portraits, lovingly displaying her appreciation of their individual characters. Her innate kindness caused her to see the best in others.

She taught for 21 years and retired to Florida in 2004, continuing her artistic work, but moved back to South Bend in 2018. At our branch wake, her son Lee praised her as a single mother “who paid off the house” and as a creative person who “saw beauty and art inside everything.”

The last time her coordinator Matt Urbanski stopped by to visit, Elinor told him she’d be dying soon. He asked her how she felt about that, and she said, “I am perfectly content right now. I’ve forgiven everyone all along the way in life and I’ve asked for forgiveness from all. I’m content.” Elinor died on Easter morning.

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RALPH RATH
By Tom Noe

Ralph’s big, booming voice and his ringing laughter always echoed through a room. In his men’s group, he was the go-to guy for spiritual or church-related questions, and he gave no-nonsense and direct answers. Whenever he was determined to do something, it didn’t take him long to accomplish it.

After being baptized in the Spirit in San Francisco—which he always described as the greatest experience of his life—he explained to his newspaper readers that he had become charismatic, because he knew they needed to understand his radically changed perspective. He came to see himself as a charismatic journalist as well as a staunch defender of the faith. From the 1970s on, Ralph managed our media office for the large public charismatic conferences we organized, including the ones in Kansas City and New Orleans. During his journalistic career he wrote 13 books and over 800 articles.

facts
• Ralph was born May 22, 1932, on the family farm outside Easton, Minnesota, and died in South Bend August 12, 2019.
• He was ordained a Catholic priest in 1958 and taught high school in California. In 1967 he felt called by God to pursue a writing career as a layman, and he was laicized by his church. For years he was the featured religion writer for the Oakland Tribune.
• In 1970, he and Dorothy Kauflin, both members of John the Baptist Charismatic Renewal Community, were married in San Francisco. They made the covenant of the People of Praise in South Bend September 24, 1977. Dorothy died in 1986 when they were living in the Vancouver-Portland branch.
• Ralph married South Bend member Pat Lewsen September 12, 1987.

BERNIE BOEGEMANN
By Patti Bye

My parents met at a dance when she was in eighth grade, and they saw each other at dances over their school years. After high school she worked at the St. Paul airport, building B24 military airplanes—a true “Rosie the Riveter”! In 1945 she enlisted in the Waves and was stationed in D.C. Ed, then in the Naval Air Corps delivering new airplanes coast to coast, took every opportunity to visit her.

At home, Bernie cared for their six children and supported Ed’s education as he studied nights until getting his Ph.D. Bernie volunteered at school, met with neighbors and friends, and built relationships in her community.

In 1974 they attended a prayer meeting at the Franciscan Retreat House and were baptized in the Holy Spirit. They served as leaders in that prayer group for seven years and traveled to all the Catholic and Lutheran charismatic conferences: local, national and abroad. In 1981 they sold their home in Prior Lake, MN, and moved to Minneapolis to join Servants of the Lord.

Bernie had an adventurous spirit and loved to travel and meet people. Together they visited Israel, Rome, Assisi, Ireland, Germany, Hawaii and Puerto Vallarta.

Bernie was strong and diligent in her faith and loved sharing it. In the Alzheimer’s facility, unable to speak complete sentences, she advised some staff members to “go back to church”! Bernie daily surrendered her life to the Lord, to her husband, to her family, to her church and to the People of Praise. She led a life of prayer and service and lived faith-filled, trusting in Jesus, her Lord and Savior.

facts
• Bernadine Ries was born December 16, 1924, in New Market, MN, and died June 12, 2019, in Bloomington, MN.
• She and Ed Boegemann were married August 27, 1947, and raised six children. Their extended family now includes 12 grandchildren and 25 great-grandchildren. Their daughter Patti Bye is also a member of Servant Branch.
• Ed and Bernie joined Servants of the Lord in 1981, became covenant members, and made the People of Praise covenant April 14, 1985.
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TRIBUTES

BILL STURMAN
By Bill King

Two things about Bill immediately come to mind: he was relationship-oriented—really loved and cared a lot about other people—and he was an eternal optimist. He often referred to Christine, his wife of 37 years, as his “bride.” He was extremely proud of his children, their accomplishments and who they were.

For over 20 years Bill coached girls’ softball and soccer for Trinity School at River Ridge and for city leagues. He liked to loan out tools from his vast collection, and a few years ago Bill was a huge help teaching me how to mix concrete when I put in a basketball hoop. He volunteered to help at my daughter’s graduation party, though he had just finished three months in the hospital and transitional care unit. He couldn’t help physically, but that shows the eternal optimist in him. Along with his health struggles over the years, toward the end of his career Bill found himself between contracts. Even so, he never lost hope in the next interview, or in getting his health in order and maybe running several miles a day.

Bill was very bright and knew a lot: about cars, electricity, construction. One of his favorite stories was about taking a construction job where they needed some jackhammering done. Bill was very young, but was already proficient on a jackhammer. After half an hour, he told his foreman he was done, but the foreman didn’t believe him until he saw it.

During his last six months, Bill knew he was dying. He also knew that he was, and would be, always in the hands of Jesus.

facts
• Bill was born January 17, 1958, in Watertown, MN, and died August 23, 2019, in Burnsville, MN.
• He and Christine Garfield were married November 28, 1981. Their family now includes three daughters and a son and three granddaughters.
• Bill graduated from the University of St. Thomas, was a member of Phi Beta Kappa and had a long career as a computer consultant, entrepreneur and project manager.
• Bill and Christine made the covenant of the People of Praise September 20, 2009.

PAT MANDEL
By Mike Madden

Following her husband Paul’s death in 1972, after only 14 years of marriage, Pat was left to raise their seven children, and she raised them well. She also worked as a registered nurse for 20 years in offices and in home care, retiring from St. Paul Home in Kaukauna in 2000. She was a dear sister to all of us.

Pat’s faith and family were very important to her and she loved being a part of all her family gatherings and all our various community gatherings. She enjoyed reading, knitting and crocheting and she was always ready to provide her guests with chocolate chip cookies. She served as our branch librarian for as long as she was able. Pat contracted Alzheimer’s disease in her 70s and was cared for in a nursing home for many years.

At the time of her death, Pat had nine grandchildren and one great-granddaughter. Her son Rev. Brian Mandel, a priest of the Catholic Diocese of New Ulm, Minnesota, presided at Pat’s funeral with many People of Praise sisters and brothers in attendance. Fr. Brian was previously an underway member and remains a close friend to many of us. He was instrumental in bringing his mother into the People of Praise.

Jeanice Armstrong remembers how much Pat enjoyed being in her women’s group. “We had lots of laughs. Pat especially enjoyed the prayer and sharing times. Bob and I have wonderful memories of spending a week with Pat in the summers up north at our cottage. Pat was especially loved by her sisters for her sense of humor and her nonjudgmental attitude, and she will always remain in our hearts.”

facts
• Pat Crechard was born in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, November 10, 1935, and died peacefully October 9, 2019, in Appleton.
• She graduated from Holy Family School of Nursing in Manitowoc with the class of 1957.
• On April 26, 1958, she and Paul Mandel were married, and their family grew to include seven children.
• Pat made the covenant of the People of Praise in Appleton November 19, 1999.
LIFENOTES

Births
Welcome to our newest little brothers and sisters!

Bruce Hesed, born to Ben and Abby LaBadie (Colorado Springs) on December 30.

Lily Porter, born to David and Cathy Smedberg (northern Virginia) on January 3.

Marjorie Ann, born to Joe and Mary Ridenour (northern Virginia, living on assignment in South Korea) on January 22.

Marilla Jane, born to Chris and Rose Marquis (Servant Branch) on February 13.

Anniversaries
Congratulations to Geoff and Nancy Myers (Corvallis), who celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary on April 14, 2019.

Congratulations to Terry and Sally Aman (Corvallis), who celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on May 30, 2019.

Congratulations to Tom and Jessica Melton (Corvallis), who celebrated their 20th wedding anniversary on November 6.

Deaths
Since our last issue, we have received word that several members of the community have died. We pray for their family and friends in this time of loss.

John Gauthier (Shreveport) died December 21.

Deb O’Connell (Servant Branch) died January 14.

Tom Davis (Vancouver-Portland) died January 16.

Jackie Berg (Servant Branch) died January 24.

Matt Kershes (northern Virginia) died January 28.

Adela Waymouth (South Bend) died January 29.

Whit Au (Oahu) died February 12.

Work and Achievements
Trinity School at Greenlawn’s mock trial program, founded by faculty member Dennis Staffelbach (South Bend) in 2005, received one of two Distinguished Achievement Awards given by the South Bend Alumni Association at its 33rd Annual Hall of Fame Awards Banquet held on November 19.

Claudia Linczer (South Bend) was one of the alumni accepting the award on behalf of the school.

Congratulations to Joe Heintzelman (South Bend) who retired at the end of 2019 after working over 44 years for Charismatic Renewal Services and LaSalle Company. Joe most recently managed the LaSalle Company warehouse. Previously, he worked in conference administration. For the 1977 Kansas City conference, Joe’s responsibilities included oversight of all the conference sites, bookshops, and food service. His team provided 17,000 lunches and 17,000 dinners spread over multiple locations each day of the conference.

Phil Monaco (Corvallis) retired January 31, 2020, after a 40-year career in analytical chemistry and environmental, health and safety management.

Executive Office Announcements
Appleton:
Bob Radosevich was released from the covenant of the People of Praise June 7, 2019.

Muncie:
Roy Connor was appointed to a second three-year term as area coordinator beginning February 2, 2020.

Northern Virginia:
David Smedberg made the covenant of the People of Praise on October 13, 2019.

Servant Branch:
David Gruber was released from the covenant of the People of Praise December 30, 2019.

Jon Grams was assigned to Fairplay, Colorado, for two years starting December 23, 2019.

South Bend:
Joe Cramer, Jr. was released from the covenant of the People of Praise January 15, 2020.

Stephen Koller was appointed to a three-year term as area coordinator beginning January 17, 2020.

Mike Zusi was appointed to a three-year term as area coordinator beginning January 17, 2020.

Vancouver-Portland:
Ron Rice was released from the covenant of the People of Praise January 31, 2020.
“Thy way, O God, is holy” (Ps. 77:13).