Peter Coleman (Muncie) right, and Rus Lyons (Mission, Indianapolis) on a missionary hitchhiking trip in Kentucky in June of 2012. Taken by Collin Anderson.

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Our Beautiful Journey

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

When I was a boy, my father loved to tell stories about the adventures of hikers on the Appalachian Trail. These days, I am still enticed by the prospect of walking that 2,189-mile footpath from Georgia to Maine. (“Honey, don’t worry about a thing! I’ll be back in about six months. . .”). On that trail, glorious vistas and new friends are both guaranteed. So are blisters, snakes, rocks and thunderstorms. The most valuable items you can bring along can’t be bought at one of those superexpensive camping stores: a love of the Lord and his creation, a good brother or sister or two, and definitely a sense of humor.

These qualities are all on display in this special issue of Vine & Branches devoted to our common journey. The articles you’ll find here are classics. Most of them have been published before in either New Heaven/New Earth or Vine & Branches, though they may be new to many of you.

They tell of things that can only be seen after climbing to the top of an ancient cathedral. They share lessons learned while wandering the same path repeatedly in every season. They speak of getting lost in midlife and finding your way with the help of a guide, and reveal how Jesus accompanies us through the sorrows we meet. Lastly, they tell of the need for recreation, for getting outside and enjoying God’s beautiful creation, while not forgetting to laugh when things don’t go according to plan.

I may never get to go the full distance on the Appalachian trail, but these stories remind me that I am embarked on a far more meaningful adventure—wandering through life with the Lord and with all of you, my brothers and sisters in the People of Praise. I hope you enjoy meandering through these pages.

In Christ,
SEAN CONNOLLY, Editor
To the Praise of God’s Glory

BY PAUL DECELLES

My wife Jeanne and I, together with four of our children, lived in Switzerland in 1965-66. Seeing the ancient cities, experiencing older cultures, learning new languages were a few of the benefits. I even managed to overcome my fear of heights enough to climb to the tops of magnificent cathedrals—if my children were dragging me!

There is a great cathedral in every great town in Europe. In fact, there is a great cathedral in nearly every town in Europe, great or small. As we approached the heart of a city we would first see these magnificent blocks of stone, towered with spires reaching up to the heavens, their tops nearly out of sight. Gargoyles peered at frightened children whose fear turned to joy at the crescendo of gongs from mammoth ancient bells ringing to the praise of God's glory.

When driving to Cologne, Germany, a city about the size of Chicago, we rounded a bend in the river road and saw one of the most magnificent of all cathedrals, dominating the modern city with its ancient form. We were still two miles from it, but we could see the scaffolding around most of the front of it; hundreds of years later, it was still being built, it seemed.

When we drew closer, the sky seemed to be filled by this Gothic form, creating an image that has remained fresh in my mind for 20 years. Again and again my thoughts and imagination have been drawn back there. The more I have thought of these glorious European cathedrals, the more I have found in them a number of analogies for our times.

The first analogy has to do with the builders. The most talented artists of the age worked together as cathedral builders for their entire lifetimes. This was artistic talent of the order of magnitude of Picasso, Matisse and Rembrandt. Even though so many geniuses worked on them, there is a wholeness there that shows no seams between the work of one and the other.

Like people involved in a centuries-long project of cathedral building, we can pour all our energy into building something magnificent for the Lord. An entire town, dwarfed by the flying buttresses of a cathedral in construction, would be mobilized for the accomplishment of a great work for God. It is not insane to hope that our towns also may live for the accomplishment of the common purpose of serving the Lord.

Cities really can be different than they are. Our cities have no common purpose; they make no sense. They are the collections of a vast number of individuals living without a plan for life together. It is a miracle of God’s mercy that we are surviving in our cities as well as we are. Unless the value of the common good becomes a civic virtue believed, taught and practiced in our society, we will experience the decay from within which the Roman Empire experienced as it fell to the barbarian invasions.

Near the end of one exhausting trek to the top of a cathedral spire, I paused to catch my breath while the children ran ahead. A small ray of light caused the dust we raised to dance above my head. I stretched far from the narrow staircase, craned my neck around and looked through a slender opening to the outside. The cars below seemed smaller than ladybugs. I realized that no one on the street could see me at so great a height. Then, looking out and up, I saw
a magnificent statue tucked into a niche in a small turret to my left. It could only have been seen from the precarious spot where I was standing. I suspect I am the only person who has seen it in hundreds of years.

Why put a beautiful statue where no one will see it? Because the only one who was meant to see these things was the Lord of all creation. The builders, the townsmen, the sculptors, the artists all did the work for God, for his pleasure. The whole building, and thereby in fact most of the town, was built for God.

What is the motivation in our lives? Why do we accumulate the things we do? Why do we spend our energies on the projects we do? Our lives may very well contain things, done for God, which no one else ever sees or admires. These especially should give us delight, for we know they are exceedingly pleasing to our Lord who sees all things.

I am not advocating building more churches of stone and mortar. I am suggesting that Christians seek the Lord, the master architect, for a plan for the cities we live in. We should be building a Christianity within our cities that will someday tower above and give meaning to everything else our hands have made. It would be a Christianity that strangers couldn’t help but notice as they entered our cities, one which would move them to look heavenward for the inspiration of our labors.

In order to make that kind of difference, we Christians have to put our talents in common. We have to work according to the plan the Lord gives us. Then we have to labor with all our energy and much of our money for perhaps 100 years to build something really good and beautiful and true and holy for the Lord our God.

Oswald Chambers wrote in his book *My Utmost for His Highest*, commenting on Matthew 5:30, “There are many things that are perfectly legitimate, but if you are going to concentrate on God you cannot do them. . . . This line of discipline is the sternest one that ever struck mankind.”

There are many options before us. In the age of cathedral building, people spared no expense for the glory of God. What are the cathedrals of today? Football stadiums and towering skyscrapers, beehives of commerce, cathedrals of entertainment and money.

Drive into a modern city and look up—it’s easy to see where our hearts are.

*New Heaven/New Earth*, November, 1986
A Place for All Seasons

BY JEANNE DECELLES

Seventeen years ago we bought our first home. We were delighted with it—and still are—because we had rented homes for 12 years and it was refreshing, finally, to have a place where we could pound in nails, let a dog run loose and experience all the other joys of ownership. There is, however, one truly unique feature of this house: we live directly in front of a very old and charming graveyard. Our children grew up playing in it, walking and running in it. (I have even heard rumors that one or two of them tried out several freshly dug graves for size!) They were and are respectful toward the place and, fortunately, without any trace of superstition or fear. Our youngest son, born a month after we moved into this home, called all cemeteries “backyards” for years.

It is a delightfully unsophisticated graveyard, filled with every sort of monument in every shape and size. Statues, natural rocks, rusty metal crosses, massive monuments of marble and granite, dignified obelisks, markers with wistful old photographs of the person buried beneath, stones engraved in Polish and other languages, stones dating back as far as the 19th century. None of these new discreet, uniform markers buried so neatly in precise rows, but a wild, almost hilarious profusion of individual tastes and opinions.

Seeing that cemetery there year after year brings many thoughts to mind: reminders to be grateful for penicillin and other antibiotics, when we see the tiny graves of children who lived only a few months or days; reminders to be grateful
for our success in the care of young mothers when we see the markers honoring women who died much too young and left behind young fathers and younger children; reminders that most women live 10 to 20 years as widows in the present century and the bittersweet wisdom which tells us both to be prepared for that life and grateful for the husband who lies beside us at night; reminders to pray for peace, work for peace, and desire peace, when we see the graves of men who died in their prime fighting for peace.

It is a marvelous place to walk. Here the seasons of the year are etched so vividly that we regularly turn to the graveyard—and not to the radio—to find out what the weather is like. Spring in the graveyard is a thing of color and excitement. Thousands of flowers appear beside the somber gray stones. Later, petunias, geraniums, zinnias, lilacs and roses appear, some planted years ago in sorrow, but many brought in coffee cans by those who do not easily forget. All proclaim the symbolism of this special place, the symbolism of new life, life beyond the graves, surely a better life. One spring, peonies seemed to be the stars. They were everywhere and astonishingly profuse and brilliant. A friend recently planted a small maple by her husband's grave and we meet occasionally on the path now because she has to encourage the frail tree with with lots of water each day. The cedars in spring take on a newer, brighter green. The catalpa burst forth in blossom and later the long, lazy beans. The maples, red and green alike, proclaim the rebirth of the earth below. Children suffering from spring fever and looking for a bit of a thrill ring the bell atop the small chapel in the center of the cemetery and run like the wind before they can be caught.

Summer comes quickly and the graveyard is less pleasant because the mosquitoes are abundant, but a brisk bicycle ride around its paths is great exercise and keeps one ahead of the pests who sting and bite. The joggers and serious runners—who came in late afternoon a month earlier—now choose the early morning hours before the day is too hot. The trees keep the paths cool in the evening and one can always use mosquito repellent. Violent summer storms prune the trees, leaving dead branches, even riven trunks as testimony to their relentless cleansing.

But fall is surely the best of times in our graveyard. There have been Octobers when I have walked out to my “backyard” and rushed back into the house to call everyone to come see it. The light, like one of Renoir’s paintings, is breathtakingly beautiful and never fails to make me long for my mother to be with me to see it. The colors are fierce, demanding attention, and it is only with great effort that I can stay away. I spend a lot of time there in the fall. Surely I know of no better place to walk, to think, to pray. The air is so clean, it’s hard to believe that it’s not always autumn in heaven!

Then winter comes. The cold air is bitter. We wander through the matted leaves, my granddaughter and I, picking up dead wood for kindling, regretting the way we have to crunch the glowing reds and yellows under our feet. It’s too cold to stay long. When the snow falls it will be beautiful again, but right now it is cold; death is reflected everywhere. Soon all harshness is covered again and the stones look beautiful and dignified. An ice storm can transform it into a magnificent Disneyland full of sparkle and spectacular magical shapes as the trees take on the glinting beauty of the ice.

Our graveyard has seen us through many seasons. In the cemetery my husband has told me many hard and sorrowful things. Also in the cemetery we have shared tender and joyful things. We have gone there to cry and shout out hurts and misunderstandings and disappointments that we could not vent in the house. I have walked there with friends whose hearts were burdened with pain and difficulty and offered what help I could. I have strolled there, sharing bright plans for the future with my daughters or with women who were approaching marriage. I have found a good place where quarrels can be settled and hearts reconciled. I have gone there to be alone with my own pain and confusion as well as to celebrate the joys of my life.

It speaks to me of many things, the graveyard, but most of all it speaks to me of new life, of resurrection, of all the faith and hope and love lived out by the generations who were laid to rest there. When we moved into this house our youngest daughter was about five. There were few young families in the neighborhood and her best friend from the very beginning was an old man who lived two houses away. He was very kind to her and she loved him dearly. When he died of cancer, she seemed not to understand it. She told me, years later, that on the first Easter morning after his death she rose early, put on some boots, wrapped a coat over her nightie and stationed herself on the small hill between our house and the graveyard, waiting for “Grandpa C.” to come back. In a way, she was right. Many have gone before us and I like to think that most of them stand in the presence of our Creator and perhaps even think kindly of the lady who spends so much time walking around in this, the final earthly dwelling of some of them.

We have a spot out there now, my husband and I. It is within sight of the chapel, near a fine old elm. It does not cause me pain or fear to see our place there. Even if I should die a million miles away and never actually rest in that spot, it speaks to me now of the companions waiting for me, of the ones who have already seen what I can only hope for, and of the special place reserved for me in the life to come.

New Heaven/New Earth, March, 1985

Jeanne DeCelles died in 2015. She was laid to rest in the cemetery behind her old house.
“Midway on our life’s journey, I found myself
In dark woods, the right road lost.”

So begins Dante’s *Inferno*. When I read these opening lines last year with the Trinity senior girls, I asked them if they ever had experienced what Dante was talking about. They certainly weren’t midway through life’s journey, at least by my reckoning. But I, reading these lines, knew immediately what Dante was talking about: that terrible feeling of waking up one morning halfway through your life and finding yourself lost in the dark. Perhaps you know, too.

Dante begins by trying to climb out of the woods and up a hill he sees before him, but his way is barred by wild beasts. He discovers that, in order to get out of the woods and back to the light, he must first descend into hell, seemingly the wrong direction. When he despaired of ever being able to make this journey into the fiery pit, he finds he has been sent a guide, the poet Virgil. He does not have to travel through the inferno alone.

In 1985, I asked for help from a handmaid in the community because I was in the dark woods of my life. I entered into what may be the longest-running “temporary” pastoral relationship in the community. I don’t think we’re keeping records of such things, but from 1985-1997 this sister talked with me weekly, sometimes daily, sometimes more than once a day, to help me with a difficult situation. She was willing to descend with me into the pit, holding my hand, so I did not have to journey alone into the dark.

Sometimes she knew the path, and was able to say to me sharply, “No! Don’t go there—that way lies madness and betrayal.” Sometimes she’d say, “I’ve never been here before. This place looks unfamiliar to me, but the Lord knows the way and will show us. Let’s pray.” Many times she repeated, “Always be cheerful. Always be courageous. Always have hope.” She said it hundreds of times to me until I had it memorized and was able to say it to myself.

When I called her, sometimes late at night or early in the morning (how many phone calls over those 12 years!) she never acted impatient or tired of me. When she got angry, she was angry with the evil one for telling me lies, and in later years, when I had learned a little, angry with me for listening to the lies. Always she told me the truth: that she loved me, that the Lord loved me, and that I was not alone.

Sometimes I wanted nothing more than to be rid of her, like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz, who wants to fall asleep in the opium poppy fields and is angry with her friends for insisting she keep going. The way was painful, difficult and confusing, and I longed to give up, lie down and be left alone to wallow in self-pity and fear. Then my sister acted like the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, to me. Like the parakletos in Greek battle, whose job was to urge the soldiers on in battle, she’d urge me not to quit before we reached the light: “Get up! Keep going! You always said you wanted to become holy, now here’s your chance;” she’d say, and sometimes drag me, sometimes carry me, until we reached a place where we could rest.

Eventually, with the Lord’s grace, the path began to turn upward. One day we saw some cracks of brightness. Finally, we emerged into the light together. Looking back, I marveled that I had travelled through hell and lived to tell about it. I marveled that she was still with me, still holding my hand. She looked older, 12 years later, when I saw her in the sunlight. She looked tired, and worn by the journey; thinner, tougher, more transparent. But she was smiling as she turned to me and said, “See? I told you you would make it! Isn’t God good? Isn’t he faithful?”

Who is rich enough to buy such companionship? What kind of money would you have to pay to hire such a guide? Who in her right mind would sign up for such an excursion, without recompense or reward? It’s not exactly the vacation dream of a lifetime!

Dear sister, how can I ever thank you? I do it by writing this testimonial to our covenant, which you kept with me as you had promised. “Greater love than this no woman has, than to lay down her life for her friend.”

*Vine & Branches*, November, 2002
Brotherhood is the Best Medicine

BY WAYNE MILLER

Editor's note: Jim Shrack (South Bend) died on November 11. He was 68. His good brother in Christ Wayne Miller offered these remarks at Jim's wake.

Jim and I met in the early 1970s while attending the Wednesday night prayer meeting held at Christ the King church in South Bend. A month or two after we met, Jim said he was looking for another place to live. I told him that I had a house and that he was welcome to move in there, and he did.

Jim had an old English sheepdog, the kind you can't tell the front from the back because of the long hair. The dog had been through obedience school, and one of the tools used in training was a little squirt gun. To deter a behavior, they'd spritz a little water on the dog's nose. One day, Jim and I had a meeting to go to, so Jim asked my brother Greg if he would watch the dog. Jim put the dog on his chain and mentioned something to Greg about watering the dog's face if he should start barking, since Jim didn't want the dog to annoy the neighbors. We came back and Jim asked Greg how things went. "Just fine," he said. Then we looked outside. It was a sunny February day and we saw the dog with a smile on his face, staring right at us with his hair straight back in frozen icicles. I think Jim forgot to mention the part about using the squirt gun instead of a tumbler.

Jim and I eventually joined the People of Praise and we were asked to move into a Christian household. We lived with Andrew and Beryl Plodowski in their beautiful home on Angela Boulevard, with their son John and with Kay Frey, a schoolteacher and also a member of the community. Jim and I had the whole finished basement to ourselves, complete with room for prayer and a Ping-Pong table. We played every night. We discussed all the world's problems and, as far as we were concerned, we solved every one of them—just no one ever came to ask our opinion. It was at the Plodowskis' house that Jim picked up an endearing phrase. He would hear Andrew refer to Beryl as “My love,” or “Love.” Jim, throughout his entire relationship with his wife Jeanie, always referred to her as “Love.”

One of the biggest things Jim and I had in common was laughter. We went with a group of friends to a Pink Panther movie. There was a scene that was so funny, we started laughing louder and louder. The punch lines kept coming, one after another. We couldn't catch our breath. We slid out of our seats onto the floor, laughing, hoping it would stop, because we couldn't keep up. We found out later on that our laughter had been a bit contagious, because, as we were told, the rest of the theater got to laughing more at us than the movie.

One evening we went to the grotto at Notre Dame. We wanted to pray for our future wives, whoever they would be. It wasn't until quite a while after, and when we looked back, we realized that within a week of that prayer we had both met the women who would eventually become our wives. I met Kathy and Jim met Jeanie.

Kathy and I got married in 1976 and Jim and Jeanie got married in 1977. Years went by and children started coming. Jim and I both passed the real estate broker exam and started working at Cressy and Everett. We even bought an investment property to fix up and resell to keep shoes on the kids and food on their plates. It was a tough time because interest rates were in the teens. We learned a very important lesson during this time involving a house listed for sale for $28,500. Jim and I were prepared to offer $25,000. We discussed it with my dad, Clem Miller, who had been a realtor for as long as I can remember. He went with us to look at the house, suggested we offer them $6,000. $6,000? What? When we saw he wasn't kidding, we offered them $6,000. They countered back to us at $7,000. We bought it and we ended up making just a little bit of money for our effort. But we would have lost a huge amount without this advice.

Jim moved on to work as a salesman, then later asked me to join him in making some furniture to sell. He bought...
all kinds of woodworking machinery and then moved it into my garage. Anything to make a buck, and the kids kept coming!

Of course, with lots of kids, things happen. Jim would get to laughing about some of the things parents experience. I said to him, “You mean like the time one of my kids decided he wanted to practice driving a car, and he took out the basketball pole that was mounted in cement.” Jim would quote Bobby Bowden, the Florida State football coach. When Bobby was asked about some of his athletes who were suspended for academics, or others arrested for various reasons, he would say, “Yes, yes, that’s right. That’s true. But they’re good boys!”

Jim was diagnosed with cancer on November 20, 2017. Even during his chemo treatments and surgeries, he never lost his sense of humor. I remember that on the day he was diagnosed Jim said he was wondering if there was golf in heaven. Someone whom I won’t mention said he heard there was good news and bad news about that. The good news is “Yes, there is golf in heaven—beautiful golf.” The bad news is, “You have a tee time tomorrow at 8:00.” Jim laughed so hard at that. The nurses must have wondered what was going on down there. That was Jim.

The spring of 2018 came and things got busy. Jim was still employed, delivering RVs across the country, plus going for chemo, having surgeries and squeezing in as much golf as possible. One highlight for me was riding with Jim and his good friend and head Bob Thomas to Jim’s many doctor and clinic visits. Bob and Jim have been very close for decades, through all the ups and downs. I was blessed to get to know Bob better along the way. Bob and his wife Kathy were always there for Jim and Jeanie.

Jim loved golf. I think we were on the course about 25 times from the end of April to early September, and when Jim couldn’t really golf after his surgeries we devised a chip and putt competition. We each had three balls we could chip up towards the hole on the putting green and proceed to put one in to see who could do it with the least number of strokes.

I got a call from Jim on the morning of November 6, election day. He said he wanted to go vote. I couldn’t believe it, but I picked him up and took him. He used his walker to get inside, voted and then he had me get the wheelchair to take him out to the car. I dropped him off at home. I was going to tell him later, but I forgot, that after I took him to vote I went to my own polling station to vote and cancelled his vote out! I know he would have laughed at that.

Jim tells the story of how, when he was young, he almost drowned after falling out of a boat into a frigid lake. At that time, he said he was not particularly a praying man, but he talked to God, and God sent a boat to rescue him, saving his life and the lives of his friends. I believe Jim knows more fully now how much our prayers are answered. And he would be the one to encourage us to take consolation in our faith and trust that the Lord never, never leaves us alone.
Through the Valley of Grief

BY LINDA DECELLES

In 1981, six weeks before his expected delivery date, my unborn son died. He was to be our fourth child and I had been looking forward to his birth with great anticipation. His death was totally unexpected and although I didn't know him I grieved very deeply. For three or four months my sense of loss was constant.

Let me share with you how the Lord showed his mercy for me in this situation. Jesus worked in my heart and my mind during that time to bring good fruit from my grief, and the abiding faithfulness of his love was slowly revealed.

The first fruit was a simple one. I realized that, since I had grieved so deeply for that child, my love for him must have been deep, too. It is always a consolation to know you have really loved someone who has died. It was a particular consolation to me since I had never been able to express my love to him and had not been able to love him through any of my actions.

The second benefit was that I was now more human. That sounds strange, doesn't it? How can a human being be more human? What I mean is that my experience of grief was a kind of initiation into another level of what it means to be human. I had entered more deeply into the common experience of mankind. I was one with all the men and women in this time and in the past who had suffered the loss of loved ones. Barriers of language, race, creed and era fell away. I had compassion on them all.

The third fruit of my grief was in my experience of the Lord shepherding me through this “valley of death.” His first task was to convince me not to dwell on asking, “Why?” I think it is natural for the human spirit to wonder why such an awful event could take place. The mysteries of pain, evil and death have plagued mankind since Adam and Eve. The Lord wanted me to know that, if I continued to grapple with “Why did this happen?,” I would only intensify my suffering and perhaps jeopardize my faith.

The Lord reminded me that the Father’s ways are above our ways, that the Father had asked his only-begotten Son to lay down his life and that the Father had asked Jesus’ gentle and innocent mother to witness her son’s crucifixion. In the face of this, who was I to question?

Jesus seemed to be saying, “If you don’t become entangled in why this happened, you will be more able to resist the temptation to hold it against me.” Because we know that God is ultimately in charge of everything that goes on, we tend to blame him for things that don’t go our way. Actually, just because the Lord permits an event does not mean that he is the cause of it. (Look at all the suffering Satan used in tempting Job.) An even more persuasive reason to avoid resenting the Lord was also a very practical one: If I held a grudge against the Lord, I would separate myself from the only one who could really help me.

The fourth thing the Lord did for me was the hardest, but ultimately the most healing. He encouraged me to give my son willingly to him. There are many sacrifices we make for the Lord to show him how much we love him. There are many sacrifices we make for the Lord to show him how much we love him. Many of them are of our own choosing. When loved ones die, however, their physical presence is taken from us without our consent.

Yet we do have the choice of hanging on to our relationships with loved ones, or of releasing them to the Lord as offerings of love. Rarely do we have the opportunity to give the Lord anything so precious as this. Actually, this was what finally turned my grief into an upward road. Bearing my suffering consciously and willingly became a way to give myself and my love to the Lord.

I made the effort to channel my grief into an offering of love to God, and over time I began to feel that grief had become my friend. This seemed pretty absurd. I realized one day that it was not grief that I sensed this fondness for, but the presence of Jesus faithfully, constantly, loving me in my grief. Because of my suffering I was living with Jesus in a way I had not experienced before. Although my grief was still there, it had become the doorway to and the foundation of the consolation of his love. While friends were praying with me on Pentecost that year, my heart was flooded with joy, the joy that comes from knowing God’s love.

I know, and shall never doubt, that the Lord in his compassion will be faithful in loving me through grief and pain.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life . . . (Ps. 23).

New Heaven/New Earth, February, 1989
Can Virtue Survive Camping?

BY LOUIS GRAMS

I grew up in a home where there was one way to vacation, the Annual Camping Trip. As a child, I traveled with my parents from coast to coast and far into Canada with hardly a night spent in a hotel.

I learned firsthand lessons about the natural sciences, social customs, history and numerous other areas of knowledge in a way that has enriched my entire life. I learned about cooperation, creative problem-solving and a healthy self-reliance. I grew to love creation and its beauties with respect for its dangers and delight in its benefits. The elation of my first hike through the mountains of Glacier National Park is as fresh to me today as the day in 1958 when I made it.

Our family could not afford hotels, so camping opened a door for us on a world that would otherwise have been out of our reach. When I no longer lived at home, I continued to camp, combining job and hobby by running a boys’ camp in northern Minnesota and camping/travelling

Our second night out, the storm of the century hit, bringing violent winds, 10 inches of rain, blinding lightning and hail for five straight hours.

all over North America with staff members on our breaks and at season’s end. I always assumed that camping would be a permanent element of my life.

The fact that the woman I asked to marry me had never done any camping somehow failed to register. Once Nancy camped with me, I assumed, she’d love it for life.
As it turned out, the first time we camped together, we were still engaged and were part of a large group of young adults who worked together as volunteers. We took a break from our service by setting out for an island in Lake Superior where we spent two days biking, hiking, sightseeing and generally having fun—until The Night of the Storm.

Our second night out, the storm of the century hit, bringing violent winds, 10 inches of rain, blinding lightning and hail for five straight hours. In my snug little mountain tent and down sleeping bag, it was some time before I heard the screams coming from the large tent the women were sleeping in. When I began to pay attention, I quickly discovered that they were somewhat disturbed by the foot-deep stream of water covering their sleeping bags and floating their luggage. I got up.

One glance told me that either my vision for a life of wilderness camping was about to end or my plans for marriage would. So much for a blissful honeymoon camping in the Canadian Rockies!

In the years since that sober night, I’ve managed to convince my wife that there is virtue to be gained in an occasional camping trip and I’ve learned to endure the rigors of motel life when there are no other options. In fact, I don’t know of many wives who would tolerate the scale of camping our family has since engaged in. About every other summer, we have shared our family vacation with close friends, camping across the country in places like Yellowstone, the Canadian Rockies and up and down the East Coast. It might go without saying that we have learned a few things along the way.

First, we’ve always looked at our vacations as times to be revived in spirit and body, so we pray for our vacations, pray during our vacations and give thanks for them afterward.

I vividly remember rolling into Yellowstone early one morning with 12 of us seated throughout a modest rented motor home. We drowned out the noises of the road with songs and praise, heightened by the wonders passing our windows.

As we concluded our daily time of group prayer, Nancy prayed that the Lord would bless us with the opportunity to see many wild birds and animals. No sooner had her prayer been spoken than a huge bald eagle appeared at eye level with us, descending alongside us into a majestic gorge. The eagle flew at our side for several minutes and then soared off to our delighted cries of thanksgiving.

We have also learned that you can never plan too carefully for a trip of any size. From our itinerary to a detailed meal plan to work assignments to packing lists, we have found that, the more carefully we plan a trip, the less confined and limited we feel when we are actually on the road.

Last summer, our camping vacation nearly got the best of us. A packed work schedule, including its own dose of travel before vacation, kept us from going through our normal planning routine. I shrugged off the potential problems by saying to myself, we’ve done all of this before; no sweat!

The intense heat of the summer of ’88 guaranteed that nothing we had done before had prepared us for our two-week 3,600-mile endurance test.

What planning we had done boiled down to talking about all of the wonderful places in the eastern United States we wanted to visit, roughing out a route through them all and not going very far beyond that. Plans to rent a motor home fell through and we ended up packed into our (not air-conditioned) van pulling a pop-up camping trailer and eventually borrowing a car along the way so that the 14 of us who ended up sharing most of the trip could survive.

Every day the fact that we had not planned things more carefully added to the stress of a too-ambitious
itinerary and too much heat. Everyone did amazingly well, but when the joking question, “Are we having fun yet?” was asked, the laughter was thin.

Over the years we have also learned a lot about pace and time on a camping expedition. When we get out in the woods, my wife and I find ourselves getting to bed much earlier, even when we have a campfire, and rising earlier as well.

Most things take more time when you are camping. Meal preparation and cleanup are slowed by the lack of conveniences we take for granted at home. In moving from one campsite to another, there is a good deal of time required for taking down the first camp, packing and then setting up the next camp and unpacking.

Routine things such as bathing or washing clothes become major events requiring planning and coordination and more time. Additionally, we have learned that, even with a relaxed camping routine, having some days to do nothing is an important element in the pace of a trip. If a lot of time is spent driving, these “down” days are even more important.

I’ve had to learn that my ideas about what camping really is (a backpack, a tent, a down sleeping bag, some food and the clothes on my back) need to be adjusted for my companions’ diversity of camping experiences and levels of desire.

The change of routine and context affords opportunities for growth in relationships that we don’t normally have to the same extent. Living, working and playing together day in and day out under a wide variety of conditions create numerous occasions for growth in knowledge and love of one another.

Seeing even one’s spouse or children outside of routine circumstances can create a new appreciation and understanding of them. Some of the best times I have ever had with my sons have come in the context of a mountain hike or a moment of facing some wilderness challenge together. Those times are preserved long after we have returned home. When one of my sons seems distant or withdrawn, I often find easy access to him through a shared memory of some particularly good or exciting time camping.

Camping also creates numerous occasions to repent and forgive, to be patient and forbearing with one another. Superficial forgiveness or feigned patience wears thin very quickly on the third full day of rainy weather, or at the 10th hour of a long day’s drive.

At the end of one particularly wonderful stay in the Canadian Rockies, the Lord outdid himself for us by putting on a display of the Northern Lights that had all 14 of us cheering like children at a fireworks show.

As the sky was filled with dancing light from one mountain-rimmed horizon to the other, we shouted out thanks to the Lord and asked him to “do another one.”

As the sky was filled with dancing light from one mountain-rimmed horizon to the other, we shouted out thanks to the Lord and asked him to “do another one.” He was bestowing on us the works of his hands far beyond what we could ever deserve. The wonder of that moment still draws me to a place of profound reverence before the Lord.

At the same moment, in the security of hotels, motels and cabins in a not too distant town, hundreds of people were settling down to a comfortable night of cable television entertainment. They didn’t deserve any less than what we were sharing at that moment, but they had no idea what they were missing.

New Heaven/New Earth, June, 1989
Every Christmas Eve in the home of Paul and Jeanne DeCelles, the kitchen counters would be covered with dozens of cinnamon rolls. Their daughter Mary Frances would help Jeanne churn out several large batches, and Paul would then take them out for delivery to friends and other families in the community.
Mary Frances took the DeCelles family tradition to Minnesota and then to northern Virginia, where a number of families now eagerly await the arrival of the Christmas sweet rolls every year. The dough recipe is adapted from an old Betty Crocker recipe. Mary Frances points out that one of the things that make the rolls most festive is the almond flavoring in the icing.

**CINNAMON SWEET ROLLS**
**MAKES 3 DOZEN ROLLS**

**Ingredients**
- ½ cup warm water (not hot: 110 to 115 degrees)
- 2 packages active dry yeast
- 1 ½ cups milk
- ½ cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 2 eggs
- ½ cup margarine or other shortening
- 7 to 7-½ cups flour
- 5 tablespoons butter, softened
- ¾ cup brown sugar
- Cinnamon-sugar mix for sprinkling

**Directions**
1. In a bowl, dissolve yeast in water. Warm milk with margarine just enough to make mixing easier and add to yeast. Add sugar, salt, eggs and half of flour. Mix with spoon until smooth. Add enough remaining flour to handle easily.
2. Turn onto lightly floured board; knead until smooth, about 5 minutes. In a greased bowl, shape dough into a rounded loaf and bring greased side up. Cover with cloth. Let rise in warm place (85 degrees) until it doubles in size, about 1 ½ hours. (If kitchen is cool, place dough on a rack over a bowl of hot water, and drape completely with a damp towel.) Punch down; let rise again until almost double, about 30 minutes. Dough should be sticky, but smooth.
3. After the dough rises for a second time, divide it into two equal amounts. Roll each into a rectangle measuring 9 x 18 inches. Spread 2 to 3 tablespoons of softened or melted butter on each roll. Sprinkle each with ⅓ to ½ cup of brown sugar and top that with a light sprinkling of cinnamon-sugar mix (if making your own, blend ¼ cup sugar to 1 tablespoon cinnamon).
4. Roll up each rectangle tightly beginning with the long edge. Cut rolls into 1-inch slices and place them with the cut side up in a greased pan of any size. Placing them close to one another so that they are touching helps them rise up and out for a more dramatic presentation. Cover and let rise 30 minutes until double in bulk.
5. Bake at 375 degrees for 20 to 25 minutes, until golden brown.

**Icing ingredients**
- 2 cups confectioners’ sugar
- 2 tablespoons butter, softened
- 1 teaspoon almond extract
- 1 tablespoon milk

**Icing Directions**
1. Mix the confectioners’ sugar, butter and almond extract.
2. Add half the milk and stir, adding just a drop at a time more of milk until a thick glaze forms. Pour immediately over cooled sweet rolls.

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**PREPARED FOR CHANGE**

**Making Provision for the Future**

**BY KERRY KOLLER**

How should we fulfill our call to serve one another in our material and financial needs? In *The Spirit and Purpose* we say, “the way we handle our total assets in this life affects the extent of our abundance in the life to come. If we free ourselves from superfluous goods and use our possessions in obedience to the gospel, then we will obtain a true and lasting abundance hereafter (Lk. 12:13-21).” As we take stock of our lives and consider what is and isn’t superfluous, we can find some insight in Kerry Koller’s 1982 book, *The Resourceful Christian*.

As we make provision for the future, we should do so according to three criteria: sufficiency, contentment and proportion. Applying the criterion of sufficiency helps us to gauge whether we are providing too much or too little. What is needed is an amount adequate to the task, but no more. Obviously the person who is responsible for a large family will have to put away more goods than a single person responsible only for himself. What is important is not that one is a larger amount than the other, but that both are sufficient.

Contentment is the wisdom to balance our needs against our desires. St. Paul urges us to be contented with what we need rather than to desire things beyond our need (1 Tim. 6:6-8). Often our desires far outstrip our needs, and we find ourselves discontented. Contentment comes from living simply, within our means.

Proportion, the last criterion, is the wisdom to live on a realistic economic level with regard to the times. Because times change, we might need more money simply to eat decently at one time than another. Sometimes we will need more for housing than we do at other times. What we have should be in proportion to the times and in proportion to what we need in order to discharge our responsibilities to the Lord, to our families and to society.

The *Resourceful Christian* is out of print, but used copies are available for purchase on Abebooks.com.
JOHN GEHL
By Tom Shriver
Following his stint in the Army, John returned to Buffalo and joined us in creating Christian community. He served as men’s group leader and area coordinator for many years. Most recently he was dedicated to our mission work in the Black Rock neighborhood. John truly had a servant’s heart and would do anything to spread baptism in the Spirit and Christian community. He was very much involved in Buffalo Camp, attending this year as our spiritual director.

John’s generosity and hospitality affected many throughout the years: refugee families, single mothers, foreign visitors, students at Our Lady of Black Rock School, and certainly all the community children who attended Buffalo Camp. His whole character can be wrapped up in one command given by St. John the Apostle: “Love one another.” Our own John took that word seriously. He loved everyone. He showed it through his evangelistic stories, his telling and retelling of healings, his listening skills, his understanding, his support and his nonjudgmental attitude. A few years back, as John and Marlene walked Spain’s Camino de Santiago pilgrimage road together, John prayed with fellow pilgrims and invited them to visit his home if they came to the U.S.!

Jarleth was raised out in the country, and both she and Bob participated in 4-H clubs growing up. She honed homemaking skills such as cooking and sewing that she put to excellent use all her life. They married when they were college sophomores, and Jarleth decided to work to support Bob’s further education, which included graduate school in art education.

Jarleth served our branch as a women’s leader for many years. Julie Klein describes her as “delightfully surprising. She possessed grace and elegance, and was also warm, funny, engaging and chatty.”

Many branch guests who came to give retreats or make branch visits enjoyed the hospitality of the Badhams. Jarleth, with her sparkling blue eyes, was a great hostess, cook and homemaker. She often baked treats such as lemon bars or pies, using lemons from a tree in her yard. Over the years, the Badhams opened their home to several household members: Jose Lim (Oahu), Gail Gaffney (now Smith, northern Virginia) and Mike Busekrus (northern Virginia).

Dorothy Au, in women’s group with Jarleth “for as long as I can remember,” said, “When Jarleth prayed for us, her prayers were beautiful, full of love and confidence that God would hear us.” Several chronic illnesses plagued Jarleth during the last 10 years, but she did not complain and always bore her trials with humble acceptance, choosing to think of others instead.

Close friend Denise Wong recalls, “It was so like Jarleth to often call me up and ask, ‘What can I do for you, dear?’”

TRIBUTES

JOHN GEHL

By Tom Shriver

Facts
- John was born July 9, 1947, and died in Akron, NY, August 16, 2018.
- He and Marlene Tighe were married in 1974 and their family now includes three children and 13 grandchildren.
- He served as a captain in the U.S. Army after leaving the seminary and marrying Marlene, and worked in the insurance industry most of his career, retiring in 2015.
- John and Marlene made the covenant of the People of Praise March 29, 1992.

JARLETH BADHAM

By Mary Duddy

Facts
- Jarleth Hoffman was born November 16, 1941, in Puyallup, WA, and died August 1, 2018, in Kailua, HI.
- Bob Badham and Jarleth married June 2, 1961, and have three sons, seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. They knew each other for 69 years, since meeting in third grade, and were married for 57 years.
- Jarleth worked most of their married life: at a credit union, Liberty House, Singer Company and finally as office manager for a dermatologist. She retired in 1990.
- Bob and Jarleth made the covenant of the People of Praise February 3, 1991.
Left: Tom Johnson (left) and Mark and Aricca Desmarais made the covenant in northern Virginia on October 6. Right: On October 14, Charlie Fraga (Vancouver-Portland) (far left) represented the board of governors as these branch members made the covenant (from left): Jose-Martin Martinez, Chelsea Mertz, Dick Safranski, Eury Gordon, Chris Kadera, Jackeline Martinez, Phil Gordon, Jonathan Willard.

**LIFENOTES**

**Births:**
Bernadette Sophie was born August 25 to Marcus and Rebekah Nayo (South Bend).
Azusa Day was born to J-T and Hannah Kelly (Mission, Indianapolis) on October 15.

**Weddings and Anniversaries:**
Congratulations to Jared Gonzalez and Laura Kane (both Colorado Springs), who were married October 6 at St. Elizabeth Seton Catholic Church in Carmel, IN.

Best wishes to Ben LaBadie and Abby Olson (both Colorado Springs), who were married at Shove Memorial Chapel at Colorado College in Colorado Springs on October 27.

Congratulations to these brothers and sisters who recently celebrated significant wedding anniversaries:
Kevin and Susan Weilbacher (Tampa), 45 years on July 28.
Chris and Charlotte Swanson (Servant Branch), 35 years on October 29.
Steve and Ann Nicklaus (Servant Branch), 20 years on October 30.

**Covenant:**
Congratulations to these brothers and sisters, who recently made the covenant of the People of Praise:
Evansville, October 14:
John Earhart
Vancouver-Portland, October 14:
Eury Gordon, Phil Gordon, Chris Kadera, Jackeline Martinez, Jose-Martin Martinez, Chelsea Mertz, Dick Safranski, Jonathan Willard
Northern Virginia, October 6:
Aricca Desmarais, Mark Desmarais, Tom Johnson
South Bend, October 6:
Mary Moser, Tom Staffelbach, Peter Timler

**Work and Achievements:**
After two and a half years taking care of her two children at home, Jenny Ridenour (Vancouver-Portland) recently accepted a position with Providence St. Joseph Health System as a part-time on-call hospice nurse.
Emily Hagens (Vancouver-Portland) has a new job as an in-home caregiver.
John Bowar (Mission, Allendale) started a new job on September 24 as a geologist in the remediation division of the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality.
Kristi Croddy (Indianapolis) is one of five recipients of the 2018 Nursing Excellence Award for Facilitative Leadership from Community Health Network in Indianapolis.
Margaret Sak (South Bend) has retired from her profession as an occupational therapist of over 40 years in Elkhart, South Bend and Goshen. She’s looking forward to what the Lord and she will be doing next!
Since Chris Kadera (Vancouver-Portland) made the covenant on October 14, there have now been four generations of covenanted Kaderas, starting with his deceased great-grandparents, Leonard and Edith Kadera, followed by his grandparents, Jim and Gina Kadera (Vancouver-Portland) and Theresa McNiff (Servant Branch), and his mother, Julie Olson (Servant Branch).
The Vatican has announced that, as of Pentecost, 2019, Bishop Peter Smith (Vancouver-Portland) will begin representing the charismatic renewal in North America and the Caribbean as a member of CHARIS, a new international office for the needs of Catholic charismatic renewal, created by the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life. Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa, O.F.M. Cap., will serve as the group’s ecclesiastical advisor.

**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.
Donna Masterman, Servant Branch, died October 20.
Jean Schmitt, Corvallis, died November 8.
Jim Shrack, South Bend, died November 11.
Bill Argus, New Orleans, died November 27.

**Executive Office:**
Susan Clairmont was transferred from the Oahu branch to the Vancouver-Portland branch on September 30, 2018.
Corvallis: Tom Melton has been appointed to a second three-year term as area coordinator, effective October 1, 2018.
Servant Branch: Hilda O’Hanley was released from the covenant of the People of Praise September 28, 2018.
South Bend: Colleen Pingel was released from the covenant of the People of Praise October 1, 2018.
Vancouver-Portland: Steve Hansen has been appointed to a three-year term as area coordinator, effective December 15, 2018.
“In that day the branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious” Is. 4:2.