Trinity School Teachers: 25 Years of Dedication and Sacrifice
Trinity School Teachers

Sacrificing Status, Salaries and Sleep

Story by Sean Connolly
Reporting by Gene Stowe and Jennifer Kenning

Since Trinity Schools’ humble 1981 beginnings, teacher sacrifices have seeded the schools’ impressive growth. Teachers have switched states to help launch new campuses, cleaned dirty cafeteria tables, and logged thousands of hours in the late afternoons and evenings that follow the 3:00 bell. They’ve taken a small school begun in a borrowed church auditorium and helped turn it into a three-campus system with teaching methods and a curriculum that are models for other schools.

Today, 95 Trinity School teachers—among them 49 community brothers and sisters—are keeping alive a 25-year tradition, exchanging high salaries, tenured positions at major universities, and the prospects of ample leisure time for stacks of papers and tests, red pens and after-school tutoring sessions offered to students at no extra charge. Two times a year, all Trinity School teachers write personal evaluations of each of their students, often 60 or 70 each, and endure a taxing week of 12-hour days meeting with students and parents. Why?

Let’s ask the teachers:

■ Mathematician Dr. Pat Malone, Greenlawn campus: “After 19 years here I count all this [sacrifice] not as suffering but as blessing. It’s a blessing to be part of the work of the community. It’s a blessing to know that what you’re doing makes a difference in building the kingdom of God and forming young men and women as God’s people.”

In the mid-1980s, Pat and Edna moved to South Bend from Toledo, OH, in order to join the People of Praise. Pat took an $8,000 pay cut. Two years later, he took another $6,000 cut to join the Greenlawn faculty. He gave up his retirement plan and started working 70 hours a week, which was 30 hours more than at his previous job.

“If you’re working for the Lord,” he says, “you shouldn’t think of it as a 40-hour-a-week job. You’re doing the Lord’s work 24/7.”

■ Historian and attorney Dennis Staffelbach, Greenlawn campus: “I always wanted to make a difference, change people’s lives, give them a vision for what’s important in the world. I love working here. In the early years, it was completely time-consuming. I looked at it almost as missionary work. The pay wasn’t much, but it was really exciting.”

Dennis began teaching at Greenlawn in the early 1980s. After a three-year stint, he left for law school so he could pursue antipornography and prolife work. He became an assistant attorney general in Arizona and then worked for the American Family Association in Tupelo, MS. After four years of practice as an attorney, he brought his family of four back to South Bend and began teaching history courses again.

“I decided I could effect more change in the world by changing the hearts and minds of young people than I would in litigation,” he says. “That’s what brought me back.”

■ Dean of Girls Penny Arndt, River Ridge campus: “I think about my life as a life of service, as having 14 hours a day to give to something. In terms of sacrifices, Trinity School has taken a lot of that time, but this is what I think I should do.” Penny has served 19 years as River Ridge’s dean of girls, the only one to have ever held that position.

Her career as a teacher had a surprising beginning. During the school’s planning stages, Penny, a college student, offered to help answer the phones. At the time, she was just finishing up a psychology degree, aiming at a career in counseling, not teaching.

“I went to Tom Finke and Kerry Koller when they were here setting things up. As I was talking to them I realized they were interviewing me. I
thought that was kind of weird since I was only a volunteer. They were asking me lots of questions. They said something about a dean of girls and I didn’t even know what that was. That’s how I got hired.”

Penny’s background in the humanities and her desire to serve made her a good candidate for the job, and they’ve made her an excellent teacher. Since 1987, she has been teaching Humanities Seminar, Scripture courses or whatever else the school has asked her to teach. “I’m a person who jumps into different classes when necessary,” she says.

“I think, in the big scheme of life, I love things that are People of Praise-centered. I’ve lived that way for a long time.”

Former political lobbyist Jenny Nolan, Meadow View campus: “It’s a career that has so much depth to it. Even after teaching three years, I keep finding more and more that I could look up and go deeper into. I love it. I love the students.”

Before teaching at Meadow View, Jenny spent four years working for the National Right to Life Committee. She helped defeat legislation that would have legalized physician-assisted suicide in the State of Hawaii. When she began looking around for her next challenge, a tour of the Meadow View campus captured her heart. She turned down a job offer that paid $15,000 more so she could teach history and become dean of girls at Meadow View.

“The first year was predictable,” she says. “I hardly remember anything in that blur except the sound of the vacuum cleaner every evening when the cleaning people came and I was still here. Then they left and I was still here.”

Civil engineer and mathematician Dr. John Vogel, River Ridge campus: “Going to Trinity School was me acting as a son of the Father and having a sense that it would please him.”

John left a top-notch computer-engineering firm to accept a faculty position at River Ridge in 1993. In seven years at the computer company, he had only brought work home two times; Trinity School was a big change. John says he loved it: the new environment, the sense of camaraderie in the faculty room and the opportunities the faculty have to learn from one another. Trinity School felt more like a group endeavor than some of his previous jobs. “I had the sense that I was part of something bigger,” he says.

Historian Tom Dits, Greenlawn campus: “The work is the treasure. That was my original motivation for coming here. The education was worth doing for my own children, and something I myself could be deeply satisfied with. It was a work we could all share in.”

Tom says coming to Greenlawn in the mid-1980s didn’t mean accepting a lower salary because he had already been teaching for a low salary in a private college. It was still difficult, though. “Sometimes I question whether a family man should teach at all at a private school or college,” he notes. “It just wasn’t enough money. I struggled to live on my Trinity School salary then. I realized that I had to give up the idea of my wife staying at home. She needed to work as a nurse on the weekends.”

Tom started a summertime painting business to bring in extra income and left teaching for a while when the business took off. But after a few years running his business, Tom decided he missed teaching. He returned in 1997 and has been there ever since.

“I’m convinced now that teaching is where I’m supposed to be, and it’s where God wants me, although I would hardly say that about anything else,” he says. In June, Tom received the Greenlawn campus’s Teacher of the Year Award.

Trinity Schools’ rapid rise is surprising, but if you ask President Kerry Koller he’ll tell you that it wasn’t purchased with personal riches or hefty government grants. This new way to do education was purchased by teachers with the same stuff Jesus used to bring us into a new kingdom: poverty, humility and sufferings.

“I have enormous respect for these brothers and sisters,” Kerry says. “They teach at our three campuses because they are convinced that the People of Praise is building the kingdom of God in Trinity Schools, and they are willing to make enormous sacrifices to further that work. They have exactly the kind of spirit we need to build new cities.”

Interested in teaching at Trinity Schools? Send a cover letter, your resume and a completed application to Kerry at kjkoller@trinityschools.org. Applications are available at www.trinityschools.org/faculty.
The Company: For Friendship and City-Building

By Bill Crimmins

If it’s a few minutes after seven o’clock on a warm July Indiana morning and you’re sitting around a motley collection of tables with 12 other guys, sweat dripping from your nose as you cool off from your morning run across the flat Midwestern landscape, and you’re staring wearily and perhaps warily into your bowl of oatmeal, you might be asking yourself: Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going? And perhaps even: Excuse me, but isn’t this the seventh or eighth time this week we’ve had oatmeal for breakfast?

Now, these are excellent questions, the kind that sends a frisson of excitement down the spine of any Trinity School Humane Letters Seminarian instructor, the kind that human beings have been asking themselves since the dawn of human consciousness, since Prometheus stole fire from heaven so that man could boil up his first primordial pot of oatmeal.

And they are particularly timely if you are John Xenakis from the northern Virginia branch, or Matt Brickweg, Ben Reinhardt, Rus Lyons or John Bowar from Servant Branch, and you’re part of the group of five young men who have come to South Bend to attend this year’s eight-week Company Summer Institute (CSI), and your summer job, besides stripping and repainting 520 feet of the black wrought-iron fence at Greenlawn, is to determine whether or not the Lord is calling you to devote the next several years of your life to following Jesus and building People of Praise cities as a part of the community’s Company.

However, if you aren’t gathered around those tables and you aren’t sleeping in triple bunkbeds in an all-male household umpteen to a room or wearing identical uniforms of Wal-Mart khakis and white t-shirts, uniforms which are designed to bind their owners together as members of a small fraternity, setting them apart from those around them and (this may be the most important element!) simplifying their laundry sorting situation a bit, then you may be wondering just what the CSI is, or for that matter what the Company itself is (though you have perhaps heard it mentioned obliquely from time to time). And these are most excellent questions.

According to Nick Holovaty, who currently heads the Company (under the direction of program coordinator Paul DeCelles), the idea was born in the early spring of 2004 in brainstorming sessions he held with close friends J-T Kelly and Sean Connolly. These men treasured their mutual friendships and noticed a new kind of friendship breaking out among the young men they knew in the community, a friendship which was centered around city-building work. They noted that modern society tends to be hostile toward the formation of real Christian men and their relationships with one another, challenging and eroding those relationships, and leading them off in different directions. They wanted to counteract these forces, deepening their bonds of male friendship while simultaneously serving the Lord by building People of Praise cities. Thus the initial raisons d’etre of the Company.

In order to bring the Company into being, they needed a mechanism, an experience to bond a group of men together. So they decided to invite some other young men from the community.
People of Praise to spend the summer of 2004 together in a single men’s household, working, sleeping and eating together, as well as giving and listening to talks on common life, friendship in the Lord, and People of Praise city-building. At the end of that summer, 15 young men, plus Sean, Nick and J-T, agreed to form the Company. They made commitments for one, two or three years (depending on their differing life circumstances), and agreed not to date during their terms.

Last summer, the Company ran a similar program for young men which yielded seven additional members, and this year Ed Preuss of the South Bend branch is leading another group of candidates, which means that Ed is the one sitting at the head of those tables at the house in South Bend after the morning run, explaining the metaphysical link between bland hot breakfast cereals and profound Christian brotherhood.

At about this point in the article, you probably begin thinking to yourself, this sounds a lot like the Brotherhood. Granted, it does sound like the Brotherhood, but there are some significant differences. Most important among them, the Company is primarily for men aged 18 to 25 who sign up for short-term commitments, usually two- and three-year stints. It is not a lifetime commitment. In addition, a lot of these guys will eventually marry. The idea is not a life of permanent celibacy, but a temporary freedom from other commitments which makes Company men highly deployable to serve our city-building efforts.

There is another idea as well. Did you ever stop to think where the next generation of People of Praise leaders might come from? The Clems and Buds and Kevins, the Kerrys and Pauls, the Bob McDonoughs, the guys to take the baton and charge forward into the thick of the 21st century? (Keep in mind that our future holds 200 branches with 1,000 members each.) Those guys were (Were? Are!) giants, Olympians, colossi of community-building. They aren’t just a bunch of great minds sitting around thinking. They conceive of tremendous ideas, and then put flesh and blood upon them. They bring things alive. They make things happen. When things don’t work, they fix them. They get their hands dirty and bruise and bloody their knuckles, banging them against the nuts and bolts, the complex mechanisms of common life. (If you have a particularly rich community life, complete with deep and meaningful relationships, well-raised and educated children, a provident and resourceful way of life, and the spiritual, financial and material support of your brothers and sisters, chances are these guys bear a lot of the responsibility.)

So I repeat, where do you think the next generation of such leaders might come from? If you thought of Mike Wacker, heading up the campus division in their city-building efforts in Dinkytown, if you thought of Nathan Barrett, leading this summer’s big push in Allendale, or Brian Couch, running the home-repair effort there, or if you pictured David Zimmel, managing the Windows, Doors and More retail business, or Nick Holovaty, drafting the
talks and making the speeches that deliver the inspiration to a few hundred Allendale volunteers, or if you recalled Ed Preuss, the oatmeal and this summer’s CSI, you might have said “the Company,” and if you did, (and you’re a male between the ages of 18 and 25) you may have just won an all-expenses-paid eight-week summer vacation in South Bend.

Now, in this short article you’ve learned a bit about the Company, but you might like to know a little more about what it looks like in real life. What it looks like is Rob Brickweg, a business major at the University of Portland (UP) who wears a coat and tie to his business classes to show that he is serious about his education (how odd is that?) and because he wants people to notice him. Not, of course, because Rob is starved for attention, but because he wants people to start conversations with him, giving him the opportunity to tell them about the People of Praise and the Company and city-building and so on.

The Company looks like young men from Portland who hold morning prayer together before class in one of the UP dormitory chapels in hopes of attracting the attention of dorm residents, or the Company men living at the University of Minnesota in Dinkytown who held daily social events last semester outside their converted frat house, which eventually led guys, total strangers like Rus Lyons from a neighboring frat house, to come over and check it out, and get interested and come underway in the People of Praise, and move to South Bend this summer to consider joining the Company.

The Company looks like Nick, Nathan, Brian, David, Kevin, Josh and Joe, all in Allendale this summer, planning a summer camp for the local kids, lining up neighborhood home-repair projects, building a new house, managing Windows, Doors and More, etc.

If this doesn’t satisfy you, or if it piques your curiosity, next time you’re in Allendale or Dinkytown or Portland or South Bend, drop by and visit one of the Company households, and don’t just take my word for it. Share in the excitement. Go and see.

**Company Facts:**

- **Number of Members:** 23
- **Leader:** Nick Holovaty, reporting to program coordinator Paul De-Cellies.
- **Members:** Nathan Barrett, Rob Brickweg, Josh Canef, Michael Conney, Sean Connolly, Brian Couch, Kevin Daly, Thomas Duddy, Jon Gapp, Joe Gleason, Nick Holovaty, J-T Kelly, Tom McNichol, Jr., Abe Olson, Jeremy Osterhouse, Ed Preuss, Rich Preuss III, Dan Reinbold, T.J. Ryan, David Salmon, Mike Wacker, Eric Yost, David Zimmel.
- **Branches they hail from:** New Orleans, northern Virginia, Oahu, Servant Branch, South Bend.
- **Where they live now:** Allendale, Dinkytown, Norfolk, VA (where Rich Preuss III is training with U.S. Navy SEALs), South Bend, Spain (where T.J. Ryan is taking Spanish classes).
- **Colleges they attend:** Minneapolis Community and Technical College, University of Minnesota, University of Notre Dame, University of Portland, U.S. Naval Academy.
- **College majors:** architecture, chemistry, classics, computer science, electrical engineering, English, finance, history, management, mass communications, mathematics, mechanical engineering, nursing, philosophy, physics, political science.
- **Estimated Company total oatmeal consumption in a single summer:** 130 pounds.
- **Company record for most push-ups in 2 minutes:** 103.
- **Company record for most situps in 2 minutes:** 109.

**Back cover:** Company member Jon Gapp (Servant Branch) sprays the fence at Greenlawn in preparation for painting.
Meet
Rich Preuss
By Claire Holovaty

Rich Preuss refused no fewer than five Life in the Spirit Seminar invitations as a Notre Dame student. Almost 30 years later, he is so full of enthusiasm that he started a 50-yard-long conga line parade at a South Bend branch Easter meeting.

“As soon as Rich joined the community, he was all the way in,” says Mike Zusi, who serves with him on the board of governors. “He was sold out for the Lord from the word ‘go.’”

Rich joined the People of Praise because of the dogged efforts of his college roommate Gus Zuehlke (South Bend). In 1977, before the

“In high school I thought Christianity was kind of wimpy,” he says. “Then I met these guys who were real men and Christians too, and it made Christianity much more attractive.” Manly Christianity at Notre Dame led Rich to become an associate member of the Brotherhood and to abandon his goal of making the varsity soccer team. Chris Rowland (South Bend), who attended Notre Dame with him, says, “Rich was good enough to have played for the Notre Dame soccer team, but he gave that up for the Lord and for the community.” The decision paid off. Rich, Gus, Brian Gaffney (Servant Branch) and four other underwary students helped bring over 50 men into the People of Praise in a four-year period.

Rich married Beth Healy in 1983, and they have nine children, from ages 21 to 4. They have given talks on parenting and family life in branches all over the community. “Beth and I work as a team,” Rich says. “Our objective is to raise young men and women who will give their lives to the Lord and to building God’s kingdom.”

Last May, Rich traveled to Colorado Springs to give the men’s retreat. Rick Busekrus reports that his men’s group is still discussing Rich’s talk on heading their wives and families. Rich also influenced Rick’s understanding of his family at a leaders’ conference in 1991. “I was telling Rich and Zyg Mazanowski (Indianapolis) about the challenges I was having in raising kids, and that we were probably going to stop at three,” Rick says. “But the way they talked about the richness and fullness of life in a large family made a deep impression. I went home after that and talked to my wife. We have eight children now.”

After graduating cum laude in finance and earning a master’s degree in theology, Rich started working for his father-in-law Ed Healy at The Healy Group. In the 24 years since, Rich has helped expand The Healy Group’s financial services from life insurance sales to include other areas of insurance and personal financial advising. Rich, now a co-owner, is a personal financial advisor, helping people make good decisions about investments, retirement planning and the like.

Christin Joy Rose, Rich’s assistant and a member of the South Bend branch, says, “Rich is very concerned about his clients. If a spouse dies, he’s very committed to helping them. He’s especially helpful to new widows.” Many brothers and sisters from various branches rely on him for their financial planning. Rich was also involved in The Healy Group’s
recruiting and hiring of seven community members.

Rich brings his astute business sense to the service of the community. He is on the LaSalle Company board, as well as LaSalle’s committee on new business ventures. As Action program coordinator, he made Action financially viable, setting up the current fundraising system, where local Action groups raise funds to pay for their members to travel to Allendale, and help cover Action’s operating costs as well.

Everyone fortunate enough to know Rich has also experienced his humor and relish for good fun. When there’s a fake cockroach on a keyboard, his co-workers know that he is involved. Rich shares everything funny that he finds on the Internet, calling out to anyone passing his office to come and share his delight. His sense of fun enters into community meetings and public meetings, too. Besides Rich’s Easter conga line during “Oh When the

“You can’t contain love, you can’t limit it, you can’t defeat it.”

—Joel Kibler

Saints Go Marching in,’ he is also known for dancing and jumping to the music, and encouraging others to join his celebration.

Rich is the South Bend Action coordinator, has previously served as area coordinator, and was elected to the board of governors in 2000. He is a true man of integrity. All he is and does arises out of his relationship with his Father and his call to the People of Praise. “Rich will go anywhere and do anything for the Lord,” Joel Kibler (Servant Branch) says. “He knows how to make People of Praise culture happen in the home and business.” Mike Zusi agrees: “He’s always been a leader in our generation—the one that a lot of us go to for advice about anything.”

By Sharon E. Gouveia

This past Christmas my mother asked if I could write an article for Vine & Branches. “I want to thank people,” she said, “and let them know what the Lord has done for me.” A few months later, I will finally get to that task, although now I have to modify it.

The eulogy for my mom opened with the question, “How can anyone begin to summarize Carrie’s life in such a brief period of time?” The long answer could take years, if it meant telling you all about my mom. But the short answer? It can be summarized as this: Love never fails.

Carrie Jean Gouveia was born 59 years ago on January 28, 1947. She was the oldest of four sisters and loved it. However, she was born into a tremendously poor family experiencing many struggles. Her father was an alcoholic and died when she was 12, her mother was emotionally frail and eventually suffered a nervous breakdown, delegating large responsibilities to Carrie. Though my mom had a difficult youth, she excelled in school. Her mind was quick and sharp, highly pragmatic, and she took an interest in the sciences, eventually earning her degree in biology. Along with her intellectual pursuits, my mother engaged in numerous social activities with her sisters and friends. She loved to dance and was known as a vibrantly energetic person.

At the age of 19 she developed rheumatoid arthritis. The pain and stiffness progressed rapidly in her joints. She required help to dress in the morning, comb her hair, and make her way around campus. Despite increasing limitations, she not only finished college with high grades, but she also managed to find a man who fell completely in love with her. One morning while she was struggling up a hill at school, my father offered her a ride. And the rest of the story, they say . . . bore fruit for a beautiful 36 years.

During their first year of marriage, she began a lengthy series of joint surgeries related to arthritis, beginning with her knees. Throughout the years she underwent replacement of knuckles in both hands, removal of damaged bones in both feet, bilateral artificial hip replacements, replacement knuckle implants in both hands, replacement of a worn-out artificial hip, total knee replacement, removal and replacement of the other artificial hip, total knee replacement of the opposite knee, and finally, last fall, attempted revision of the other hip. After that operation, the surgeon stated there was so little bone left he doubted whether she’d be able to return to weight-bearing activities.

In addition to arthritis, she was diagnosed with systemic lupus in 1976 but responded well to treatments. In late 2000, she was diagnosed with a new disease, pure red cell aplasia, which prevented production of red blood cells. For the next two years, she required blood transfusions every three weeks.

Through all this, my dad was at her side. Hospital staff knew him as “the man who never left his wife.” He knew all about her diseases, their complications, whether she was having a good day or a bad day, how certain medicines worked and didn’t work, how to talk to doctors, how to nag doctors when necessary. In everything, he was her defender and protector. During the eulogy, Tom Duddy honored my father for his “constant care, attention, devotion and affection” and for being “God’s loving providence in Carrie’s life.” As my mother asked of me five months ago at Christmas, I honor my father for loving her as only he could, with a love unsurpassed.

My parents became part of the charismatic renewal in the 1970s, and my mom was baptized in the Holy Spirit in 1974. This was an important juncture in her life, the first time she felt God’s love in a tangible and con-
You can’t contain love, you can’t limit it, you can’t defeat it. She said once that, during the early stages of her illness, she often felt desolate and accumulated a lot of anger and resentment toward God. But her own baptism in the Holy Spirit and my dad’s unshakable faith led her back to the Lord and away from her fears.

My parents became integral to the discernment process, training and establishment of the Oahu branch. On December 9, 1984, they were with 11 others who made the covenant of the People of Praise. She treasured her commitment to the community. Despite serious physical limitations, she loved opening her home as a gathering place, cared for numerous household members, participated in and planned fundraising for Action and, perhaps most importantly, she made sure her mind, heart and time were always available to the many sisters within the branch. What her hands could not do, her voice and love could. She listened with tremendous empathy and compassion to her sisters’ needs and struggles. It is remarkable how many women consider my mom as their best friend and confidante. Over the years, these women also became her transportation system, companions to doctors’ visits, and cooks (for her specific dietary needs), and until the very end they made sure they were always available to her.

My mom was the most active chronically ill person you could have met. Her body did not limit her or her desire to live fully. In 1982, my parents adopted Jonathan, a little boy from Korea, and in 1985 they adopted me, a girl from the Philippines. In the last couple of years, she planned an Alaskan cruise and a trip to Newfoundland. Most recently, she was planning another cruise to Australia and New Zealand. In everything, my mom always demonstrated a deep love of life, never focusing on what she couldn’t do but maximizing what she could. She celebrated.

As she said in a recent testimony while her blood disease was worsening, “During this time, a crucial change took place in me. I decided that God loved me no matter what was happening with my health. My husband and I began to celebrate life in every circumstance. We often went out to dinner to celebrate some bad news from the doctors...[and] we had many opportunities to celebrate bad news.”

Eventually, her bone marrow stopped producing platelets. She required platelet transfusions every three days in addition to her red cell transfusions. In January she agreed to a second round of intense chemotherapy, knowing that the side effects could result in death. Despite tremendous efforts by her physicians and numerous consultants, she succumbed to the effects of her underlying disease and its treatment, passing away on March 7, 2006. She died as beautifully as anyone could. Those of us surrounding her were singing, “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases...”

My last telephone conversations with her were always brief and to the point. “Sharon,” she’d say, “I can’t talk because I’m too tired. But God loves you, I love you,” and then we’d hang up. It may have frustrated me then, but she told me exactly what I needed to know. All I needed to know. She said these precise words to others: to her friends, to my father. When they heard more bad news at the hospital, my dad would pace and worry, and all my mom would say is, “Enough, Ron. You are a son of God!” She was letting him know God’s love is enough.

The love of the Father never failed her, and the love of my own father never failed her, and the love of the People of Praise never failed her, and because of all that my mum never allowed life to fail her. Not too long ago, she wrote to me: “I pray that you will experience everlasting love.” While it struck me as strange at the time, because it was written inside my birthday card, I understand now that she was telling me she knew what infinite love was like. She wanted all of us to know what the Lord has done. Tom Duddy closed her eulogy with: “You can’t contain love, you can’t limit it, you can’t defeat it.” This had been her life: Love never fails.
What would you do if you were asked to give a retreat on two days’ notice and you didn’t have time to write any talks? Here’s a digital-age idea: Log on to peopleofpraise.org, click the links for the Center for Christian Studies file library and download a copy of the Pentecost Seminar. That’s exactly what Mary Timler, a member of the South Bend branch’s campus division, did when she found herself in that position in May. Mary got the talks from the file library, adapted them for her eighth-grade listeners, and used them to help seven young women decide to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. Amazing!

Besides being a retreat lifesaver, the Center for Christian Studies file library is a historical archive, a home for heroic stories and a repository for fascinating facts. Did you know that Kerry Koller first used the term “revolution” to describe the community in 1988? . . . And that he then reintroduced the term in a 1998 talk to college students? You can find the 1998 talk, and find out what Kerry was talking about, in the file library.

“Community members often ask for reading recommendations,” says Mary Frances Sparrow, the library’s director. “The community has a wealth of resources, but for many years most of them were not easily accessible. The goals of the file library are simple, to gather together readings that will help members to understand the community better, and to make those readings easy to get to.”

Like any library, the CCS file library contains a variety of items organized by topic. Some items come from community conferences, such as last March’s Leaders’ Conference for Women; others, like the Pentecost Seminar and the Community Weekend Manual, are official community teachings. The oldest item in the library dates back to 1986. (It’s an interview with Paul DeCelles on our being a provident and resourceful people.) Unlike most libraries, there are no cards, no due dates and no fines. And if you shout when you find what you’re looking for, no one is going to tell you to quiet down!

The File Library on Peopleofpraise.org

By Catherine Bulger

1. I want to access the file library, but I don’t have a peopleofpraise.org account. What should I do?
   There is someone in your branch who can help, the LSA (local site administrator). If you don’t know who your LSA is, ask around your branch or talk to your branch coordinator or leader.

2. I’m on the Internet, but how do I get to the file library?
   First, type www.peopleofpraise.org into your web browser and click on the name of your branch. On your branch’s home page, enter your user name and password in the empty fields located in the left-hand sidebar. After you have logged in, you will see the words “Center for Christian Studies” in the left-hand sidebar. Click on them. Once you’re on the CCS home page, you will see a link that says “file library” on your left. Click on it and you’re in!

3. Help! I can’t remember my user name and password. What do I do?
   Your LSA can help you with this problem, too!

Discernment talks from the 2006 Leaders’ Conference for Women

Did that thought come from Satan? From God? Or was it the unhappy result of that egg salad sandwich I ate for lunch? This series of six talks by Mary Frances Sparrow is full of practical tips for recognizing who’s who and what’s what when it comes to the competing pushes and pulls inside our hearts and minds. The series elaborates on the rules for the discernment of spirits in Ignatius of Loyola’s Spiritual Exercises.
What’s in the File Library?

There are six sections: Growth, Life in the Spirit, Life Together, Scripture, “For the Record” Columns and Working Papers. Click on a name to see what’s in that section:

Growth

1. Through the Valley of the Kwai: In Thailand, despite the sort of conditions that reduce men to beasts, British prisoners in World War II developed a city of God. Overall Coordinator Craig Lent narrates the heroic story of POW Ernest Gordon and his compatriots, who built a railroad through the jungle and created a Christian community in a brutal Japanese prison camp.

2. FAQ Consultation on Growth: “Isn’t a 13% annual growth rate for the community kind of unrealistic?“ “Are we saying that everyone is called to the community?” Do you have questions about community growth? Find answers in this document from last spring’s communitywide consultation.

3. Lifelines: Have you found yourself a bit tongue-tied when asked by a stranger to describe the community? Discover the words you need on this list of 54 punchy statements about life in the People of Praise, including “Pentecost isn’t a one-time experience” and “There’s something here worth giving your whole life for.” Each of the simple but pointed statements can lead into a serious conversation about the community.

4. Powerpoint from the 2005 Leaders’ Conference for Men. Craig Lent’s call for the community to build 200 cities in the next 40 years and raise our total membership to 200,000. The presentation explains why we need to grow and what our strategies are, as well as the basic structures of the community and information about city-building. Check out the charts and graphs.

Life in the Spirit

1. The Pentecost Seminar: A series of six talks that aims to answer the questions, “What does it look like when God acts?” and “What does it mean to be baptized in the Holy Spirit?” This seminar is helpful not only for people giving the entire set of talks, but for anyone looking to gain new insights or to pray with someone to be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Life Together

1. Conversation Talks: “You can know without loving, but you can’t love without knowledge. Knowledge is the gateway to love.” Mary Frances Sparrow offers her reflections on how to have conversations that promote greater knowledge and love between sisters. Worksheets are included.

2. The Community Weekend Manual: Everything you need to introduce a group of people to the day-by-day details of life in the People of Praise. This 75-page document is full of carefully honed explanations of our life—from men’s and women’s groups to ecumenism to community governance and finances.

Scripture

1. Talks on the Father: “Anyone who has seen me has seen my Father,” Jesus said. In these talks, Paul DeCelles uses Scripture to study Jesus’ life: his generosity, his constant labors and his experiences with rejection. Paul uses Jesus’ life to reveal a lot about our Father.

2. Hardships: The apostle Paul was threatened, beaten, run out of town, hauled into court without cause, imprisoned, shipwrecked and constantly on the move. He even struggled with loneliness and fear. Yet, everywhere he went, he left behind stronger Christians and new communities. In this talk, Paul DeCelles says that hardships aren’t a sign of failure. In fact, they just might be indicators that things are going right.

“For the Record” Columns

These interviews with former Overall Coordinator Paul DeCelles were a staple of Vine & Branches. Here are some classic columns, including “Children and the Community,” “Money and Our Common Life,” “Attire,” “Our Properties,” “Being Sent,” and 10 more.

Working Papers


2. Revolutionary Christianity: Have you ever wondered how the term “revolution” came into community parlance? This is the 1998 Kerry Koller-spun big-picture talk that brought back the term. Surveying the global scene from Algeria to America, Kerry reveals the all-out war between our Lord and his enemies. “The world is in enemy hands and Christ is leading a revolution.” ■
Learning from New Community Members

V&B Staff Writers

Editor’s Note: At the 2005 Leaders’ Conference for Men, Maurice Valerio (New Orleans) encouraged attendees to interview newly underway members to find out why they had joined the community and learn the ingredients for effective outreach. Here are four brief profiles of community members who have come underway within the last year or so. They found what they were looking for, and often very much more.

Jerry and Linda Wright, a couple in their late 50s, moved to Muncie from Cincinnati in 1983. They had been introduced to charismatic prayer through the Cursillo movement, and in Muncie they hoped to find a new charismatic prayer group to replace the one they were leaving behind. It took the Wrights 22 years in their new city to discover the People of Praise, but once they found us it was only a few weeks before they came underway.

“I was looking in the wrong place,” Linda says. “I was looking for charismatic prayer groups in the newsletter from church.”

The Wrights’ decades-long search came to an end one fortuitous day in 2005 when Linda was playing golf with a priest from her parish. She made a remark about the lack of charismatic prayer groups in Muncie. The priest encouraged her to check into the People of Praise. Linda got Tom Schmitt’s phone number from a nun at the parish who had attended our public meetings. She called Tom and found out there was a meeting the next evening. The Wrights went, and they loved it.

“We knew, we just absolutely knew this was what we needed, this was what we wanted,” Linda says. “This was exactly what I had been waiting for since we left Cincinnati.”

“We jumped on board right away,” Jerry adds. “We started meeting with Tom. We came underway fast.” Within a few weeks, in November of 2005, the Wrights became the Muncie branch’s newest members.

Jerry and Linda both call the friendship they’ve experienced in the branch overwhelming. “I was very impressed with the teachings, very impressed with the music ministry,” Jerry says, “and the people were just overwhelmingly friendly. They make you feel like you’ve known them forever, when in reality you’ve just met them.” Linda adds, “Everybody was just so open to us. It was overwhelming that everyone was so happy to have us there, truly happy. People were sincere, and I could feel that.”

Now the Wrights are trying to help people who are in the position they were in—they’re passing out flyers advertising upcoming community events. “That’s what it’s all about,” Linda says. “Spread the word.”

Rebecca Sklorenko, 18, grew up in the South Bend and Indianapolis branches, and will be a freshman at Marian College in the fall. She says she always thought she would join the community sometime as an adult, but her friendship with a community sister who moved away from the branch to do city-building work helped her make that decision earlier than expected, while she was still a high-school student.

“Genevieve DeCelles was a big influence on me,” she says. “Gen-
evieve moved to Dinkytown from Indianapolis, and I saw why she was moving, and how she was really following the Lord, and it made me realize that I should really start taking action with my life.”

Genevieve and Rebecca kept their friendship going through e-mail, and Rebecca asked Genevieve to serve as her confirmation sponsor. She says Genevieve never prodded her toward the community, and Genevieve notes that Rebecca was always the one who initiated their conversations about the People of Praise.

“I’m not the type of person who likes people telling me to do things,” Rebecca says. “My parents never pressured me to join, which was another big thing.”

After praying about the decision for a year, Rebecca decided she was ready.

“I decided, I should just make a decision, and stop letting Satan take over my life. I needed to stop saying, ‘Maybe I should just wait another year.’”

Rebecca says she was pleased by the reactions of her parents, the branch and her high-school-aged friends. “Everyone was really surprised, actually. Everyone was really happy. I didn’t get any negative comments from any of the teenagers in the branch. They were all really happy for me too.”

*R * *

**Ruth Christor** is a retired nurse’s aide and a lifelong resident of Shreveport’s Allendale neighborhood. She first encountered the community in the summer of 2002, when Sean Connolly and J-T Kelly invited Ruth, her daughter Valerie and Valerie’s six children to a barbecue with the first community Action team. Her first meeting with the community left her a bit perplexed.

“When I first met J-T and Sean, they said they was gonna build some houses on Yale, and they asked me what I think of it. I told them I didn’t have nothing against it, but I was kind of shocked because I didn’t know them. You know, they were moving into a black neighborhood, so I didn’t know what to think.”

Over the course of that first summer, Ruth’s grandchildren became friends with Sean, J-T and the Action team members. Ruth says it was through her grandchildren that she started to warm up to the neighborhood newcomers. In the fall of 2002, Ruth and Valerie began attending weekly Thursday night prayer meetings.

LaCondra Rock, 16, one of Ruth’s granddaughters, remembers those meetings. “We sang songs, prayed for everyone who was in need of prayer, and sometimes Val and J-T would even get together and cook before the meeting so we could have dinner together. It was really fun.” Ruth cooked, too, classic soul food dishes like fried catfish, dirty rice and jambalaya with chicken and sausage.

As the weeks of meetings turned into a couple of years, peppered with friendly visits, barbecues and other good times, Ruth grew close to the community members in Allendale. She rarely missed a Thursday night meeting. She says she was particularly moved when People of Praise members came to visit her during a hospital stay for heart troubles and high blood pressure.

In the fall of 2005, when J-T invited Ruth to come underway, she was quick to accept. “Well, you know I’d gotten so close to him,” she says. “And I’d been going to every meeting, so I went on and joined.”

Nathan Barrett says that Ruth has made invaluable contributions to neighborhood outreach. “She has been extremely loyal to the community. She’s defended our role in the neighborhood and been very eager to talk about us with other neighbors.”

Ruth gives her neighbors and visiting Action team members the same short message: “In the People of Praise, we’re like one big family.”

*R * *

continued on next page
Mike Stapp, 24, grew up in Greensburg, IN, a small town of about 10,000 southeast of Indianapolis. When he was 19, he moved to Hawaii, where he spent a few years drinking and partying and wound up losing his faith. In 2003, God saved him from that life. He started going back to church and getting involved with Catholic youth ministry and prison outreach.

Mike first met Michael and Malia Busekrus because they were housing some youth-ministry volunteers he knew. He used to go over to their house from time to time to visit volunteers, sometimes staying for supper, and that’s where he first heard about the community.

Mike says he was skeptical during those early conversations. “My first reaction was that it seemed too surreal. These people can’t seriously be this in love with God and their community!”

In 2005, the Busekruses invited Mike to attend the Oahu branch family camp. Mike says he went because it sounded like fun and because the camp had a waterslide. While he was there, he noticed that the children were well behaved and that community marriages were high-quality. He had had a longstanding desire to be a good husband and father, and he says he started to envision the community as a good place to be if he ever got married. He was eager for formation.

When Carrie Gouveia died, Mike attended the wake out of gratitude for the kindnesses he had received from community members. “I was awestruck with the absolute beauty of the service,” he says. “It was awesome. Every woman in the community considered Carrie her best friend.” Near the end of the wake, Donald Busekrus shared about Carrie’s love for the People of Praise, making a direct pitch for community life. Mike was listening.

“To me, this was the moment that I knew the People of Praise was my future. I turned to my friend and said, ‘Where do I sign?’ Within an hour of the wake I was getting as much info as I could about the People of Praise.” Mike came underway within a few weeks.

Since then, he says he’s seen big changes in his life, including a new job working for Donald Busekrus’ building supply business. Mike took the job in part because Donald was talking about using his business to build the kingdom of God. He’s been working 40 hours a week and finishing up his history degree at Hawaii Pacific University.

He has also been lending a hand with Oahu branch growth efforts. Five singles have joined in the last few months, and Mike, eager to foster that growth, visited South Bend to learn more about outreach. He also says that he’s grateful for the formation he’s receiving. “To me, calling the People of Praise a community is a complete understatement. I believe we are a true example of a Christian family, caring for our brothers and sisters while collectively building the kingdom of God.”

LifeNotes

Congratulations to Gene Stowe (South Bend), whose book Inherit the Land: Jim Crow Meets Miss Maggie’s Will has been published by the University Press of Mississippi. The book is available online and through bookstores.

Congratulations to David Brookman (St. Petersburg, FL) and Elizabeth Jennings (Tampa) on their marriage May 21 at the Church of the Resurrection in Tampa.

Terry Bomkamp (Rockford) celebrated his 30th anniversary with honors with Sodexho Corporation on May 30.

Congratulations to Matt Ridenour (Northern Virginia branch) who has been commissioned a second lieutenant in the US Army.

Congratulations to Mark Olson and Julie Kadera (Burnsville, MN), who were married at St. John Neumann Catholic Church in Eagan, MN, on May 27.

We remember with affection and love our sister Gen Geyer, a member of Servant Branch, who died recently. Please pray for her family and friends at this time of loss.

Board of Governors News:

During an elective assembly on May 17, two men were elected to terms of office on the board of governors of the People of Praise. A term on the board of governors runs for six years, and a member may be elected for a second six-year term. Rich Preuss, who had already served one term, was elected to a second term, and Mike Coney, principal branch coordinator in New Orleans, was elected to a first term.

Mike and Linda Coney live in Metairie, LA, and have seven children, all grown. Mike is a corporate attorney for Shell Oil Company. See our profile of Rich Preuss on page 7.
Steve and Ameec Pable (Neenah, WI) are joyfully celebrating the birth of Nathaniel Stephen on May 6.

Ray and Kim Gonzalez (Fishers, IN) were happy to welcome Claire Elizabeth into their family on April 8.

Steve and Sarah Willard (Bloomington, MN) were doubly blessed to become the parents of Elizabeth Clare and Mariah Terese on April 4.

Pete and Megan Sgroi are thanking God for the arrival of Monica Claire on June 1.

Steve and Teresa Ambrose (Roscoe, IL) opened their hearts and home to Maximilian Kolbe on May 13.

Jim and Nadine Reinhardt (Burnsville, MN) are happy to be announcing the birth of Samuel Jens on March 3.

Chris and Mari Dausman (Rockford) are praising God for the gift of Ann Therese on May 6.

From the Executive Office

New Orleans:
Lloyd Mehaffey has been appointed to a third three-year term of office as an area coordinator, effective June 3, 2006.

Servant Branch:
Ginny Annala, Penny Arndt, Christine Brickweg and Fran Willard have been elected for three-year terms as handmaids, effective May 21.

Jim and Mary Gearen were released from the covenant of the People of Praise on June 2, 2006.

South Bend:
John and Kathy Coriden were released from the covenant of the People of Praise on June 27, 2006.

David Niswonger was released from the covenant of the People of Praise on June 27, 2006.

Brian Rawlins is no longer covenant-ed, as of May 28.

New Orleans:
Congratulations to Bill Wiltz and Pam Wiltz, who made the covenant of the People of Praise on Easter Sunday, April 16, 2006.
“For the Lord your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands” (Dt. 2:7).