Reaching Out to Women

Growth efforts in Allendale, Muncie, Oahu, Servant Branch and South Bend

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Outreach to Women

By Elizabeth Grams

Last March, a few women from Muncie got into a car for the drive home from the Leaders’ Conference for Women and began brainstorming about ways to bring women into their branch. Thanks to the leaders’ conference and many other promptings from the Lord to reach out, seeds of growth have blossomed not only in Muncie but all around the community. They’ve turned up a host of new ways—from watercolor parties to flower arranging parties to pool parties—to share community life with other women.

Ron and Ruthanne Seitz moved from South Bend to Allendale in 2005, to help grow the community through city-building work there. Looking at the neighborhood, Ruthanne noticed how alone many women seemed, like strangers who were living next door to one another. She thought of starting a Bible study as a way of getting them together. “The Lord began to poke me about it,” she says. “I said I was busy, but then he told me he was preparing the hearts of the women who would come.”

“I said I was busy, but then the Lord told me he was preparing the hearts of the women who would come.”

—Ruthanne Seitz

Ruthanne began recruiting, finding it slow going at first. “You have to sit down and talk for a while, and then invite them, and then they say no, and then you talk more, and then they begin to ask questions.” Much
to her surprise, though, eight women came to one of the first Bible studies, and today a steady group of five meet on Tuesdays at the Seitzes’ to study Scripture and pray. “I call them about an hour ahead to remind them,” she says. “Today one woman forgot, came home and heard the message and came late. She says that she always feels better when she leaves the Bible study. It’s important to her and to the other women.”

Other individual women have answered the call: Rita Frenz (Servant Branch) asked the Lord what she could do in her neighborhood and wound up starting a book club. The club has gotten parents talking to one another, praying together and learning about the People of Praise.

It is also becoming common for groups of People of Praise women to plan growth-oriented events strategically, events engineered to stick visitors into the thick of our sisterhood and ultimately draw them into the community.

Cheryl Schmitt offers advice on arranging flowers to women in the Muncie branch and their guests.

Remember the women in the car from Muncie? They haven’t rested since they got home. They’ve put on new growth-oriented events every other month, inviting women from their churches, workplaces, families and neighborhoods. First, Cheryl Schmitt, a professional floral designer, held a floral arrangement session. Attendees brought bouquets to practice on, and there were so many people and flowers that Sandy Benkeser joked that the room “looked like a funeral home.” Next, the women invited a state trooper to teach them safety tips. They also hosted a watercolor class conducted by Jan Connor, which brought in women of all different ages. “We are desperate to get people in,” Cheryl says. “These events have given us a venue. It’s hard work.”

On top of that hard work, the branch is aggressively publicizing its public meetings, hand-delivering 400 flyers and making door-to-door visits in the neighborhood near their community center. Branch women also head up Girls of Praise, which now includes 26 girls—two-thirds of whom are not daughters of People of Praise families, and a Bible study of 25, three-fourths of whom are women not in the People of Praise. Sandy has noticed that the women who have been coming to the women-only events are coming unaccompanied to
public meetings: a sign that they are getting more comfortable and more interested in the People of Praise.

Back before the leaders’ conference, Susan Rademacher (Servant Branch) began planning an open event with women in her area, inviting a master gardener to teach women how to care for their plants. She hoped for an event that would interest guests by building on strengths she saw in community women—showing hospitality and creating welcoming social environments. In that spirit, sisters decorated lavishly for the event. “When they walked in, guests were taken with the love and care that had gone into the décor,” Susan says. At least 15 of the 50 attendees were guests.

This September, Servant Branch women capitalized again on these strengths, transforming the River Ridge gym into a walk-through village. It was a production of massive proportions, with four different stations headed by mastermind Penny Arndt and three other handmaids: an ice cream parlor, a tea room, a tavern and a bake shop. To make the tea room selections, Veronica Putzier tasted teas around town for months. There were greeters, servers, candles, Devonshire cream, lace, fine china—everything meticulously planned.

Many women commented that they would remember the night for a long time. “People just seemed to linger,” Veronica says. “Our relationships are what our guests need as women,” adds Mary Claassen, “so we create an environment that is conducive to others relating well and having conversations. It’s not only a good environment for them, but it is also good for us.”

In South Bend, the women used to gather only twice a year, for a women’s day of reflection and the women’s retreat. Starting in April of 2005, they began hosting bi-monthly evenings of prayer and praise, open to guests. The evening usually includes worship, talks or prepared sharings, and a time for praying over one another in small groups. At one gathering, for example, Mary Ann Grauvogel shared about the 1980 death of her two-year-old son in a car accident. “When I bring guests it blows them away that we come together and pray, sharing our needs and bringing them to the Lord, and that we naturally do all of this for one another,” Pam Peterson says.

Women all over the People of Praise are responding eagerly to the call for growth, praying and keeping their eyes open for opportunities, using their talents and loves and creativity, taking risks and making investments, acting confidently and boldly as daughters of the Father. Expect lots more, folks. This is only the beginning.

Servant Branch women transformed the River Ridge gym into a walk-through village for an outreach event last September. Upper left (from left): Konnie Jacoby and Patricia Ficker. Lower right (from left): Karen Coleman, Beth Schmitz, Jeanne Stauble.

“Arise, shine out, for your light has come.
The Glory of Yahweh rises upon you. . . .
Nations will come to your light and kings to the brightness of your dawn (Is. 60: 1, 3).”
I was born and raised in Shreveport. I have two sisters, Shalaydra and Sha’Carra, and three brothers, Lemetris, Serterryon and Larry. I was baptized at Hurricane Bluff Baptist Church when I was seven.

When we were growing up, my brothers and sisters and I didn’t all attend the same school, and we weren’t very close to each other when it came to getting along.

When I was eight, our great-grandmother died and our grandmother Ruth moved in with us. As the years passed, things changed. We moved out of our house on Park Street to my great-grandmother’s house on Yale Avenue (one block from the field the People of Praise eventually bought). I didn’t like living on Yale at first, because the people on Harvard and Walnut Streets used to sell drugs and have shootouts.

My older sister and I joined our church praise dance team because we wanted to develop a closer relationship with God. Monday through Friday we had a Bible study, Saturday we had praise dance practice, and Sunday we had church.

During the fifth grade, my life got hard. My momma got divorced and my friend Rosalyn passed away because she had cancer. I thought my life and the life of my family was really going to change, and it did.

It all started about five years ago when my momma, my sisters and brothers and I were headed home from the store. We saw over 10 people in our field—well, at least, we thought it was ours. I told Shalaydra and Lemetris that we should have a talk with them, so we walked over to tell them that it was our field. Then one of the ladies got up and approached us. We didn’t know what to do. She introduced herself to us, so my brother and sister introduced themselves to her, but I didn’t. I didn’t want to give her my identification.

Later that day, two men came walking down our driveway. One had a long beard, a ponytail, and he had glasses. The other didn’t have a beard or a ponytail, but he did have curly hair. My momma and grandma thought they were the cops. Sha’Carra and I thought they were coming to take our brothers away because they had been mean to us, and my other sister and brothers thought they were with some kind of church group or something.

The one with the long beard introduced himself first. He said his name was J-T and then the curly-haired one said his name was Sean. So my momma and grandma introduced themselves to them, and so did my sisters and brothers. My momma told us they were having some kind of barbecue, and she wanted all of us to go and meet some new people from the neighborhood. I looked at her like she had lost her everlasting mind.

When we went to the barbecue, we met over half the people there. I found out that J-T and Sean could really play the guitar, and when they laughed they made you laugh with them.

Later on, we were invited to attend their Thursday night prayer meetings. At the meetings, we sang songs, prayed for everyone, and my momma and J-T even got together to cook before the meetings so we could have dinner together. Along the way, I learned that you can praise Jesus by sharing your life with other people.

When the guys and girls moved in, they changed the neighborhood. We don’t have shootouts anymore, you don’t see people selling drugs as much, and more of the people are getting along better than they did before. Also, my brothers, sisters and I are starting to get along with each other.

I think some of the reasons God has called the People of Praise here was to rebuild Allendale, to help the neighborhood answer God’s call and be obedient to God. I also think God has called the People of Praise here during the summers to do something together—with adults and youths from different branches—to do something as a family.
Ten more reasons to shout.

Our Newly Covenanted Brothers and Sisters

Interviews by Patricia Brewer, David Sklorenko and Sharon Sklorenko
Editor’s note: 10 people made the covenant of the People of Praise in November.

Frank Grant, Kingston, 51, landscaper

Sharing Excerpt: I lost my dad when I was young—you all know how important a dad is to a young man. My life has not been easy and I have made mistakes, but I found in the People of Praise not only men who could answer my questions but men who were like brothers to me. I would not be where I am today without Vince Keaveny, Locksley Robin- son and Glen Gill. Vince is like my dad, Locksley is my practical brother and Glen is the one who told me that God is my Father and that he’s there at all times.

I hope I can be a living example and bring others to God the Father and into the People of Praise.

Helen Grant, Kingston, 49, physical education teacher

Sharing Excerpt: My life has had its share of challenges, but the folks here and in my women’s group have helped me. I feel especially blessed to have been asked to make the covenant and I hope that I can be a real inspiration to others in the time to come. I especially enjoy the teachings that Glen Gill has given over the years. I am a quiet person and I am thankful and blessed by the People of Praise. I want to be a good example of a daughter of the Father.

Lori Gress, Oahu, 55, part-time secretary for the Marriage Tribunal of the Catholic Diocese of Honolulu

What first attracted you to the People of Praise? I noticed that my closest friends were women who were in the People of Praise. When they disappeared once a year for retreats, I yearned to be with them.

What has been your greatest blessing in the community? The love of my brothers and sisters. They are always there for me, no matter where I am or what I am doing. It’s like my brothers and sisters are God’s kingdom here with me. It is hard to come up with specifics because my whole life has changed.

Why did you choose to make the covenant? It was not a major decision. It was what I wanted all along. I spent the last five years learning about the People of Praise. The more I learned, the more I loved the community.
Julie Klein, Oahu, 36, homemaker, semiretired interior designer

What first attracted you to the community? I was introduced to the People of Praise after I met my soon-to-be-husband Harlan in 1993. Realizing that we were in a serious relationship, I started to explore what the People of Praise was and why he was so sold on it. A year later I came underway. I was attracted by women’s group, by the praise and worship and by headship.

What is your greatest blessing in the People of Praise? Learning how to work through relationships. Often, I’ve found myself in a challenging relationship at work or with another parent. Instead of getting defensive or turning away from a problem, I’ve been able to see things from their perspective. I’ve learned how to defuse tense situations either by apologizing or by talking honestly, rather than by turning away and complaining about the situation to someone else. These are practices that I’ve learned through headship and CFS talks.

What’s something you hope to do in the People of Praise in the next few decades? I would love to be in a room surrounded by video-screens where every single branch is telecasted live—all the way from Grenada to Hawaii, just to see the enormity of our community.

Maile Murphy, Oahu, 32, chief of staff for Senator Paul Whalen (Hawaii)

What first attracted you to the People of Praise? The Sisterhood. While I was a student at Notre Dame, Chris Vieck, a Sisterhood member, invited me to stay at her house for a week during Christmas break. That week I was lavished with kind attention and many smiles and I was especially moved during my prayer times. Before staying with the Sisterhood, I wasn’t really interested in the People of Praise. But seeing the life of the People of Praise and feeling the presence of the Holy Spirit really moved me. I joined the People of Praise at the end of the week.

What has been your greatest blessing in the community? The relationships. The People of Praise is very much like family to me. Also, the formation teachings helped me to reorient my relationships, put a check on my speech and give me an idea of what Christian community can be. There have also been people in the community who have inspired me, like Ellen Reed and Lori Twining (South Bend), Joel Kibler and the Bulgers (Servant Branch), and the Duddys (Oahu). I have been able to see more clearly the call to serve, and I feel called to live the richer and fuller Christian life I see in the People of Praise.

Dorothy Over, Kingston, semiretired businesswoman

Sharing Excerpt: I go back many years in the charismatic renewal. I was around for Locksley and Ingrid Robinson’s and Glen and Hopie Gill’s weddings. The People of Praise was there when I had problems in my business and, more recently when I moved temporarily to Belize to support my family, you never let me down. In Belize there was a hole in my heart and I ached to be back with all of you. Today, as I made the covenant with all of you, my heart is full of the love of Christ and is no longer empty.

About a week ago I was frustrated with the company I am working for. Nothing was going well. I prayed and then called Locksley and asked for help. He came and worked the whole day and got me out of the bind I was in. I said to him, “Locksley, how can I pay you for your time?” “Dorothy, today is your day,” he said, and with that, he left. That is what the People of Praise means to me: unconditional love and nothing expected in return.

I hope that I can bring others to Christ and spread the same love to those around me in the years to come.
Kevin Rodriguez, Kingston, 27, mechanical engineer

**Sharing Excerpt:** I have always looked to my family for support, both as a child and now as a young man. My family’s strengths lie in their relationship with the Father and in their relationships in the People of Praise. While studying in the US and Spain, living a Christian life sustained me. My life has changed since then, especially since Anna-Lisa Keaveny and I were married, almost a year ago. We are the first children of original members of the People of Praise in Kingston to make the covenant. Our hope is to keep in contact with the other young people that we grew up with and bring them into our life in the People of Praise once again.

**Why did you decide to make the covenant?** I made the covenant to announce publicly my commitment to the People of Praise. Over the past two years there have been several occasions where the Lord has said in plain simple English, “Community life is your life, my life and the life I want for you all.”

Anna-Lisa Rodriguez, Kingston, 25, teacher

**Sharing Excerpt:** The thing that attracted me to the People of Praise was my mother and dad’s (Vince and Dawn Keaveny) total reliance on God and on the People of Praise. Raising five very different children has been and still is a challenge, but my parents have never strayed from their commitments. They’re a People of Praise couple, and Kevin and I want to model our lives after them.

I made the covenant not just because it is a nice thing to do. It was a free decision that I made in harmony with my husband Kevin, because we want to share our lives with others and help build the People of Praise in Jamaica.

Noel Shirley, Kingston, 50, land surveyor

**What first attracted you to the People of Praise?** The friends I had who were involved in the community at the beginning. We were part of the same prayer group before we joined the People of Praise. Also, the quality of the teachings really impressed me.

**Why did you decide to make the covenant?** I wanted to make the covenant because I have grown tremendously in the People of Praise. Also, going to South Bend once or twice a year since 1998 for leaders’ meetings gave me a bigger view of the community. I decided it was what I wanted.

**How have you changed in the People of Praise?** I have a much more meaningful relationship with Jesus. It is much more challenging and deeper. Since I have had a deeper relationship with Jesus I have been able to love people in a deeper way. We care for one another in very practical ways in the community. Sometimes there are family crises that we help with like a family member would.

**What’s been your greatest blessing in the community?** Being a family, which is what I always wanted. I come from a very small family.

**What would you like to do in the next 10 years in the People of Praise?** I would like to pioneer a couple of programs to help with education, medical needs and the formation of young people in Jamaica, and let more people know about the People of Praise.
Finding treasure in the Magi story

What’s up with Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh?

By Mary Frances Sparrow

Editor’s note: J-T Kelly has written a song based on this reflection. You can listen to it at www.citybuilder.org/magi.

Who were the magi? Where did they come from? They’re mysterious figures, and, adding to the mystery, they only appear in one Gospel, Matthew’s. Information on them is scanty.

Matthew tells us that the magi came to Jerusalem from the east with a question, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?” (Mt. 2:2). That’s all he says about their identity.

It turns out that he isn’t really interested in telling us who the magi were. Instead, he emphasizes their actions: “When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy; and going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh” (Mt. 2:10-11).

The magi are like the man who finds a treasure hidden in a field (Mt. 13:44). In his great joy, he sells everything and buys the field. They too rejoice “exceedingly, with great joy,” opening their treasure boxes before the child Jesus. Why?

Of all the things Matthew could have said about the magi, he chooses to tell us that they offered gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh. What is the significance of these three gifts?

There’s another place in the Bible where gold, frankincense and myrrh appear. In the book of Exodus, Moses spends 40 days and 40 nights on Mt. Sinai listening to God’s instructions, many of which concern the sanctuary. (In Exodus, the sanctuary is also called the “tabernacle,” the “tent of meeting” or the “testimony in the tent of meeting.” As in Exodus, I’ll use these terms interchangeably.) Gold, frankincense and myrrh all appear in connection with the sanctuary.

Gold: God gives Moses instructions “concerning the pattern of the tabernacle [remember, think “sanctuary”], and of all its furniture” (Ex. 25:9). He speaks to Moses about the ark, the mercy seat, the table of the bread of Presence, the lampstand and the altar of incense, telling him to make them out of gold or out of acacia wood overlaid with gold. Much gold will be used in the sanctuary.

Frankincense: After describing the holy anointing oil, God tells Moses to make incense, which will be burned “before the testimony in the tent of meeting” (Ex. 30:36). “Take sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum, sweet spices with pure frankincense (of each there shall be an equal part), and make an incense blended as by the perfumer, seasoned with salt, pure and holy” (Ex. 30:34-35). Frankincense was one of the principal ingredients of the incense burnt on the altar in the sanctuary.

What’s the significance of the sanctuary? When the Israelites wandered for 40 years in the desert, God traveled with them in the sanctuary. He lived there. God says of the tent of meeting, “There I will meet with the people of Israel . . . And I will dwell among the people of Israel, and will be their God” (Ex. 29:43-45). In fact, God brought his people out of the land of Egypt so that he could “dwell among them” (Ex. 29:46).

Later, as described in 1 Kings, when King Solomon builds the Temple he patterns it after the tabernacle built in the desert. Eventually, the Temple replaces the tabernacle as God’s dwelling among his people. The Temple became the new sanctuary.

Back to the Gospels. I mentioned that Matthew is the only Gospel writer to include the magi. Interestingly, he’s also the only one who calls Jesus “Emmanuel,” God with us (Mt. 1:23). He is the only one who reports Jesus’ promise, “Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt. 28:20). Here’s where it gets interesting—Matthew is also the only Gospel writer to record Jesus’ remark, “I tell you, something greater than the temple is here” (Mt. 12:6).

Jesus is Emmanuel. He is the presence of God among his people. He is greater than the tabernacle and greater than the Temple. Even when Solomon built the Temple as a place for God to dwell, he knew “Heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built!” (1 Kg. 8:27). The magi travel for many days and many miles bearing gold, frankincense and myrrh because they want to place them in God’s new presence, his new way of traveling with people, the true temple, then just a tiny baby boy.

“They rejoiced exceedingly with great joy,” opening their treasures.
In the trenches

Service at Work

“I see everything you’re doing for me. Impressive! The love and the faith, the service and persistence... You get better at it every day” (Rv. 2:19, MSG).

By V&B Staff Writers

When the community-run LaSalle Company put together its employee manual, our community teachings, especially Servant School, helped to shape every policy and procedure. Clem Walters’s book To Serve as Jesus Served is directly quoted in the manual, and in another place the manual states explicitly, “This company has one product, service.”

The LaSalle Company also has religion textbooks to sell, a bottom line to maintain and customers to please. How do teachings on service pan out in practice?

Thirty minutes before closing time on a recent Friday afternoon, Sharon Jones took a call from a distraught customer. She needed books for a confirmation course that was scheduled to begin soon—two days later, on Sunday. Because of a mix-up between a revision of a book and a text that had gone out of print, she thought she had ordered the correct edition of the books with plenty of time to spare. She hadn’t. She was stuck with the wrong texts.

Taking care of her became a company effort:

- Sharon talked to her several times and got approval from customer service manager Mike Feeks to send her a package via next-day delivery.
- In the shipping department, Pat McNamara held off closing out the freight meter for the day while he waited for final word about the order.
- Mixell photocopied the lesson plans she would need for the first session and faxed them to her. This required two attempts, because the customer gave the wrong fax number the first time.
- Since she would be getting the books at home rather than at the church, the address listed in the computer had to be changed. This meant Pat had to create new shipping labels at the last minute.
- Debbie’s past experience as a teacher helped her to anticipate one of the customer’s needs. After consultation, the customer decided she needed the introductory material from the teacher’s guide as well as the lesson plans, which had already been sent on their way to her via fax. Start the fax machine again.
- By 4 p.m., an hour past the regular closing time for Fridays, a happy customer had received her lesson plans and introductory texts by fax, along with a promise that the students in the confirmation class would have the books they needed.

“I appreciated the personal attention I received,” the customer said. “They took the extra time to help ensure I had the books, and they even shipped them to my home so that I could use them on Sunday. The staff members are always personal. I have used Communication Center (LaSalle Company’s religion textbook division) for four years. I wouldn’t choose another company.”

“Service isn’t pretty and it isn’t always comfortable.”

—Pat Rath

Larry Day, operating a forklift in LaSalle’s warehouse.

Susan Busk takes an order at LaSalle Company.
A tale of two cities

Close to Home

By V&B Staff Writers

In October, 2003, after a long and fruitless job search, healthcare administrator Marty Lebbin (South Bend) reluctantly accepted a job at a Chicago hospital. It was a two- to three-hour commute on a good day, and five hours if traffic was bad. Here’s how the Lord sustained and ultimately saved the Lebbins from a life spread out across two cities divided by 100 miles of interstate.

Marty and Veronica and their family moved to South Bend from Kalamazoo, Michigan, in 1989. Through their church they met Dan and Anne Brewer, Larry and Valerie Day and numerous other branch members. On Valerie’s advice they sent their son Nicholas to the branch’s summer camp and were considering Trinity School at Greenlawn. But it was a tragedy that led the Lebbins to choose community life.

In summer, 1999, two recent Greenlawn graduates from community families—Larry and Valerie’s son Aaron, and Tom and Linda Finke’s son Thad—died in a workplace accident. The Lebbins attended the wake and funeral, where Marty saw “a living example of how people can find goodness and a sense of peace in heartrending adversity.” The Lebbins decided they wanted in, and came under way that September. Their ties to South Bend were growing stronger.

Marty accepted the Chicago job in 2003 as a temporary fix that would work only because Veronica’s mother lived there. He could stay with her during the week, driving back to South Bend on the weekends. He still looked for a position in South Bend, but nothing turned up.

Six months. A year. Friendships within the People of Praise deepened, and they began considering the covenant (which they made in October, 2004). Their daughter Janelle married a South Bend firefighter; their son Marcel began working for a South Bend law firm; Nicholas settled in at Greenlawn.

Marty was working 12- and 13-hour days so he could avoid rush-hour traffic, using his cell phone to check in with the family during his commute. In the evenings, he used his phone to join family evening prayer. He says he spent at least 4,000 minutes a month on that phone!

Life was challenging. Veronica took a full-time job to help cover the costs of life in two cities, and there were still three children to care for at home. Family weekends together passed far too quickly. During one community meeting, Veronica pleaded with the Lord: Should we look for a house in Chicago? As the worship subsided, someone came to the microphone with a word from the Lord that seemed to be directed at her: “You are right where I want you to be.”

The community stepped in regularly. Marty’s head, Paul Barrett, scheduled meetings early on Saturday mornings so Marty could be with his family during prime weekend hours. His men’s group sent him e-mail updates. Branch members encouraged Veronica by telling her often that they were praying. People helped with the carpool.

Then things got worse. In early 2006, Veronica’s mother announced plans to leave Chicago. She wanted to live closer to family. Marty felt sick: with his mother-in-law gone, he would have no place to live in the city.

Then Veronica saw a newspaper ad and Marty sent a resume to Press Ganey, a healthcare-related company headquartered in South Bend. (He didn’t know then that a colleague had put in a plug for him with a Press Ganey representative.) Press Ganey offered Marty a job.

But he also got a very attractive offer from another Chicago hospital system. This job was only (!) a 90-minute commute from South Bend and the pay was 45% more than Press Ganey’s offer. Marty drove to Chicago for interviews and loved the job, but on his way back he wound up fighting traffic again. “You know what? I just can’t do it anymore,” he told Veronica. He accepted the position with Press Ganey in South Bend on March 15.

Today, Marty is thriving in a job with no undue commuting pressures and a work environment he loves. With her husband around all the time again, Veronica has shifted to a job with a better schedule for the family. And Veronica’s mother? She moved into her new home in May . . . with Marty and Veronica. So now the Lebbins—a family that desperately wanted to live in South Bend—are closer together than ever before in the city they call home. After a 30-month struggle, their Father, famous for straightening highways, simply removed the road.
South Bend members gathered at a wake on September 17 to commend our sister Pat Keusch into the loving hands of her God and Father. Pat died on September 14 after residing for several years at Healthwin Specialized Care because of declining health.

She and her husband Dick, a tenured coordinator who died in 1993, were early members of the community. They attended the very first Community Weekend in January, 1973, and made the covenant on January 27. Before that, they were very involved in their parish and in the Cursillo movement, where Dick became a leader. In fact, Pat made up her mind to convince fellow parishioner Clem Walters to make a Cursillo. Clem recalled at the wake, “Pat kept after me every day until I decided to go.”

Through their Cursillo contacts, including their bridge partners and good friends Paul and Jeanne DeCelles, the Keusches heard about charismatic gifts very early. On March 4, 1967, Dick and Pat went to Kevin and Dorothy Ranaghan’s apartment for a prayer meeting, one of the first gatherings of what would swell worldwide into the Catholic charismatic renewal. But they decided it was not for them, and Dick stayed with the Cursillo. Later, realizing that God wanted them back at the prayer meetings, they became completely committed. Later again, after taking a while to think it over and evaluate the situation, they found a home in the People of Praise, which Dick often called “the only game in town.”

Pat was born in Mt. Clemens, Michigan, on October 6, 1924, and she and Dick were married there on October 4, 1947. Pat was trained as a nurse and worked professionally in Detroit. Dick followed a very successful career in banking and finance, and together they raised three children, Richard, Maggie and Matt, whom they always spoke of with great delight and parental pride.

In 1976, Dick resigned his position at St. Joseph Bank in South Bend to manage the conference office for Charismatic Renewal Services, a community outreach to the Catholic charismatic renewal which organized the annual Notre Dame conferences and other events. He later worked as president of the LaSalle Company. For about 12 years, Pat worked there too, as the receptionist who greeted visitors to their offices in the LaSalle Building. Pat was enthusiastic and full of good cheer, her eyes often twinkling with delight.

Rath recalled, “Pat loved it when the phones were ringing and she could stay busy. She would astonish some of our regular customers because she got to know their voices and greeted them by name as soon as she heard them speak.” Every day in the LaSalle Restaurant she and Dick had lunch together, showing off the constant friendly care for each other that was a hallmark of their marriage.

When the phones weren’t ringing with customers’ orders, Pat would knit baby clothes for expectant mothers in the branch. It was hard to catch her when she wasn’t knitting or sewing or doing something with her hands, and usually she was busy doing something for others. She was enthusiastic about Christmas and genuinely loved to give presents. One time Pat Rath ran into Pat at work and she was a little teary-eyed, so Pat asked her what was wrong. She explained that Dick wouldn’t let her give presents to everyone.

Pat Rath asked, “Do you mean everyone here at work?”

“No,” said Pat. “Everyone.”

She delighted in outfitting the LaSalle Company reception area with a manger scene and festive Christmas decorations. She could sew anything and loved to frame decorative items to give away, and in her spare time she refinished antiques. She was enthusiastic and full of good cheer, her eyes often twinkling with delight. She also loved to root for the Notre Dame football team, but when they weren’t doing well she would grimace in pain and roll on the floor—all in good fun. Many branch members remember her spirit of fun and the zest she found in life.

The years since Dick’s death were hard for her, especially as her health and energy declined, but as long as she was able she continued in her spirit of unparalleled generosity and vibrant friendliness. We rejoice now that she has won victory over the recent hardships she endured, and God has gathered her up into his eternal friendship and covenant love.

Pat Keusch • October 6, 1924, to September 14, 2006
In Clem’s world, there was always something better just around the corner

Clem Miller

By Tom Noe

“Tonight we think of ourselves as a family, because you can’t think about Clem Miller without thinking about family.” Area Coordinator Dan Brewer offered these words—the first of many overflowing tributes from all over South Bend—to open the branch’s wake service for our dear brother Clem Miller. Over the course of his 92 years, and despite being orphaned at an early age, Clem excelled in building, loving and caring for his large family, made up of his wife Mary Lou, who died in 1997 after 60 years of marriage, as well as their 11 children, 44 grandchildren, 72 great-grandchildren and numerous spouses, nieces, nephews, cousins, etc., not to mention all his brothers and sisters in the People of Praise.

As Clem’s death was imminent, members of his extended and community families gathered in the home he shared with his daughter Bev Bradley (South Bend), praying and singing, joining him as he prayed the name of Jesus over and over anytime he was awake.

In his last days, as always, he was thankful for his long and fruitful life. “When my parents died, God always helped me,” he said. Clem was born on April 21, 1914, on a farm in Wisconsin. After the death of his parents, Clem lived with his aunt and uncle and their seven children. They all moved to South Bend in 1930, and in 1932 Clem graduated from Central High School, where he played on a state champion football team.

In 1937, he married Mary Louise Cressy. Clem always said, “The best thing that ever happened to me was meeting Mary Lou.”

It wasn’t easy raising 11 children. (Once, everybody in the house came down with the flu at the same time.) Still, “For every child the Lord gives you he also gives you a special grace to help you care for that child.”

Clem worked for 15 years at his uncle’s shirt company, and later was a broker with Cressy & Everett Realty, where he became a partner. He served for many years on the South Bend board of zoning appeals.

Mary Lou started attending prayer meetings around 1970, and Clem attended the ND conference in 1973. They were regulars after that, and encouraged other family members to get involved. They joined the People of Praise in 1974 and made the covenant in September, 1977.

In 1977, Clem also flew to San Francisco to help dozens of members of John the Baptist Charismatic Renewal Community move to South Bend. He spent months helping them purchase new homes. His contacts and expertise helped out many community homebuyers, and he was instrumental in arranging the purchase of our Greenlawn property. Some families who were very low on funds discovered that Clem turned down his agent’s commission.

At one point there were so many Millers in the branch that newcomers had trouble figuring out who was and was not related. “But it really doesn’t matter,” Clem said. “As far as we’re concerned, all of you are our family.” Members of the Miller clan currently in the community include their children Bev Bradley and Wayne Miller (both South Bend), Ginni Gionfriddo and Alicia Cassell (both northern Virginia), along with too-many-to-count spouses and nieces and nephews, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. We are all especially thankful to Bev, who bore much of the loving burden of Clem’s health care for many months, arranging for the medicines and paperwork, keeping everybody informed.

Mary Lou Cressy shared, “Uncle Clem was always a lot of fun. One time in his late 80s, coming home from a movie, the sidewalk was icy and he was using a cane, but he stopped, bent down, made a snowball and threw it. ‘Let’s have some fun!’, he said. Enthusiasm bubbled out of him. He was still roofing houses at 80!”

Clem was an ingenious, can-do carpenter. He made the large wooden cross that now hangs in the meeting room at the South Bend branch center. He could install a furnace, add on a family room (big enough for prayer meetings and campus area parties) or redo a bathroom. His homespun wisdom and his common sense were well-nigh infallible. When Clem said something, you knew you wouldn’t find a more trustworthy opinion. He was a walking encyclopedia on practical subjects and on the right way to live.

Clem loved people, and his joy made them happy. He lived a large and great life. In Clem’s world, there was always something better just around the corner. He lived by what was good and true, with unstoppable good humor.

“As far as we’re concerned, all of you are our family.”
—Clem Miller
Meet Kerry Koller

Revolutionary Leader

By Bridget Donohue and Sean Connolly

In 1998 Kerry Koller invited campus division members in South Bend to join a revolution. “Creation is in enemy hands,” he said, “but Christ is leading a revolution. He’s building a new heaven and a new earth, a new city, establishing our Father’s reign throughout the earth.”

Kerry urged the students to follow Christ and join his revolution, a revolution marked by a radical common life and by ambitious efforts to build the kingdom of God. It’s the life Kerry has been living since the years just before the community began, back when he was a graduate student studying philosophy at Notre Dame.

Kerry became friends with Paul and Jeanne DeCelles, Andrew and Beryl Plodowski, Kevin and Dorothy Ranaghan, Clem and Julie Walters and other future founders of the community while at Notre Dame in the mid-1960s. Kerry and other graduate students used to meet regularly for discussions in the South Dining Hall. Together with Paul, Kevin and others, they began aggressively evangelizing students as part of the Cursillo movement, and, in the late 1960s, they led many to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. Kerry spent the 1960s involved in the mix at Notre Dame, learning lessons about spreading radical Christianity. He and his wife Barbara were married in 1964.

In 1969, Kerry finished his studies and had to choose a course of action. One option was to teach at the University of San Francisco (he had come from San Francisco to Notre Dame in 1963). After talking things over with Paul, Kevin and others, the Kollers chose to head west. “Barbara and I left South Bend with the sense of being sent,” Kerry recalls. “We knew our mission in San Francisco had something to do with baptism in the Spirit and with community-building.”

Once on the ground at USF, Kerry began strategizing. “No one had heard about being baptized in the Holy Spirit, except for one fellow in the business school, so we started there.” Within six months, Kerry, Barbara and others had prayer meetings going and growing—meetings that eventually included 400 to 500 people, and, in the early 1970s, bore fruit in John the Baptist Charismatic Renewal Community (JBCRC). Fellow board of governors members Craig Lent and Charlie Fraga were regular attendees at San Francisco prayer meetings in those days.

With a growing family, several singles living in household, pastoral responsibility for JBCRC and full-time teaching, Kerry’s life was bursting at the seams. After praying and talking with Paul and others back in South Bend, he began thinking about giving up his job teaching philosophy to work full-time for JBCRC. “I remember when the dean of the college called me into his office, aware that I might leave the university. ‘You have a family and you need to be concerned about your income,’ he said. ‘The University of San Francisco has met a lot of payrolls. John the Baptist community has not met one.’” Kerry thanked him politely, but said that God was calling him to choose the less secure option, working for the community.

Kerry faced challenges leading JBCRC. Members were spread across the entire Bay Area, the cost of living was high and the pace of life intense. In early 1977, the Lord began to speak prophetically to them, telling JBCRC that they should leave San Francisco. Kerry and fellow leader John Curran called Paul, and together they decided that South Bend was the place to move. “I am still amazed,” Kerry says. “John received the first prophecies in January, we brought them to the community for discernment in February and by August we were all gone. It was truly a move of the Spirit!” Around 100 adults made the move to South Bend.

The Kollers—Kerry, Barbara, Katherine (Colorado Springs), Ste-
Phen (South Bend) and Jack (northern Virginia)—arrived in South Bend on June 6, 1977. Elizabeth (northern Virginia) and Peter were born four weeks later. Kerry was delighted to be able to rejoin the leaders of the People of Praise. Their friendships deepened and bore fruit in a decision that the community should invest time and energy speaking to the world, sending the People of Praise message out. To that end, Kerry was named head of the Center for Christian Studies, which began publishing Center Journal in 1981, and Paul also appointed him coordinator for the community’s new publications division, which soon had started a magazine, New Heaven/New Earth, with Jeanne DeCelles as editor. Publications division trained writers and fostered a community presence in the print media in an effort to share our experience about how to live a Christian community life as modern people in the modern world.

Eventually, discussions among the leaders turned to education. Many in the community were dissatisfied with current trends in education, and the South Bend coordinators thought the People of Praise could have an influence on the world in that field—training community children and others to live morally, think soundly and become agents of the kingdom of God. As a result of these discussions, the community founded Trinity School in 1981, and Kerry has been primarily responsible for the successful growth of the three campuses and for their adherence to the original vision of what a People of Praise school should be like.

“All these projects were born from honest conversations about how God was acting in the world,” Kerry says. “They and everything else God is doing in the People of Praise today are the fruit of the same thing: an intense life together, rooted in love, trust and loyalty to our Father and to one another. That’s the core of the revolution.”

In November, the northern Virginia branch cosponsored a Christians in Commerce (CIC) seminar entitled Hope for the Workplace. Therese McNichol and Walt Seale were featured speakers.

Congratulations to Mark Mullen (Burke, VA) and Carmen Cuba, who were married in Chinchaca Alta, Peru, on November 24.

In October, Ed Feeks (Vienna, VA) started a new position as the Preventive Medicine Officer at Marine Corps Headquarters.

Bob and Kristi Croddy (Indianapolis) joyfully announce the birth of Magdalen Rose, who was born on November 12.

John Barnitz (New Orleans) recently presented the session “New Literacy Education for English Language Learners in a Post-Katrina and Post-Rita Society” at the conference of Louisiana Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages.

From the Executive Office

Nick Holovaty has been appointed as program coordinator for the Mission program office, effective December 6, 2006.

Servant Branch:

Jon Balsbaugh has been appointed to a one-year term as a nonvoting coordinator for purposes of training, effective January 26, 2007.

Pat Ficker has been appointed to a second three-year term of office as area coordinator, effective January 26, 2007.

Paul Putzier has been appointed to a second three-year term of office as area coordinator, effective January 26, 2007.

South Bend:

Rich Was has been appointed to a second three-year term of office as area coordinator, effective January 18, 2007.
“Go make disciples of all nations” (Mt. 28:19).