THE PEOPLE OF PRAISE: We’re Always on the Move

1977
San Francisco to South Bend

2000
Servant Branch to Colorado Springs

2005
Northern Virginia to Portland

2007
Allendale to Indianapolis

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The Rocket Summer?

TRS Report
By Hugh Springer

You may be new to the community and wondering what “TRS Report” could possibly mean. I can give you a personal guarantee that you aren’t going to find the answer by typing TRS into the search bar on AcronymFinder.com. I did that for fun, recently. And now I fully understand your confusion . . . if, for example, you happened to think it referred to the Telecommunications Relay Service (which allows deaf people to make phone calls), a Technical Research Ship (U.S. Navy spyboat from the 1960s) or The Rocket Summer (a one-man rock band from Grapevine, Texas). So why, exactly, would we be reporting on any of those TRSs?

In the People of Praise, “TRS” means “Teaching Review Seminar,” plain and simple. Traditionally, reviewing teachings is what this annual gathering of community leaders is all about. It’s normal for a different teaching topic to come up for discussion each year, with leaders offering in-the-trenches insights and ideas about the matter at hand. There have been TRSs on our Community Formation Series teachings, on the Authority and Obedience talks, on the Community Weekend, and, more recently, on youth, mission branches and growth. This year’s TRS was different.

It was smaller, for one thing, with 48 men in attendance instead of the usual 72. Overall coordinator Craig Lent invited fewer men so that all of us would be able to exchange ideas easily and carry on a single conversation. Also, this year’s seminar covered a huge variety of topics rather than a single subject, from aging in our branches to the 21 lots we hope to acquire in Allendale to growth progress in branches large and small.

There were also some key similarities with the TRSs of the past. Leaders from Saskatoon to Shreveport traded stories and slapped backs in the wood-paneled mansion portion of the People of Praise headquarters building at Greenlawn in South Bend. Mary Beckley, our conference administrator, deftly directed a never-ending flow of meals, snacks, coffee cups, airport runs and shuttle cars to host families’ homes (offering a TRS of her own on the subject of service). South Bend branch members filled their guest rooms so out of town guests like me could lie down wearily after a long day. (TRS meetings typically run from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.)

Craig’s talk on the Letter to the Hebrews was definitely a highlight of this year’s seminar. He said these early Christians were “drifting” or “shrinking back” from their call to community, which is why the author of Hebrews decided to sit down and write them a tough letter. I lost a boat anchor one time after the anchor rope came loose. I didn’t realize how far I had floated until I saw the shore and realized that I’d been drifting. “Drifting happens when one is carried by apparently slight forces, small actions, a gentle breeze,” Craig said. “We can miss it when it happens. Drifting doesn’t happen due to a conscious decision to leave.” Which is why “Pay attention” is one of the main messages of the letter!

As Craig read from Hebrews, some of us heard the Lord speaking a plain message to us: “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another” (Hb. 10:24-25).

About a year ago Paul DeCelles (the head of the community’s growth efforts) was looking very fatigued from his chemo treatments for colon cancer. That is one big reason we loved his energetic TRS update on Allendale. And Paul’s health wasn’t the only cause for celebration. He explained that the City of Shreveport has just announced a long-term renewal plan for Allendale. It calls for many new homes and businesses to be built over the next few years, and it asks religious organizations to play a big part in this redevelopment campaign. Community-building
is one of the big goals of the plan, a goal the city wants to support with architectural and zoning arrangements. Paul said we couldn’t have asked for a better vision from the city. We’re certainly going to need plenty of assistance from city hall as our own city-building effort moves ahead.

Every men’s group in the community has a goal from the 2005 Leaders’ Conference for Men: bring one new member into the community each year. We spent a while hearing from everyone about progress toward that target. We also heard reports on how branches are serving their older members. “How old is an older member of the People of Praise anyway?,” we wondered, as we counted the ways we can keep on living the rich life of the People of Praise in our twilight years.

To top it all off, we tackled city-building. Craig made an important distinction between city-building in “new starts,” places where the People of Praise doesn’t yet exist, and city-building in branches. This distinction focused our conversation and dispelled a lot of confusion. (Look for more on city-building in an upcoming issue of V&B.)

Discussions like the ones we had at this year’s TRS are notoriously tough to summarize, but they are also very important to our life in the People of Praise. You can certainly compare them to a well-running men’s group: brothers listening carefully to one another, respecting one another’s opinions and insights, not insisting on their own way and expecting to hear God speak loudly and clearly. It’s important for us to take time to come to one mind and heart. I think the brothers who attended the TRS definitely left with a united vision for our life together in the People of Praise. Glory to God!

So the next time you see “TRS” in these pages, you can be confident that we’re not talking about *Taux de Rendement Synthétique*—French for “Overall Equipment Effectiveness.” And if you want to know what that means, you can look up OEE.
Our overall coordinator

Meet Craig Lent

By Evan Lent

Editor’s note: Craig was elected overall coordinator in 2003. In this article, Craig’s son, Evan (South Bend), looks at his life story and explains some of Craig’s other responsibilities.

When Kerry Koller offered Craig Lent a ride across the San Francisco Bay after a 1977 John the Baptist community meeting, neither had any idea that they were starting a conversation that would still be going strong 30 years later.

Craig was eager to get involved with a Christian community. He was studying physics and had just transferred to UC Berkeley from Caltech, a school near Los Angeles. As it turned out, soon after he arrived, the Christian community he was hoping to join, John the Baptist Charismatic Renewal Community, announced that they were moving to South Bend to join the People of Praise (See p. 8.)

Craig told Kerry that he was willing to move again so that he could live in community, but Kerry, aware that he was studying physics, suggested that he first make a phone call to a Notre Dame physics professor, Paul DeCelles. After a couple of conversations, Paul advised Craig to stay in Berkeley, finish college and then go to graduate school near a growing Christian community. Craig acted on this word of the Lord from a man he had never met or seen. He finished his undergraduate degree, then enrolled in physics graduate school at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. He also joined Servants of the Lord community.

Life in a stable Christian community, with its many opportunities for committed, long-term relationships, differed noticeably from Craig’s childhood experience of frequent travel. His father served as a Baptist chaplain in the U.S. Army, accepting new assignments every 18 months or so. The Lents moved to Virginia, Washington, Kansas and all over Germany. Craig recalls growing up with the sense that the whole family shared in his father’s mission. “I knew that my dad was committed to the family and I never doubted his love for us. But I also knew that he was the Lord’s man first, and that he, and we, were serving our country.”

Craig first ran into charismatic renewal in his own family’s living room in Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas. His father had started a prayer meeting that met there, but Craig, then a high-school senior, chose to stay away.

Still, the meetings managed to leave a mark. When Craig started college at Caltech, he met another...
Christian in his dorm (the only Christian student Craig could find) and began meeting with him regularly, reading books and praying. Christian life was tough with just the two of them, and Craig started wondering whether God had something more for him. Back with his family in Germany after freshman year, he began investigating baptism in the Holy Spirit. “My dad had created a charismatic-renewal cassette tape library for the military,” he recalls. “I listened to the Life in the Spirit Seminar, including a talk by Kevin Ranaghan. I used headphones so my parents wouldn’t know about it.” Craig was baptized in the Spirit in Germany, and later, back at Caltech, he began attending prayer meetings at the Newman Center. There, he heard about the John the Baptist community in San Francisco. By the time Craig completed his Ph.D., Servants of the Lord had become a branch of the People of Praise, and Craig had met and married Mary Traynor. Like Craig, Mary had moved to join a community, leaving St. Cloud, Minnesota, for Minneapolis. When the Notre Dame physics department offered Craig a postdoctoral position in 1984, it was easy for the Lents to choose to move to the branch in South Bend. Craig joined the Electrical Engineering faculty two years later and is currently the Frank M. Freimann Professor of Engineering.

Craig is a leader in the new field of nanoelectronics, built at the intersection of electrical engineering, physics, chemistry and computer science. For the past 15 years, he has led a research project called Quantum-Dot Cellular Automata. The goal is to build tiny devices—the size of a single molecule—that might one day replace the transistor and play a big role in computers. During his career, Craig has published over 100 scientific papers and been invited to speak on nanotechnology at conferences in the U.S., Europe and Asia.

Craig’s computing knowledge has also helped him to improve the Trinity School curriculum. In 2005, he began teaching a computer programming language called MATLAB to juniors and seniors at the Greenlawn campus as part of the physics course. He later learned that Trinity School was the first high school in the U.S. to teach MATLAB. The Greenlawn pilot project was a success and MATLAB has since spread to the River Ridge and Meadow View campuses. (See the October issue of Vine & Branches.)

Today, you can find Craig either in his Notre Dame office, in his community office at Greenlawn, or inside a Greenlawn classroom. He keeps tabs on his many responsibilities using the Internet and a cell phone tucked away in his shirt pocket. He still has time for a hobby, photographing stars and galaxies. A few nights each year he drives to a park outside the city, takes out a small refractor telescope and a digital camera, and begins taking pictures of a part of God’s creation that people don’t normally see.

Speaking personally, I’ve seen my dad come home from work, chat with my mom, ask me and my sister Paula about our homework and our days, then check his e-mail, only to discover that six messages have arrived since he left the office. I’ve heard him share at dinner about his research, or about a meeting he had with someone in the community, or a cool programming idea one of his Trinity School students had. All of this is fairly ordinary and normal to my mind.

It’s only more recently that I’ve begun to realize how revolutionary his life has been. Like his own dad, he’s always been the Lord’s man first, willing to go anywhere or do anything for the Lord, even if that means living an extremely busy life here in South Bend. I’m inspired by his love for all of us and by his wisdom, and I consider it an honor to be his son and his brother in the community.
Business growth through the Internet

Jesus called his first disciples while they were mending their nets. Today, he’s calling disciples to mend other people’s .nets. The community-owned LaSalle Company has responded by starting One:Ten Communications, an Internet business designed to help fulfill God’s plan revealed in Ephesians 1:10, to unite all things in Christ—things in heaven, things on earth and things in cyberspace.

The company, started May 15, 2006, employs seven community members: David Salmon (president), Sean Connolly, Jennifer Kenning, Chris Meehan, Jeremy Osterhouse, Carrie Urbanski and Justin Walters, who joined in January.

“We’ve focused so far on helping businesses owned or influenced by community members,” David says.

“We’ve noticed that many businesses don’t realize how much they can do with the Internet, or perhaps they want to do more but don’t know where to start. That’s where we come in.

“The Internet has become a primary way for businesses and customers to connect. One of the first things customers do nowadays when they run into a new business is check out its web site. There are plenty of ways businesses can capitalize on the Internet, from advertising to e-commerce. New opportunities are emerging all the time.”

David sees building web sites for brothers and sisters as a way for the People of Praise to reap a double benefit: businesses around the community improve and grow using the Internet, and One:Ten gains new clients at the same time. “It’s a way for us to put our work in common with many brothers and sisters,” he says.

Donald Busekrus (Oahu) was planning to launch a web site for his building-materials supply company when he found out about One:Ten.

“I did not have an Internet presence before One:Ten,” he says. “I had a goal of starting a web site in 2006, so when I read the article on One:Ten in Vine & Branches (Oct., 2006), I thought I would give them a try—to keep things in the family, so to speak.”

The whole process took about five or six weeks, Donald says.

“Everything was done by phone and e-mail, which made it easy for me. The design and layout of the home page and the whole web site gave my company an added boost to its good reputation.” The site, www.bcdwinc.com, for Busekrus

Jennifer Kenning

Jeremy Osterhouse (left) and Justin Walters work as computer programmers for One:Ten Communications.

www.mosaic-interactive.com

www.bcdwinc.com
Our present focus is building web sites for businesses, but as we grow we hope to take on many more projects in communications.”
—David Salmon

Jim Ganther (Tampa) began working full-time for his new business venture in November. Mosaic Interactive is a company he started with a group of investors to sell online legal-compliance training to car, RV and boat dealerships. Jim knew at the outset that Mosaic needed to make a strong impression on the web. He wanted a highly polished site that would impress his customers, most of whom are sales experts themselves.

Jim chose One:Ten after a competitive bidding process. “They were available right away and I had a high level of personal confidence in them,” he says. “Also, their price came in well below their competitors.”

Jim gave One:Ten a clear mandate: build a web site that looked and worked better than competitors’ sites. “They came through in spades,” he says. “I would put our new site (www.mosaic-interactive.com) up against any of the five or six sites owned by our competitors.”

Jim says One:Ten’s responsiveness and personal service have made working with them very gratifying. “I’ve worked on other web site design projects, and I can say that we’re getting a real value from One: Ten. Our web site is developing at a pace that delights me. It has been far less painful than other similar projects that haven’t turned out nearly as well. They call me frequently, sometimes just to check in. That’s the kind of touch that makes customers for life. It makes me a real fan.”

One:Ten has finished web sites for Colorado Springs members Paul and Grace Marie Rose (www.familyfinancialonline.com) and the Trinity School at River Ridge Capital Campaign (www.trinityschools.net). One:Ten is currently building an e-commerce package which will help many future customers sell their products online.

“Our present focus is building web sites for businesses, but as we grow we hope to take on many more projects in communications, along the lines of the live broadcasts we did from Allendale last summer,” David says.

That means plenty of challenges lie ahead for the community’s start-up Internet business. “We’ve set some big goals for ourselves—helping businesses grow with the Internet, becoming experts on all the new communications techniques the Internet is creating, and, ultimately, inventing new ways for people to be personally present to one another across distances. We have a lot of work ahead of us, but this is what we love doing. It’s an exciting business and it’s also a lot of fun.”

Want to learn more? Send an e-mail to David@OneTenCommunications.com, or call him at 574-309-3543.

www.familyfinancialonline.com

www.trinityschools.net

Cabinets, Doors & Windows, went online in mid-December. Customers have taken notice.

“I’ve already received a lot of compliments on the web site,” he says. “Most say it is a great way for them to learn about the products I offer, and that the site itself is very impressive and easy to navigate. Just the ability to say, ‘Check out my web site’ adds to the first-impression experience a new customer gets of the company. It’s obvious the site was created by professionals.”

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How We Decided To Move from San Francisco

A Memoir
Narrated by Marge Szudy Connolly

John the Baptist. That was our name, and like the biblical hero we had to decrease so the Lord could increase. Thirty years ago, John the Baptist Charismatic Renewal Community (JBCRC)—97 adults and 58 children—dissolved itself by moving from San Francisco to South Bend to join the People of Praise. How did the Holy Spirit work among us that winter of 1977, to inspire us to make that life-changing decision? Here’s a joint recollection of the discernment process, beginning with my own memory.

“A new vision of Christian life”
—Dan Brewer (South Bend), writing in a student newspaper, September 15, 1972

Marge (South Bend): In the fall of 1969, I transferred as a sophomore to the University of San Francisco. Shortly after registering, I encountered a new philosophy teacher, Kerry Koller, who had also just arrived at USF (to learn why, see the December, 2006, issue of V&B). Even though I wasn’t taking his philosophy class, it wasn’t hard to meet Kerry. He seemed to spend most of his time roaming campus trying to strike up conversations. When he got hold of you, he would start off sounding normal and engaging, but end up spouting crazy talk about selling out to Jesus and being on fire with the Holy Spirit. I argued with him a lot. The problem was that Kerry was such a good speaker, you would be drawn to listen to him in spite of yourself.

In November, Kerry invited me and everyone else on his list to come to what he called a “prayer meeting” at his house the Friday after Thanksgiving. There were about 25 or 30 of us crowded in his living room. Only three people there knew what a prayer meeting was: Kerry, his wife Barbara and Bob Fernn, a Pentecostal professor from the business school. But some were intrigued when Kerry explained being baptized in the Spirit, and by January of 1970 seven people began meeting regularly at a local high school to pray together. By June of 1970, the prayer group had grown to about 50 and had moved on campus to a meeting place called the Ark.

Dan Brewer (South Bend): In October of 1970 a core community of 20 began meeting on Wednesday nights. By the summer of 1972 there were 400 to 600 people coming to the Saturday night prayer meeting, and about 75 people at the community meetings. Then the Lord gave us the name “John the Baptist.” It seemed an appropriate name for a community trying to preach the word of God in San Francisco, which many of us thought of as a wilderness. We had a vision of being saved as a people, a new Israel, and not just as isolated individuals. We wanted to live out the rest of our lives together. For the next five years, we worked at growing as a community, and in 1976 we formalized our lifelong commitment with a covenant.

* * *

By the winter of 1976, we numbered about 120 adults and 60 children, with about half of us living in households together. By this time, we were having a significant impact in San Francisco, in the Bay Area and in the West. We helped to train other, smaller communities; we were teaching and preaching and baptizing others in the Spirit; we were putting on a powerful prayer meeting; we seemed to be doing a lot of good. With the covenant came the desire to live a closer community life, and we began talking about maybe buying an apartment building together in the city, or even moving out to a suburb where we could buy houses close together. We recognized it was tough to live the kind of community life we wanted to in San Francisco, but we were committed to evangelizing the city.

“Nothing worth doing is easy.”
—Kerry Koller, in a 2007 conversation about the move

Kerry Koller (South Bend): In January of 1977, everything changed. At the time, John Curran and I were the two coordinators. At our weekly meeting, John received a prophecy that the Lord was going to do something new—within the next six weeks and the next six months—and that we should intercede for the community daily. We began praying in earnest and staying alert. Two weeks later John had a vision that he and I were leading our people out of the Bay Area, though not everyone would come.
Can you find these current People of Praise members: Marilyn Boydstun, Dan and Anne Brewer, Don and Rosie Cedergren, Marge Connolly, Jackie Curran, Jerome Devlaeminck, Carolyn Faytle, Bill and Elena Flynn, Carmen Fraga, Tony and Nancy Fulcher, Steve and Kelly Howard, Kerry and Barbara Koller, Stephen Koller, Therese (Cedergren) McNichol, Terry Paukert, Ralph Rath, Karen (Kretchmer) Zuehlke?

Photos courtesy of Dan and Anne Brewer.

John and I both sensed we should share what was happening with Paul DeCelles in South Bend, and ask him to help us discern. Paul also began praying for clarity, and asking others to pray. Through them we received independent confirmation in prophecy and in Scripture that we should leave the city, that it was no longer a good place for us to live.

At the same time, in a startling development, a brother in another community received a prophetic word for us, totally independent of our discussion. In it the Lord said that we should not try to build community in San Francisco. Neither should we try to build community elsewhere. Instead, we should join one of the existing communities.

As we talked about it together, we thought the Lord was saying, “This is the wrong place and the wrong time for a Christian community to thrive out here. I want you to get your people and take them where I want them.” As John and I continued to talk with Paul it became clear to us we should move to South Bend and join the People of Praise. It also became clear we should try to be on our way by the end of June.

Kevin Ranaghan (South Bend):
I remember when Kerry and John called Paul to confirm their decision to move. They asked (I could hear them talking through the phone speaker), “If we believe the Lord is prophetically calling us to move from San Francisco to South Bend to join the People of Praise, can we come? Will you receive us?” And I remember Paul, looking back at me over his shoulder, saying, “If you think that’s God’s will, and you’re willing to do it, then by all means, yes.”

Kerry: On February 17 we met with a small group of leaders in the community and told them what the Lord had been saying to us. At that time I told them, “I don’t think you can move 120 people in six months. We’re probably talking about a year or two, given our jobs and our housing needs. And yet, it sounds like the Lord wants us to move quickly.” Their response was amazingly open, although they had lots of questions. We decided that we would all fast and pray and then present our discernment to the whole community.

The time between our leaders’ meeting and the February 27 community meeting was both exciting and scary for me. On the one hand, Barbara and I knew the People of Praise well and it was exciting to think of joining them; on the other hand, the very idea of encouraging 100+ people to sell their homes, leave their families and friends, and move 2,000 miles to a place they’d never even seen, without any guarantee of employment, was plenty scary. When we met with the whole community, John and I had a lot of confidence that we had understood the Lord’s word, and we were committed to presenting it as faithfully as we could, but we really didn’t know what kind of response we’d get.

“Let’s jump off a cliff together.”
—Charlie Fraga (Portland/Vancouver), looking back at February 27, 1977

Jackie Curran (South Bend):
A few days before the big meeting, Barbara, Kerry, John and I got together at our house. Kerry and John went
off to talk. I comforted myself with the thought, Well, at least four of us will be moving. At the meeting on the 27th, first John gave a long inspirational talk about Abraham being called, and what it meant to have faith. Then he said, “We’ll take a break.” After the break, Kerry broke the big news that the coordinators had discerned we were being called to move to South Bend. I will never forget: when Kerry finished his talk, the first brother who stood up said simply, “When are we going?” Then person after person shared confirming Scripture passages they had gotten during the week.

Terry Paukert (South Bend): I remember experiencing a surge of joy and excitement. I’m adventurous by nature, so that wasn’t an unusual reaction. But others, normally more cautious, experienced the same joy and a sense of certainty as Kerry spoke. It was the Holy Spirit sweeping through the room.

Elena Flynn (South Bend): I felt a mixture of dismay and confusion. Practically speaking, what Kerry was sharing didn’t make any sense. To move away from family, to move without jobs, across country, with so many unknowns—it was such a wild thing to do. I couldn’t understand it. But Bill seemed convinced it was from the Lord, and I trusted Bill, and I was committed to following the Lord with Bill. I had to act with faith and not with feeling.

Dan Robinson (South Bend): After years of thirsting for community, I had finally found JBCRC only the month before. After the big announcement, someone gave a prophecy that used the words I had used in my own prayer time. In this way the Lord told me, “That desire to be part of a people that you have had—that is what I am doing in this move.”

Nanci Panos (northern Virginia): I thought Kerry was going to announce we would be moving a little south toward Half Moon Bay, where there was farmland we could buy and live on. So when he announced “South Bend,” I thought, South where? What bend? Where is that in California?

Katherine Koller Brophy (Colorado Springs): I was 10 years old, finishing up fourth grade, when I first heard that we were going to move to Indiana. All I knew was that it sounded like a cool adventure, driving across the country, settling in the town where I had been born, and sharing the fun with my best friend, Karen Busk, who would also be moving.

Celia Monges (South Bend): My husband Ben and I belonged to a prayer group in the East Bay that related to John the Baptist. When Kerry told us he thought God was inviting us to move with JBCRC to South Bend, we knew right away it was an answer to our prayers. That was because the previous spring the Lord had first told me and then told Ben in prayer that we were going to move. So, for the previous year, together with our two sons, we had been praying every morning for direction on where to move. As soon as we heard, we began packing, and so did some of the other families.

Charlie Fraga: I don’t think I’ve ever felt so “alive” in my life as I did in the days of the final discernment and decision-making. You really knew you were free to choose. And you knew something was actually going to happen as a result of your freedom! It was like jumping off a cliff because there were so many unknowns, but jumping off this cliff with so many of our friends was actually an exciting joy!

* * *

Of course there were many more discussions, and thousands of details to get worked out. Yet the key “yes,” by the grace of the Holy Spirit, came from all of us together at that February, 1977, meeting. By March 17 the first house had been bought (Kollers’), by April 12 the first San Francisco people had arrived (Nanci Panos and Therese Cedergren) and by July 7 the final moving van had been unloaded (Curran’s), just six months after John Curran’s initial prophecy. The story of how the South Bend community helped us sell homes and find housing, how we negotiated a super group discount for the Ryder trucks, how we faced a giant blizzard our first winter, how the blending of West Coast and Midwestern culture changed the community, how we feel now, looking back from a 30-year perspective . . . all these stories still remain to be told. If you want to hear them, invite one of us to dinner this month. As Kevin Ranaghan said about the phone call he overheard, “It was a big moment for Christ.” And a big moment for us, as Christ, as his People of Praise.
Five Men Volunteer in Allendale and Indianapolis

By Sean Connolly

Five men are working full-time for the People of Praise in Allendale and Indianapolis, gratis. They have no regular jobs and no regular paychecks, and their daily business typically involves wandering the streets. In Allendale they baptize men in the Holy Spirit, and in Indianapolis they walk up to perfect strangers with words like these: “We’re Christians with the People of Praise, here to find out if God has prepared your heart for life in a Christian community, a life with healings, shared possessions, and lots of Holy Spirit power, just like in the book of Acts. Are you interested?”

Dauntless, they are asking the Lord’s questions and relying on him to provide the answers for their food, clothing and shelter, health insurance and student loan payments. And after four months of hearty meals and paid bills, they stand as further evidence that one of Jesus’ more incredible promises holds true in the 21st century: “Do not worry and say, ‘What are we going to eat? What are we going to drink? Or what shall we wear? . . . Set your heart first on the kingdom and justice of God and all these things will also be given to you” (Mt. 6:31, 33).

In Allendale, 15 neighborhood men have been baptized in the Holy Spirit, thanks to a program of daily, and sometimes nightly, walks through the neighborhood.

“We’ve talked to guys between the ages of 14 and 73,” notes Brian Couch, one of the five. “That includes unemployed men, high-school guys, a retired car mechanic, a music producer, drug addicts and ex-gang members. One man we prayed with needed a job, so we prayed for that, too. He got one the next day and attributed it to God and to our prayer.” (Besides Brian, Allendale project manager Nathan Barrett has played a huge role in this effort, and the rest of the Allendale household added all-night prayer vigils and fasting.)

The genesis of this volunteer commitment dates to last August, when several of the five volunteers made a five-day silent retreat based on the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola. (They are all members of the Company, a group of young men who have decided to be single temporarily in order to serve the People of Praise. The retreat took place during the Company’s semiannual meeting.) As part of the retreat, they pondered Jesus’ marching orders to his disciples, given in Matthew 10—“Do not carry any gold, silver, copper in your purses, . . . for a worker deserves his wages.” Soon, they were asking themselves whether they could really live the same way. After discussing the idea with Nick Holovaty, the head of the Company, they decided to try it.

“Growing up in the community I had heard numerous stories about how the Lord had provided for folks who were doing his work,” Brian says. “All of that helped reassure me as I thought about the decision.”

Brian, Thomas Duddy and Jon Gapp decided to take two years off from college to work for the community wherever they were needed—in this case, in Allendale. (A fourth, Joe Gleason, spent one semester in Allendale, then heard the Lord calling him back to school at Notre Dame.) To support themselves, they have written letters to relatives and friends begging for donations. They hoped to collect enough money so that they wouldn’t have to ask the community or community members to subsidize their labors.

So far, they haven’t had to. They have, however, had some opportu-

nities to bank on the Lord. (They’ve also been able to bank on plenty of free meals from other community members in Allendale and elsewhere in Shreveport.) One time they had a $75 health insurance payment due in a few days and no money to pay for it. Brian was on the phone with his head explaining the problem when someone handed him an envelope from that day’s mail. It contained a $100 cashier’s check from an anonymous sender.

Jon reports that between September and December they took in $7,136 in donations. That’s exactly $91 more than what they needed to cover four months’ worth of expenses, he says.

In January three became five, with the addition of Nick Holovaty and recent University of Minnesota grad Rus Lyons. Two remained in Allendale (Brian and Thomas), while the others have moved to Indianapolis. Their mission is to locate a neighborhood that could serve as a good site for a future People of Praise city. (An update on city-building plans in Indianapolis will follow in an upcoming issue of Vine & Branches.)

“I feel like I’m depending on a friend,” says Jon, summarizing a life where the breakfast is always oatmeal, travel is always in the cards and talking to strangers always takes guts.

“By making this move, we’re saying that we’re really serious about the Lord. In the same way, every time we have to pay a bill or eat, the Lord is saying that he’s serious about us.”

From left: Rus Lyons, Nick Holovaty, Jon Gapp
Missionary Conference
By V&B Staff Writers

Campus division members from South Bend and Dinkytown mingled with household members from Allendale and college students from the University of Portland at the community’s first Missionary Conference. The conference was held in South Bend from December 29 to 31 and 104 people attended. Paul DeCelles opened the meetings by introducing Nick Holovaty, the newly appointed program coordinator for Mission. Overall coordinator Craig Lent appointed Nick to this position on December 6.

The conference’s primary purpose was to introduce the Mission program office and its two new aims: first, to identify new sites for city-building (called “new starts”), especially in cities that don’t already have branches; second, to begin community life in these new locales. To accomplish these aims, Nick described the formation of the Missionary Company, a group of People of Praise missionaries who will be sent to new starts. Nick, as program coordinator for Mission, will lead the Missionary Company (at the time of the conference, he was its only member, but stay tuned).

Other conference highlights included updates on city-building work in Allendale and Dinkytown, talks on the Beatitudes (by Paul) and on the apostle Paul (by Sean Connolly) and small group meetings on songwriting, interior design, computer programming, household finances, digital photography and menu planning. A prayer meeting near the end of the conference yielded several healings: Bud Rose (South Bend) was healed of knee pain, Gianna Priolo (Servant Branch) was freed from dizzy spells and Ellen Putzier (Servant Branch) was healed of jaw troubles.

If all this raises questions (What’s the Mission program office? Who can be in the Missionary Company? How will we pick new starts? What is a new start?), look for detailed answers in an upcoming special issue of Vine & Branches!
On a recent Friday afternoon in Falls Church, Virginia, it was business as usual for the Kane household. Paul was running an errand before the men’s retreat that evening, the three oldest Kane children were at Trinity School at Meadow View, and Andrea was homeschooling five younger Kanes at the kitchen table. Paul had arranged for a new front door to be installed at the house. His cell phone rang in the car. It was Mike from Doorways USA.

“I’m running a little behind,” Mike said, “and I’m praying that this is a good time to put on your door.”

“So you’re a praying man?,” Paul asked.

“I’m new at it, but I’m trying it out.”

After Mike confirmed the Kanes’ address, Paul called Andrea and mentioned that Mike had talked about prayer. When Mike got to the house, Andrea welcomed him and introduced each of the children.

“The kids asked him a million questions,” Andrea says. “They brought him water, watched him work, everything.”

During a break in her lessons, Andrea asked Mike about his faith.

“Well, I sure need more God in my life,” he admitted. Mike came from a background hostile to Christianity, but was searching for a new direction in his life.

Andrea realized he needed prayer. At that point, two branch members showed up: household member John Xenakis and Mary Beth Harris, a neighbor. They eagerly joined Andrea in praying for Mike.

What Mike said next was surprising: He had had a sense that he would be spending some time with a group of good men.

A few minutes later, Paul arrived with branch member Terry Cassell. Andrea recounted her conversation with Mike, so while Paul packed, Terry invited Mike on the men’s retreat. Mike had a door to install the next morning near the retreat center and

said he’d come to the retreat when he’d finished the job.

About noon on Saturday, Mike called Paul and said he’d be there in an hour or so, but he didn’t show up until almost 5:00.

“What took you so long?,” Paul asked, when Mike finally got to the retreat center.

“I was sitting in my car on the side of the road, wrestling with myself. I decided I couldn’t come to this retreat, so I called your house, not sure what to do.”

Andrea had talked to him for a few minutes on the phone but couldn’t convince him to go, so she put her eight-year-old daughter Maria on the line, remembering that Maria had make a strong impression on Mike the day before. Maria remembers what happened next.

“He called, and I think he talked to my mom for a little while. Then my mom handed me the phone and I helped him through it. I just told him, ‘Put the key in the ignition. Turn on the car. Drive. When you get there, turn off the engine. Open the door. Put one foot in front of the other, and find my dad!’”

That’s what he did. Mike put his foot on the gas pedal and drove until he located the retreat center and found Paul, just as Maria had instructed. At the retreat, a group of men prayed with him to be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Paul estimates that he’s had a dozen phone conversations with Mike since the retreat, helping him grow in his young faith. Mike has returned to his home in Oklahoma (he often travels for work), and he has professed his new belief in the Lord publicly in an e-mail to friends.

A few weeks after the retreat, Paul’s cell phone rang again. It was Mike from Doorways USA. “I guess we installed the wrong door on your house,” he told Paul, “and we need to replace it. Please, request me!”

Sure enough, Mike had installed a left-handed door instead of a right-handed one. He hopes he’ll be back with the Kanes soon.

Maria Kane helped a man decide to come on the northern Virginia branch men’s retreat in November.
Building the new River Ridge

Capital Campaign Kicks Off

By Elizabeth Grams

While the walls of the new River Ridge building rise up from snowy ground, Peg Louiselle, a Servant Branch member and Trinity School at River Ridge’s director of development, has announced the public phase of the capital campaign to pay for the construction. The campaign has an ambitious $6 million goal, but with $3.6 million already pledged during the private phase this fall, organizers are in high spirits about their prospects.

“We’re very excited that we’ve already reached 60 percent of our goal before the campaign has really gotten under way publicly,” says Tom Dunworth, a professional fundraiser hired to direct the effort. (See the October issue of Vine & Branches for a profile on Tom.) “It’s going to be hard work accomplishing the next $2.4 million, but in my experience that’s very doable. The campaign is working!”

Peg’s announcement came at a kickoff attended by Servant Branch members and Trinity School at River Ridge parents, alumni and friends (with a special performance by a Trinity School jazz ensemble). The event, part celebration and part call to action, included remarks by Tom, head of school Bill Wacker and principal branch coordinator Joel Kibler, along with sharings from River Ridge parents. Campaign co-chair Laurie Coleman, a River Ridge parent and the wife of U.S. Senator Norm Coleman, announced a regular Wednesday fast for the capital campaign.

“I hope everyone will be as generous as possible with your resources, your time, your talent, but I would also invite you to join us in fasting and praying for the success of this project. I really believe this is our most powerful weapon. . . . We are truly putting this wonderful project in the Lord’s hands, asking that his Spirit will move people to be generous so that the important and good work of Trinity School will flourish and change the world.”

The campaign is moving at an ambitious pace. Organizers hope for pledges to keep up with the construction, reaching the $6 million total in time for the building’s scheduled opening next December. Tom says that the fundraising is right on schedule.

This early success is due in part to hard work. Peg and others in the Development Office have been planning the campaign since last June, before the sale of the old River Ridge building or the land deal for the new site. In the fall, organizers conducted a round of private meetings, securing a few dozen major gifts to serve as seed money for the public phase. Laurie and Bill, the campaign’s co-chairs, are leading a 25-member fundraising committee comprised of People of Praise members, Trinity School parents and River Ridge alumni. The People of Praise’s board of governors and the board of trustees of Trinity Schools continue to oversee the campaign’s progress.

“This is a very good development for Trinity School, for Servant Branch and really for the entire People of Praise, because all the branches make up one community,” says Joel. “The new building gives Servant Branch more opportunities than ever before for various kinds of events, activities and gatherings. Our lives will be enriched in many ways. This is clearly the Lord loving us. We should all be very grateful.”

Campaign co-chair
Laurie Coleman announced a regular Wednesday fast for the capital campaign.
LifeNotes

- Although Grace Elizabeth Hammer lived for only one week after her premature birth on August 19, Peter and Sarah Hammer (Buffalo) thank God for his wonderful gift of her precious life.

- Tim and Cindy Predieri (Muncie) have been assigned to Watonga, OK, for work at Corrections Corporation of America.

- Dan and Carrie Gonzalez (Fishers, IN) were blessed by the birth of William John (Will) on August 7, 2006.

- Congratulations to Jack Koller (Arlington, VA) and Julie Gurley, who were married October 28 at Falls Episcopal Church in Falls Church, VA.

- Rus Lyons (Fishers, IN) graduated in December from the University of Minnesota with a major in political science. Rus is a volunteer working for the community’s new city-building effort in Indianapolis. (See p. 11)

- Congratulations to Chris Dietz (Springfield, VA), who received his M.B.A. in December at Virginia Tech’s Pamplin College of Business.

- Congratulations to Tracy Scriba (Falls Church). In November she received the Administrator’s Award, the highest honor given by the Department of Transportation’s Federal Highway Administration, in recognition of her outstanding performance and sustained excellence as an employee, and especially for helping states to implement traffic safety rules.

- Georgine M. Redmond (Annandale, VA) had an article entitled “Aging Matters: Developing Programs for Older Adults in a Faith Community” published in the November 11, 2006, issue of Journal of Psychosocial Nursing. Georgine is parish nurse at St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church in Falls Church.

- Jim Ganther (Tampa) is pleased to announce his new position as president of Mosaic Interactive. Mosaic provides internet-based legal-compliance training and tools for the automotive industry. In addition to his duties as president, Jim is also the receptionist, file clerk and bookkeeper!

From the Executive Office

South Bend:
Nancy McCue was released from the covenant of the People of Praise on January 27, 2007.

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“Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth, . . . For the Lord has comforted his people, and will have compassion on his afflicted” (Is. 49:13).