SPECIAL ISSUE: Missionary Stories From Indianapolis

on the South Side of Indy just south of downtown
there’s a neighborhood we found (p. 5)
where the streets are too narrow for two cars to pass
and boys of 13 smoke grass
where hard words and hard drink, knife fights and beatings (p. 4)
are now making room for missionary meetings
where a deaf woman showed she had the ears to hear it
when we used sign-language to tell her about the Spirit (p. 13)
where a trashbag full of new age junk
was hauled out of the neighborhood in the missionaries’ trunk (p. 2)
where a man didn’t wait but dropped to his knees
in the street to repent and pray to Jesus (p. 12)
where a bedridden woman’s been walking again
and a hard-working man defends us to his friends (p. 6)
on the South Side of Indy just east of Meridian
our missionaries are shining
we can copy them. (p. 16)
Our missionaries met Lucinda accidentally. Hannah Brummer, Rus Lyons, Nick Holovaty and Naomi Caneff were standing in a small, dingy room that served as entryway, sickroom, living room, mudroom and dining room for a circle of adults and children of uncertain relations. The missionaries were there to visit Sheri, an invalid gunshot victim who lived on the couch, but during their visit a large woman with a stud in her bottom lip, sitting in one of the chairs packed into the room, piped up, letting it slip that she worked as a stripper in a topless bar.

“It’s okay,” she said lightly, but Rus cut her off.

“No, it’s not okay.”

Hannah looked up and noticed a vacant look in Lucinda’s eyes.

“You don’t have to do that job,” Hannah said. “The Lord wants to do more for you.”

Lucinda didn’t defend herself, didn’t say much at all. Wrapping up their visit, the missionaries made their way toward the door. One told Sheri, “We’ll come see you again.” But it was Lucinda who replied. “Oh, please do! You could even come back tonight!”

The missionaries did, but Lucinda was gone.

The next afternoon was sunny and hot outdoors, but the crowded multipurpose room felt cold and dark. Lucinda lay under a blanket on the couch with her feet up and motioned Hannah, Rus and Ellen to sit down. She apologized for missing the missionaries’ visit the previous evening. She had been out helping Sheri move to a relative’s home where she would have a room of her own.

Hannah got right to the point. She pulled out her pocket Bible, leaned over and read a passage she’d gotten for Lucinda in her personal prayer earlier that day. It came from Luke 14: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—even, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.”

“We’re not here to offer you an easy life,” she said firmly, “but you’ve got to stop working at that topless bar.”

Lucinda revealed a bit of her story. She had given her life to Christ one time before, on the heels of years of working as a prostitute. At that time, she had a vision of being the Lord’s bride, dressed in white raiment. But she discarded the vision, quit church and took up drugs. She figured the job as a stripper—though she loathed it—was an improvement on prostitution and a way to pay the bills for her children.

Hannah sat on the edge of her seat. Earlier in the day in personal prayer, she’d also had a vision of a wedding in which Jesus was serving as a personal attendant. What was the connection?

In a flash she saw it. She flipped her Bible open to Revelation 19 and read: “This is the time to celebrate the wedding of the Lamb. His bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, is given her to wear.” Lucinda could be pure again if she wanted to.

Hannah encouraged her to get on her knees and repent. At first Lucinda hesitated, but eventually she shifted off the couch and placed her knees on the floor. She started naming some sins. She got through a few but then she suddenly stopped.

“I think I need to repent of lying, but I don’t know
why. That's just what I'm hearing the Holy Spirit tell me. I'm not a liar.”

They told her to go ahead and apologize to the Lord for lying.

Back on her feet again, Lucinda offered them some spaghetti and garlic bread someone else had prepared in the kitchen. “It’s like a weight has been lifted from my shoulders,” she said during the impromptu meal. “I’ve never experienced this before!”

While they were eating, Hannah saw a book lying on the coffee table, a guidebook to black magic. She had a quick and silent conversation with the Lord about it. Should she ignore it? Should she rip it up suddenly and dramatically? Finally, she knew the answer.

“You’ve got to get rid of that book,” she blurted out.

“There’s a lot more where that came from!” said Lucinda, wide-eyed.

“Well,” said Rus, “let’s get to it!”

He had to go to the neighbors for a trash bag, and when he got back the missionaries and Lucinda started rummaging through her things, pulling out crystal balls, a wall tapestry (supposedly a portal to the spirit world), dolls, drug paraphernalia and more magic books. Lucinda often paused over an item, considering whether or not to toss it. The missionaries would tell her to ask the Lord about it. Inevitably, she chose to chuck it.

Rus, Ellen and Hannah walked away with a large, doubled-up trash bag destined for a far-off dumpster. (Several neighbors tried to pry information about the dumpster’s location from Lucinda, hoping to make a buck from her discarded valuables.) While two of the missionaries hauled the bag, all three sang, “I have decided to follow Jesus; no turning back. . . . The cross before me, the world behind me; no turning back, no turning back.”

Lots of folks in the neighborhood only knew Lucinda by her stage name. Now there’s a new Lucinda who doesn’t fit that identity anymore. She’s been coming to neighborhood women’s meetings and weekly prayer meetings with the missionaries. She started attending a church in the area. She bought new clothes and her eyes are illuminated by new makeup—her effusive, almost bubbly personality.

One of the neighbors, Ruth (see p. 6), had known Lucinda before her conversion, though the two hadn’t been friends; now they relate like sisters.

“I see a big difference in you,” Ruth told Lucinda.

“Really?”

Ruth is right. Lucinda has changed her name, her occupation, her friends, her appearance, the people she goes to for help, who she thinks about and what she lives for, counting her whole old life as loss so she can gain our Lord. She even writes songs about him now, belting them out in a rich, bluesy voice.

She recently threw a huge fiesta for all the missionaries and their friends at her grandmother’s home. She blared some of the Christian music she likes to listen to, while sweating up a storm in the kitchen preparing trays of food and giving kind directions to the folks trying to be helpful. There was a lot of smiling and laughing going on.

“You’re my family,” she told the missionaries. “You’re my friends. I love you with the love of Jesus.”

**Icicle lights dangle from a South Side roof (left), and wind chimes dangle from a South Side porch.**
Walking down Union Street (one of the South Side’s main drags), Jon Gapp and Molly Seale heard curses and yells coming from a circle of adults near an old grey Dodge Ram pickup. Two men stood at the center. The taller man, Junior, was a 19-year-old in baggy athletic shorts and tanktop, with tattoos lining his taut biceps. He was threatening and taunting Frank, a short wiry man in his mid-30s with thinning hair and a slight beer gut—the obvious underdog.

Cries of “Bust him,” flew out of the crowd, mostly egging Junior on. Frank’s girlfriend Nicole pleaded with the men, “If y’all keep fighting, you’re going back to jail.”

Jon leaned over to Molly, “This is going to be fun.” Then he hurried toward the crowd. “What’s going on here?,” he asked.

Snappish comments came at him from everywhere, from nearby porches and stoops, from the circle of adults on the street. “Go home, man. This ain’t your business.”

Jon fought through the crowd and wedged himself between the two men.

“This isn’t your fight,” Junior said.

“This fight isn’t going to solve anything,” Jon replied. “You don’t have to go back to jail. Let’s work this out.”

Jon tried pushing Junior back and out of the way, but Junior dodged him. Then he threw a furious punch that caught Frank in the cheek. Frank cursed and swung back.

Suddenly, two toughs with buzzed hair, tattoos and bracelets stepped calmly into the circle like bodyguards. They grabbed Jon by his armpits and hauled him out, flared their shoulders and backs in front of him to keep him out.

Junior kept on punching, connecting with Frank’s solar plexus and kidneys. Frank tried to back away but the crowd hemmed him in.

The two toughs were watching the fight closely. Jon, sensing an opening, burst into the circle again and got himself right next to Frank. “We’ve got to get out of here,” he said.

Junior crept up close to Frank, too, but this time he didn’t punch. When he pulled away, Jon saw a small, white-handled paring knife in his hand. A drop of blood moistened the tip. Jon put his hand on Frank’s back and started shoving him toward the edge of the circle.

Suddenly a large woman broke through the crowd, carrying an aluminum baseball bat and yelling at Frank. “I’m gonna kill you.”

Jon kept up the pressure on Frank’s back, pushing him through the crowd, while someone else tried to contain the large woman. They made it through the circle, hurried a few hundred feet and then glanced back. No one followed.

Frank finally saw that his stomach was bleeding. He pulled up his shirt and found two punctures.

As Jon dialed 911, Nicole came over. The three of them crossed Meridian Street to wait for the ambulance at a Village Pantry convenience store. Molly joined them a minute later. She and Jon prayed in tongues, while Frank smoked a cigarette until the ambulance arrived.

Frank’s intestine was punctured. Doctors performed minor surgery and patched him up with more than 30 stitches. They told Frank that if he hadn’t gotten immediate attention he would have ruined his stomach.

Molly and Jon saw Frank and Nicole in the hospital a few days after the fight. “Thanks for everything,” Frank said. “But you guys going out and knocking on doors isn’t going to do anything.” Frank didn’t see the Lord in the neighborhood, rapping on doors, talking to people, and occasionally stepping into fights.

In the days that followed, many neighbors called Jon crazy. “The Lord tells us to be peacemakers,” he told one of them. “That’s what I’m doing.”

Jon never found out what caused the fight.
By Sean Connolly

“We’re going out, but not as professionally religious people, not as people with carefully constructed images, not as salesmen, not as political organizers, not as social workers. . . . We’re going out speaking simply. . . . We’re stepping out in faith and opening our mouths.”

—Paul DeCelles
Pastoral Training Institute (March, 2007)

Jon Gapp, Nick Holovaty and Rus Lyons—the first People of Praise missionaries in Indianapolis—spent last winter “opening their mouths” on the city’s joint campus of Indiana University and Purdue University (IUPUI). One Sunday in May, they invited eight north African students over for supper, but with finals coming on fast, all eight offered last-minute regrets.

As the supper beans simmered, Nick and Nathan Barrett decided to pray about what the three missionaries and their five weekend guests from Allendale and South Bend would do next. Nick got a word from Ezekiel 3:

Eat this scroll and then go; speak to the people of Israel. . . . Indeed, it is not to a people with a difficult foreign language to whom you are sent . . . , not to the many nations with difficult and obscure languages. . . . Go to the exiles, your fellow countrymen, speak to them and tell them, “This is what Yahweh says,” whether they listen or not. . . . I am making your forehead as hard as a diamond, harder than flint.

Nick and Nathan came up with a plan. After supper, the eight men would split into pairs and head out in four different directions, fanning out across the city to talk to people and find out what Ezekiel 3 really meant.

In one yard thrashing with heavy metal music, a tanktopped woman stood behind a chain-link fence. They told her about baptism in the Holy Spirit, and prayed with her while teenagers on the porch called them liars and brainwashers.

Later they met a 6’ 3” man whose arms were tattooed with women and demons. He said the police always used to pull him over on sight just to say Hi . . . until recently, when a Baptist preacher had led him to the Lord. Since then he walked the streets at night praying for the neighborhood.

As he spoke, a portly man in a wide-brimmed straw hat lumbered toward them. In his right hand was a tall shepherd’s crook. He was the preacher.

He came up to them and offered his story: God had called him to move into the neighborhood and start knocking on doors. People had repented, and a small group of Christians was meeting in one another’s homes and organizing to fight drug houses (they’d already shut down two). He peppered his conversation with references to the book of Acts and called his ministry “incarnational.”

Greatly encouraged, Jon and Nathan drove back home and shared about what they’d seen. None of the other pairs had experienced even minor missionary successes.

Two weeks later, several teams were back on the South Side. Jon and Rus met a heroin addict who broke down in tears when they spoke to her about the Lord—she was so desperate to get off drugs. Nick and Dan Reinbold met a tough-looking man who cried about his divorce and then gave the missionaries bratwurst, milk, cereal and gas money.

In early June, more missionaries arrived. First they spent their days at IUPUI, but fewer students were around during the summer session, so they started going to the South Side too, reaping still more fruit.

They just kept going back.

Note: The missionaries run into the Baptist preacher from time to time, now that they’re working regularly in the neighborhood. His work centers in a small sector of the wider area they travel in. They pray for his success.
Sunday, June 10, found Ruth Sullivan doing exactly what she had been doing most days for the previous five years—lying in her bed afflicted by severe lymphedema, a massive swelling of her entire right leg. Then she noticed something on the bedside monitor screen that was connected to the surveillance cameras for her front lawn: three strangers at her door.

“They were out on the porch praying for my son-in-law’s nephew John Lee, who’d gotten shot in the head [by a car thief about a week earlier]. I’ll never forget that day. I sent my daughter Anna out to ask, if they had time, could they come in.”

Ruth welcomed Molly Seale, Jon Gapp and Nick Holovaty into her living-room-turned-bedroom, a shrine of Colts football paraphernalia, family photos and porcelain angel figurines, with a revolving lampshade that cast rippling shadows around the room.

“I was ready to send them away if they were Jehovah’s Witnesses. I’m a preacher’s daughter, I already know about God. They told me they were missionaries of the People of Praise. We got talking, and they prayed with me. I’d never had hands laid on me for healing until that Sunday.”

She laughs. “Then Nick asked me if I wanted to take a walk, and I thought, Is this guy deaf? I just told him I’ve been in bed for five years!”

Nick and Jon helped Ruth out of her bed, and she did walk—all the way to her kitchen and back.

“I hadn’t seen my kitchen for five years,” says Ruth. “I’m thinking, this is amazing! God, this has to be you!”

Ruth had been praying a lot since her mother’s funeral six months earlier, when she’d given her life back to the Lord. (She left her bed for funerals and hospital visits only, and then only in a wheelchair). “I lay here from December until June, praying every day and reading my Bible and listening to my Christian music. But I was just by myself. Something was missing.”

When the missionaries suggested a prayer meeting at her house, Ruth warmed. The following Sunday, the whole missionary crew appeared on her front porch. They set up some chairs around her bed, pulled out a guitar, and started singing. Before the meeting started, however, Ruth told everyone in the room that she needed the Holy Spirit. They prayed with her for baptism in the Holy Spirit that afternoon.

Ruth was on fire, wasting no time telling people what God was doing for her. Even before that first Sunday prayer meeting, she made sure to invite Rick, who’d never been Christian, and her nephew-in-law Walter. Walter wanted to get free of a drug addiction.

“You don’t need that kind of high,” Ruth told him when she called him up. “You just need what Jesus can give you.”

Walter came, turning his life over to the Lord on his knees while Nick led him in a prayer of repentance.

Rick came, too. In the middle of Walter’s prayer, he began weeping silently. Ruth understood that something big was happening. “Rick never cries,” she says. She encouraged Rick to give his life to the Lord, and then he,
too, knelt down on the floor. He and Walter were baptized in the Holy Spirit in turn.

In the weeks that followed, the prayer meetings multiplied and more neighbors came. The missionaries moved into a house just a few doors from Rick and Ruth’s, and new life burst out onto Union Street.

Rick and Ruth wanted in on all of it: men’s groups, women’s groups, service work for the grandsons, Lord’s Day meals, phone calls, more meals together, more phone calls, more visits and more prayer together.

People who’d known Ruth for years heard about this woman hanging around the missionaries and didn’t realize it was the same Ruth.

She wasn’t the same Ruth.

There aren’t many long-time South Side residents who don’t know of Ruth and her strong maternal streak. She’s given many neighbors a meal or some sound advice or a shoulder to cry on. About 15 years ago, she agreed to run a threatened youth center in the neighborhood after a gang of 30 teens got on their knees in her front lawn and begged her to save it.

“They always knew that I was there for them, that my home was open to them,” she says. “They all called me ‘mom.’”

Three years later, the owner of the youth center’s building sold it. At that point, Ruth’s health problems—obesity, diabetes and eventually lymphedema—began to take charge of her. Her father died, and she became depressed. Still, for a bedbound woman, she kept up an extraordinary amount of communication with friends and family, doing most of it on the phone.

After that first prayer meeting, Ruth really had something to talk about. She told so many people what God was doing that within a week folks in her family and neighborhood were hearing the news second- or third-hand.

“After the missionaries came, my life took a 100% turn. Baptism in the Holy Spirit took me closer to Christ. I understand a lot more of the Bible. I can pray out loud and in tongues with the rest of the group—it used to be I couldn’t do that.”

With new hope and determination, she began working to take care of her body, too, and especially to strengthen her legs. She has continued to lose weight, is almost off insulin, and is walking more every week, while the swelling in her leg is subsiding. Doctors and family are astounded. “People come and tell me that my son, Keith, has been talking nonstop about my healing!”

Ruth is doing more of what she does best. Women who come to the prayer meetings gravitate toward her.

Brenda from down the street visits her daily. Ruth takes all the women into her heart, giving advice when asked, sharing with them about the Lord, and encouraging them in their struggles. At one neighborhood women’s meeting, the women planned to watch the Colts game. Ruth didn’t mention the game once, but quietly started up one of her Gaither Group gospel music DVDs instead, which she knew the rest of the women would enjoy. Diehard Colts fan that she is, she cares about these women a whole lot more.

Then there’s Rick. He isn’t talkative like Ruth, but his actions say plenty. In the middle of the summer, Rick’s brother Terry was dying of cirrhosis and refused to see anyone but Rick. Rick went to his house, told him about the Lord and prayed with him. Terry wept and held the Bible close to his heart.

Another time, one of the neighbors ran to Rick’s house for refuge from her husband, who had beaten her the night before in a drug-induced fury. Rick immediately took charge and got her to the hospital.

Rick works long, hard days for a tent-installation company and often wakes up at 4:00 a.m. to tend to Ruth, but he never backs out of his commitments to his friends. “God has done real good for me,” he says.

Rick and Ruth already had a huge circle they called family, but now they (and some of that circle) have become part of a new family. They decided in mid-July that they were serious about that, and joined the People of Praise.

This has caused a stir among their friends. Many were shocked at the news. Some neighbors were gossiping to Ruth recently, “talking bad,” she said, about the missionaries. She stopped them in their tracks: “I’m a missionary now; I’m a part of the People of Praise. You talk bad about the People of Praise, you talk bad about me, too.” Rick encountered a co-worker who voiced suspicions about the missionaries, and he, too, responded simply, “I’m one of them now.”

In the South Side, being “one of them” means doing missionary work. In early October, Rick went out with Rus to preach to the neighbors. Ruth got too impatient to wait until she could walk around, so now she’s going out preaching in her motorized cart, rolling from doorknob to doorknob. Her first time out, she and Abe Olson ran into a man she’d known since his childhood, whose mother was in the hospital. Ruth led a prayer over the man and sent him off to pray with his mother.

“I want to get out into the neighborhood,” she says eagerly. “I want to testify to what the Lord has done in my life.”
SOUTH SIDE BOYS

By Sean Connolly

South Side boys buzz around in threes and fours like motorcycle gangs, but on short, trick-style bikes of flashy metal. They pedal shirtless or wear white cotton muscle shirts, thigh-brushing basketball jerseys, cargo shorts, jeans and filthy, tongue-wagging high tops. Below their buzzed heads, many of their ears are tricked out in cheap silverplated studs, while many necks flash silver-plated chains (including one on which a large, molded Jesus head dangles). The boys train their thumbs on street-fighting video games and train their fists on real street fights. This summer a few of them demonstrated basic competence in explosives, transforming a plastic two-liter bottle into a homemade bomb with a pop loud enough to bring a block of neighbors out of their air-conditioning, their mouths agape.

Many of the boys smoke pot—including some 13-year-olds. Many of them have seen close relatives die and they rage against God because of the injustice. Some have fathers in prison or racist and violent fathers or fathers who walked out on their mothers long ago... fathers who labor as mechanics, painters, roofers, forklift drivers and warehouse hands, who rarely labor behind desks, fathers who are weekend boozers and NASCAR junkies (they ride and repair their own fast cars). South Side boys are like their fathers, tough and adventuresome, handy with tools and, in general, older in outlook than they are in measured years. Just like those doctored two-liter bottles, these minimen are loaded with combustible material, and always ready to pop.

One afternoon three dirt-faced boys traipsed down Minnesota Street. They wore sweat-stained clothes that stuck to their bodies and indicated that the stickiness—like the clothes—had been on them for a few days. A 12-year-old had a basketball wedged under his arm, his big teeth and big hands indicating “imped-
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The very same afternoon that Hannah Brummer, Ellen Putzier and Rus hefted garbage bags bursting with black-magic books into a dumpster (see p. 2), they also stopped in front of a white row house on Terrace Street. Three boys and two young women stood outside on a tiny patch of yard. They all looked to be 17 or 18 and the boys were high.

Hannah knew one boy, James, a muscled youth with tattoos running the length of his arms in tribute to his dead friends. James has a history of run-ins with the police and has plenty of trouble in his family. His 13-year-old brother was arrested for stealing mopeds, and Hannah saw his screaming mother chasing a man out of her house, socking him with a dishtowel. The first time she had seen James, he was standing behind a screen door barking like a dog, distracting her with this faked lunacy while she preached to a young woman.

As the missionaries approached, James tried to get their goat.

“Man, I love crack,” he said. “I smoke it all the time.”

Rus stared at him.

“You’ve got to repent,” Rus said.

“No, I like doing drugs.”

“Dude, I’m not joking. You can repent and get on your knees right here.”

Rus dropped to his knees demonstrating. Ellen and Hannah followed.

“He noticed that one of the boys was eyeing him closely—Tiger, a short and skinny lad with a white basketball jersey and clean face.

“Do you want to repent?,” Rus asked Tiger.

“Oooh, he’s a drug dealer,” someone yelled. “He deals crack.”

“Yeah, I do,” Tiger said, then he came over and knelt down next to Rus. From his knees, Tiger began motioning to James, calling him to come over and kneel down, too. After some verbal back and forth, James came over and knelt.

The other youths shouted out curses, yelling “666” and “Satan,” in an attempt to shake the resolve of Tiger and James. Rus began talking to the boys about repenting.

“Okay, do you want to pray with me and say, ‘I’ve sinned, please forgive me?’”

James looked back at his friends, his head bobbing.

“Man, I can’t do this any longer,” he said. He got up and left.

Rus raised his voice so Tiger could hear them talk over the jeering, and led him in a simple prayer of repentance.

As Tiger repeated the words, one of the boys came over and began swatting Tiger’s head and hitting the heads of the missionaries, too. Hannah tried to shield Tiger, who looked at the flailing boy. “Dude, stop. Cut it
The missionary men don't have any trouble understanding their mission—training loyal disciples and soldiers of our Lord.

out,” he said.

Rus couldn’t stay much longer, since they were late for a meeting. He gave Tiger a teaching on personal prayer, got his phone number and started walking back to the car with Hannah and Ellen.

Then the missionaries felt something hit them from behind—hunks of bread, flung at them from the yard. As they got into the car, the youths kept pelting them.

Ellen rolled down the windows and yelled, “God bless you.”

Rus has called Tiger a few times since then, inviting him to come to neighborhood men’s meetings the missionaries have held. Rus says he sounds interested, but he has never come. They have seen him on the street, always high and, at the same time, docile and eager to talk.

Looking at the younger JNR boys, seeing that healthy shine in their eyes, noticing their soldierly admiration for the missionary men, it isn’t hard to hope that all their budding fealty might shoot them into manhood by this new route, bypassing all the South Side’s rage and drug-induced mental mayhem, bypassing the chaos that produces so many 17-year-old junior Gerasene demoniacs, young men who rave and gnash and bark, so that, eventually, no chains or prisons will be able to contain them.

Recently, Rus called one of the young JNR boys and invited him for a weekend trip to South Bend. As he listened to the offer, the boy was very polite and composed, replying with calm yeses and yes sirs. “I’ll go pack,” he said smoothly. Before the conversation was finished, though, he blew his cover. He pulled the phone away from his face and began yelping with delight, his heart aquiver with honor.

Studying the eyes of all the JNR boys, watching the loyalty that flashes and flares up as they work beside the missionaries, you can’t help but think about the wildfires of outrage that could so easily light in these same sockets in a matter of years. Moved by visions like these, the missionary men don’t have any trouble understanding their mission—training loyal disciples and soldiers of our Lord, men who can trample on snakes and scorpions, who can repair cars, put up tents, handle tools, take their courage from manly Bible stories, and fight in the very same way the missionaries do.

To win. ■
As the close-of-workday traffic strikes the South Side, cars line up to park along the neighborhood’s cracked roads, leaving narrow passageways just wide enough for one moving vehicle. The cars themselves are a survey of yesteryear’s marketing fads in Detroit and Tokyo: wood-paneled minivans, boxy station wagons, gas-guzzling conversion vans with black-tinted windows, thin pick-up trucks with fat earth-tone stripes, tiny Pintos and two-door Escorts. Together, they form a crush that places side mirrors and swinging car doors and bicycling boys all at risk of getting swiped.

During this line-up-and-park part of the day, Rus Lyons, Mary Timler and Monica Porter (an Indianapolis Action team member and guest missionary) noticed a bat-tered, rusty Cutlass with a propped-up hood and two legs poking out from underneath the frame. Tim, a scruffy and shirtless man, came out denouncing his starter.

Rus announced, “God has authority over everything, including cars,” as the missionaries offered to pray with Tim’s listless Cutlass. Accepting the offer, Tim began turning the key while the others stood beside the engine asking the Lord for ignition. Each time they prayed, the engine gave off a louder sputter, but it never caught.

Then, out of the blue, Mary got a sense from the Lord. “Are you right with the Lord, Tim?” she asked. “Have you repented?”

“Man, I’ve got so many sins.”

Rus chimed in, “You know, we could get down on our knees right now and you could repent.”

Rus dropped to his knees in the middle of Talbot Street. Mary wondered what would happen if a car rumbled along.

“Come on,” Rus said, motioning to Tim. Finally, Tim came over and put his knees on the pavement. Mary figured that if a speeding car did come, she wanted it to find her beside Rus and Tim, so she knelt down too.

Tim named off several sins and asked God to forgive them, admitting that he needed the Lord.

Later, back on his feet, Tim said he doubted that he’d ever find anyone else in the South Side who loved the Lord. “There are so many bad people in the neighborhood,” he complained. Just then, another car pulled up—in seeming response to his cue. It was Deanna and Crystal, two South Siders on their way to women’s group with the missionaries.

“Look, more Spirit-filled people!” Mary said.

Then, turning toward the other women, she asked, “Do you want to help us pray over this guy’s car?”

The whole group prayed for ignition one last time, but the Cutlass still would not turn over.

“Well,” Tim said, “maybe the Lord didn’t want me to go where I was going tonight.” Maybe he wanted Tim right there with the missionaries, parked and with his knees touching Talbot Street.
Ellen Putzier passed through a white picket fence and stepped up nervously to the door of a peeling house just like all the others on Alabama Street—except that this one held a deaf occupant. Small, pale Twyla emerged.

Ellen gave her name, signing E-l-l-e-n in the air with her right hand and secretly hoping that her four American Sign Language classes at the University of Minnesota would be enough to carry her through the entire conversation. As Twyla signed back, Ellen found that she could follow her speech, and when she couldn’t, Twyla would patiently pause, spelling out every letter of the unfamiliar words and sometimes speaking, too, in soft, yawning tones.

Twyla said she could actually hear some things, though very dimly. She was born totally deaf, but at age 11 her pastor had prayed with her for healing, and she’d gained 30% hearing in one ear, enough to discern loud sounds like thunderstorms and shouting. At work—she stocks shelves at a nearby Meijer store—Twyla’s supervisors and co-workers communicate with her by shouting.

About a week later, Ellen and Dan Reinbold stood at Twyla’s door again. A tall thin man appeared behind the screen. He opened it a crack and stuck his head out. “Twyla?,” they asked.

The man held up a finger, motioning for the mission-aries to wait, and then went off into the house to fetch her. Twyla came out to the porch as the tall man (her partially deaf boyfriend) stood off to the side and lit a cigarette.

“I want to tell you about baptism in the Holy Spirit,” Ellen signed. (Actually she had to stop and ask Twyla the sign for baptism.) Then she began telling the story of Pentecost, haltingly, because of her frequent need to ask for help in expressing a word. The tall man chimed in a few times to help with words neither Ellen nor Twyla knew.

“Ellen has blue eyes and blonde hair and likes to dance,” Ellen signed. “But who is Ellen really? Twyla has red hair, blue eyes and is deaf, but who is she? What is the essence of Twyla? Could I give my essence to her? That’s what God does! We can have his essence, his Holy Spirit.” Slowly, Ellen explained the fruit that comes from baptism in the Holy Spirit: Scripture coming alive, speaking in tongues, healing, etc.

“Do you want that?”

Twyla hesitated and Ellen realized she didn’t know what Ellen was about to do.

“We’ll lay our hands on you and then pray for baptism in the Holy Spirit. Do you want that?”

Twyla signed enthusiastically, “Okay! Let’s do it, right now, today!”

Ellen turned to Dan. “You pray out loud, and I’ll sign it.” She encouraged Twyla to sign out her own responses during the prayer.

When they had finished, there was a new twinkle in Twyla’s eyes.

“Thank you, God, for giving Twyla your Holy Spirit,” Ellen signed.

She encouraged Twyla to pray every day, to ask the Lord to talk to her, to read Scripture. Then she said that she and Dan needed to be on their way, to tell other people in the neighborhood about the Lord.

“Really, you have to leave now?,” Twyla asked, crest-fallen.

Ellen and Twyla are still talking with each other about what God is doing in the neighborhood, about friendship, about life in the Holy Spirit. “I don’t know exactly what it’s going to look like for Twyla to receive all the gifts,” Ellen says, “but she’s filled with the Holy Spirit!”

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**SIGN LANGUAGE**

*By Elizabeth Grams*

Dan Reinbold and Ellen Putzier used sign language to explain baptism in the Holy Spirit to a deaf woman this summer.
In that beating, all-consuming sleepy summer heat... just a block from the street’s dead end, 1815 Union is awake and alive. It’s Sunday afternoon and kids are playing Simon Says in the short front yard while some smaller ones stick to the red brick porch. Two tiny Hispanic children are poking their heads through the low, open windows.

Music bursts from the house and flows into the streets. Just inside, about 30 people are standing or sitting in rows of folding chairs, packed into the modest-sized front living room and the connected dining room that stretches back into the house. Everyone is singing and clapping together, a few noticeably off key but all of them undeniably enthusiastic.

Nick Holovaty stands at the corner where the two rooms converge, attacking his guitar and half-singing, half-shouting, pausing to yell out song titles — “Jesus Lives,” “Come to the River,” “Praise the Name of Jesus” — or to encourage the group to share words from the Lord. Rus Lyons sits close by, whaling away on a djembe drum with one flat hand and one closed fist.

More children fill a row at the front of the room. There’s Luis, Jesus and José, three brothers the missionaries baptized in the Holy Spirit this summer (see p. 9), studying the paper songsheets voraciously.

Shelly is also in the front, singing loudly and raising her hands in the air, shouting out “Praise you, Jesus!” whenever there’s a lull in the music. She is a former drug addict with a strong Southern twang who gave her life to the Lord a couple months ago. For five years, chronic back pain, the result of lifting her disabled son in and out of his wheelchair, kept her from sleeping in a bed. Then Mary Timler prayed with her after a prayer meeting and healed her.

Jerry stands across from Shelly, next to a few others sitting in the folding chairs that spill out from the main room. He speaks humbly and firmly, frequently moving conversations onto the topic of the Holy Spirit. Jerry is a golf-car mechanic who likes to give gifts to the missionaries, even toilet paper if they need it.

Ray Gonzales (Indianapolis) stands in the middle of the crowd in his customary jeans. Ray leads a group of South Side men who meet together weekly, men who themselves do South Side missionary work and recently all knelt down in a grassy front yard with a repenting neighbor.

Young Austin and his grandmother Deanna are there, too. Austin, who is normally talking explosively or working grass-stains into his pants, looks solemn as he studies the missionary men in the room and imitates their posture, his hands raised. Deanna, her hands raised, looks down to earth, chatty and friendly, unabashedly herself. Both Deanna and Austin were baptized in the Holy Spirit this summer. These two are around a lot, along with Austin’s mom, Crystal, who is currently on the job at Walmart, and his little sister Angel, part of the crowd playing outside.

Ten-year-old Courtney and her sister Brittany flank Ellen Putzier, who encourages the girls to join in with a huge smile and hands raised high above her head. Courtney gazes up starry-eyed at Ellen and sponges in every word that Nick speaks. Lately, she’s been seen biking around the neighborhood singing the latest J-T Kelly song, “Jesus Lives.” The other day, she coached Brittany so that they could perform it together on the phone for Mary Timler. Courtney calls herself a “little missionary.”

Rick stands farther back, hiding quietly behind his graying shoulder-length hair, thick beard and baseball cap. He looks something like a slim Santa Claus, with his

Now they’re a family. They take care of one another’s needs, heal one another and pray together. They suffer together. . . .
whiskers and his mischievous twinkle. Rick always makes
it to the weekly men’s group meetings, despite long,
grueling hours working for a tent installation company.
He gave his life to the Lord at one of the first South Side
prayer meetings (see p. 6).

Then there’s Ruth. She sits in a wheelchair, often smil-
ing and briefly raising her hands in a sweet-natured ges-
ture of thanks to God. If there is time during this prayer
meeting to share what the Lord has been doing, Ruth
is sure to jump in with some story like the one about
the hairline fracture in her arm. She was gearing up for
months of therapy with her arm in a cast, when Robin
Gonzales (Ray’s wife) called her with a vision that Ruth’s
arm was being healed. Ruth took off the bandaging that
night and found that she could move it without pain; it
was absolutely healed.

An attentive audience hears Nick give a talk on the
basics of daily prayer, then he opens up the floor for shar-
ings. Luella, an older woman, declares that the missionar-
ies healed her granddaughter from a bacterial infection.
Everyone claps and Rus gives a few loud whoops. Several
people mention other folks in the room when they share,
since many people here spend a lot of time together. Som-
times there are simple sharings about how someone’s week
went, about jobs, family troubles and conversations.

The group prays over one another for their needs. A
woman who hasn’t come to a meeting before asks prayers
for healing of a tumor. Then one of the missionaries asks
for healing of a toe infection. They end with prayers over
Ruth and, after they pray, Ruth walks around the room to
the sound of applause and cheering.

Once the meeting ends, everyone stands around talk-
ing raucously for half an hour. Ruth has provided a card
table full of food including, today, even her specialty dia-
abetic-friendly Diet Coke cake. Everybody takes enough to
spoil their suppers, and there’s still a good deal left.

It’s a pretty funny group: willowy Naomi Canef and
roly-poly little Dalton, one of Ruth’s grandchildren; wiry,
focused Jon Gapp and laid-back Deanna; old and young;
missionaries and drug addicts who just gave their life to
God.

They’re becoming more in common. Several of the
women talk to one another on the phone almost ev-
ey day, if they don’t actually pop by one another’s
houses. The boys meet together every week to do clean-
up and fix-it jobs in the neighborhood, and they’ve started
hanging out on their own, too, though they didn’t know
one another before the missionaries came. The men just
fixed up Brenda’s front steps (she lives a few doors away).
All the adults meet in small groups every week, one for
men, another for women. They talk about the Lord, they
share their daily joys and struggles.

Many of them are sick. Several of them had or still
have drug or alcohol addictions. Most of them have some
kind of family trouble. There are several single mothers
in the group. Several people in the room would not be
there if they followed their family’s wishes or paid heed
to neighborhood gossip. They are not unlike Jesus’ first
motley crew and, like many early disciples, they have
troubles.

Now they’re a family. They take care of one another’s
needs, heal one another and pray together. They suffer
together, defend one another, and spread the good news
about Jesus around the neighborhood. There’s no flashi-
ness or glamour about them, nothing but the clapping and
the playing kids to attract passersby to their meeting, just
ordinary South Side working people gathered together in
an ordinary house. The Lord likes ordinary houses . . . like
the ones around Asuza Street in Los Angeles in 1907, in
South Bend in the early 1970s when the People of Praise
was born, or all across present-day Communist China,
where millions of people gather illegally in homes to wor-
ship Jesus, ordinary houses where the Holy Spirit makes
new brothers and sisters and draws them to himself.
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This summer I got to visit our missionaries in Indianapolis three or four times. The drive from South Bend to Indy knifes through the heartland—cornfields planted in dirt that waves and rolls ever so slightly. But the best part isn’t the scenery. It’s that the drive is only three hours and requires just two turns. Head south on US 31, turn right on 16th and make a left on Rembrandt . . . bingo, you’re there.

The missionaries lived in two houses this summer. One is a duplex the community bought, and first impression of that place left me doubting that humans would ever live there again. The smell of cat urine was so thick I assumed it would push Clorox past its limits, but I was wrong. Bleach and summer breezes beat that stench. (I’m not going to name the men who camped out on the smelly side of the duplex, so that their reward might be great in heaven.)

During the summer the main action took place inside a rental house 100 yards away from the duplex. Two giant maple trees—like a giant bumpy popcorn ball stuck on two Popsicle sticks—hide a sagging structure with chipped concrete steps. Inside, the house has bare white walls, thick sofas and chairs done up in ugly brown and orange harvest patterns. White-topped folding tables serve as computer desks and supper tables.

Normal days start at 6:00 a.m. when cell phones ring the alarm. Missionaries rise, fold their blankets (there are no beds) then find a quiet place to pray for an hour. At 7:00 the guys run a few blocks over to a giant field for push-ups and stomach torture, led by Jon Gapp. The women run by in the distance following the beautiful currents of Fall Creek (which, as it turns out, really carries city wastewater).

The missionaries eat just two meals a day, so at 8:15 breakfast is hearty: oatmeal topped with canned mandarin oranges or canned pineapple, raisins or brown sugar, toast, hardboiled eggs, coffee, water, powdered milk, calcium pills and vitamins. They don’t have a food budget, and when they do spend money on food it’s a pittance, no more than $35 weekly for all 12 or 13 of them. Nick Holovaty says it’s God’s job to give them the food they need.

Turns out God likes doing that job. One time the missionaries had guests due around breakfast time and only plain old oatmeal to feed them. Ten minutes after the guests arrived, Karl Horlander (Indianapolis) came by with bagels and pastries courtesy of another branch member, Cathy MacAleer, who works at an upscale bakery and always seems to deliver day-old goods just in time.

Another time, they planned to celebrate Hannah Brummer’s and Naomi Caneff’s birthdays. Mary Timler, the cook, knew all too well that the pantry shelves held nothing but bagged beans, but she was wishing she could make the Jamaican pork that Vivian Coney taught her to cook. The day of the celebrations, Jen Torma arrived from Dinkytown with a cooler containing pork loin and Jamaican spices, placed there by Vivian’s brother, Mike!

As the breakfast serving bowls circulate, Nick eases his way to the whiteboard and squeaks out the day’s

It’s God’s job to give them the food they need. Turns out God likes doing that job.

Left: Hannah Brummer and Thomas Duddy paint 1815 Union Street, the missionaries’ South Side home base.
Top right: Missionary breakfast. Bottom: Missionary dinner (just add water).
schedule. The missionaries like to leave plenty of space open for the Lord to set the agenda, but there are a few standard elements.

Often they have training sessions right after breakfast. They use these free-flowing conversations to write and memorize short “bullet” teachings they can give in the field. Now everyone can teach the basics on forgiveness and reconciliation, prayer, reading the Bible, Satan, friendship, money management and baptism in the Spirit.

After the training sessions, the missionaries often do 90-minute meditations on the life of Jesus: his birth, his baptism, his miracles, his crucifixion and resurrection. Their goal is to get to know the Lord better, and the best part comes afterward, when everyone gathers to share what they’ve learned. It’s like getting the benefit of 14 meditations at the price of just one, your own.

The missionaries have a motto of sorts, “Preach what you learned two hours ago,” and often their meditations pay off in the field later in the day. The meditations require vivid reconstructions of scenic detail, so they spend a lot of time imagining the long, dusty and mountainous roads that Jesus traveled. Abe says the details have helped him hook young boys in the South Side, many of whom have never heard many Bible stories. For example, he started telling some boys about the hundreds of gallons of water that Jesus turned into wine. I guess I’d be interested in that too if I was 14.

The missionaries want to be talking and preaching when South Siders are at home, so they schedule their own supper for 2:00 p.m. It’s typically rice steamed in a cooker, beans simmered with hamhocks in a crockpot with fresh vegetables from branch members’ gardens.

After supper they pray again privately, but this time they pray specifically for their work. They consider the people they’re going to see and ask the Lord for specific words for them. One time Abe got a word directing them to knock on doors systematically. He had a sense that Satan had taken control of the streets, forcing the good people inside—that’s where the missionaries would find them.

Sometimes they get words directing them to bring up specific topics: forgiveness and reconciliation, community life, baptism in the Spirit or, simply, Jesus. They get encouraging words: “The Lord is giving us the authority to teach, cast out demons and heal.” (Several healings followed that one.) “Be filled with joy as you fast, for great victories are being won.”

After sharing their words with one another, they pile into cars for the 15-minute drive to the South Side. It’s a fascinating ride. They pass IUPUI, with its government-
I’d hoped that when I got to this point the significance of the missionary pattern of life would be apparent, but it turns out that significance is a hard thing to pin down. Some aspects of their life are plenty puzzling (So why do they pray three hours a day?), while other sacrifices they make don’t come across as heroically on paper as they are in practice (the way their money works, for example, with the community covering their rent).

In his talk at the last PTI, Paul DeCelles said that one way to read the Beatitudes is to use them as descriptions of Jesus’ own life. Jesus assigns blessings to people in circumstances like those he himself experienced: poverty, hunger, weeping, rejection and persecution, to name a few. You can see these circumstances in the missionaries’ lives, too, copied.

The missionary diet consists of oatmeal and beans, two meals a day, while the work they do involves plenty of walking and heat exposure. They aren’t starving, but they do regularly experience hunger and exhaustion. Blessed are the hungry.

Our missionaries don’t pay for their own rent and utilities, but they do face a substantial student loan burden, not to mention empty pantries and gas tanks. They handle their bills without steady jobs or hidden credit cards to act as insurance if faith comes up a little short on cash. Blessed are the poor.

Many of our missionaries don’t have college degrees and none of them has taken any formal training as a sales rep, marketer, evangelist or preacher. Along with this lack, they face slammed doors (par for the course, obviously), not to mention the people who run away from them, call them brainwashers, throw food at them or call their work cheap and worthless. Blessed are those who mourn.

I studied philosophy in college and in those days I learned about an obscure concept called intentional being.
Our missionaries are copying our Lord.
In their copy, you can see his essence.
It’s shining through so brightly that the South Side is changing.

The idea was that when you copy something, the essence of that thing, its act of being, exists not only in the thing itself, but also in the copy. My act of being exists in me, but it also shines through in a photograph that is a copy of my visual appearance. If you take that photograph and fax it, or if you digitize it and e-mail it, replicate it a thousand times like a computer virus, my act of being is still there, shining. This is why good copies, good photographs, can impact real situations. A photograph or a statue of a dictator can instill fear because the act of being of the dictator is present in the copy.

I hope this letter communicates the sense I get visiting the missionaries, that they are very patiently and deliberately copying our Lord, and not just his internal qualities, but the way he lived, his circumstances. The whole missionary pattern—their schedule, the way they treat food and money, the way they conduct themselves—stands as a single coherent copy of him, a moving photograph of his life, albeit an imperfect and rapidly changing one, a picture still being developed.

Jesus copied, too. That’s why, in Luke 15, when the Pharisees ask him why he ate with tax collectors and sinners, he responds with the story of the prodigal son. He’s saying, “My Father humiliates himself, raises his robes and runs like no normal village patriarch ever would, spends more money than he ever anticipated, endures the cheeky insults that only a family member can deliver, all to welcome back one sinner, one rebel son, and throw him an expensive feast. I eat with tax collectors and sinners because that’s what my Father does. I’m copying him. You can copy, too.”

Our missionaries are copying our Lord. In their copy, you can see his essence. It’s shining through so brightly that the South Side is changing.

We can copy, too.

Sean Connolly
South Bend, IN
11/1/07
People of Praise Missionaries in Indianapolis (Summer, 2007)

Mary Timler
Hannah Brummer
Rus Lyons
Abe Olson
Jon Gapp
Naomi Caneff

Nick Holovaty
Molly Seale
Dan Reinbold
Brian Couch
Ellen Putzier
Thomas Duddy

“And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory” (2 Cor. 3:18).