SPECIAL ISSUE
doors open at the new
RIVER RIDGE
The new River Ridge is located at 2660 River Ridge Parkway in Eagan, Minnesota, nine miles east of the old location in Bloomington.

There are 31 classrooms, including two biology/chemistry labs, two physics labs, two eighth-grade science rooms, an art room, two music rooms, nine seminar rooms, a suite for the tutorial program and 12 other classrooms.

The new building can accommodate five Servant Branch area meetings at once: in the auditorium, media center, commons, gym and family room.

The first official event at the new building was a ribbon-cutting on January 4. About 250 people attended, including U.S. Representative John Kline and Mayor Mike Maguire of Eagan. The next day, Servant Branch women held a tea in the building, and on Sunday, January 6, the whole branch gathered for their first community meeting in their new home.

The first day of classes for Trinity School was January 15—just one month after volunteers began breaking down lockers and packing up the old school.

The building extends over two stories and 94,000 square feet (2.16 acres)—a 34,000-foot increase over the old building.

The 17.3-acre grounds include a full-size soccer field and a smaller practice field, several basketball hoops, a parking lot with spots for 235 cars, and a protected wetlands with three ponds.

The auditorium can seat 700 people for branch meetings, Trinity School assemblies and drama performances. It features a thrust stage and a high ceiling with sound panels called clouds—providing an acoustical environment suitable for chamber music concerts and choral singing.

There are six entrances, three staircases, 11 bathrooms, 104 windows and 168 doors.

The gym is roomy enough to hold two simultaneous basketball or volleyball practices, separated by an electronically controlled curtain. The bleachers can seat 1,000 people.

The first event in the gym was a three-way wrestling meet between Trinity School, St. Thomas Academy and Meadow Creek Christian School on January 17. Trinity School won the meet. Joe Bulger, a senior in the 112-pound weight class, was the first Trinity School student to win a match in the new building. He won with a pin.

The structure of the building combines steel, concrete and cinderblocks. The exterior is brick and stone.

The building’s heating and air-conditioning systems include two state-of-the-art boilers that are run by computers and can be controlled from outside the building.

Building Facts
Compiled by Chris Meehan

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Left: Eagan Mayor Mike Maguire, Monsignor James Habiger, head of school Bill Wacker, capital campaign co-chair Laurie Coleman, principal branch coordinator Joel Kibler. Below: Joel Kibler, Bill Wacker and Sam Claassen on stage at the first community meeting. Below, right: Dr. Kerry Koller, president of Trinity Schools, speaking at the grand opening.

Peg Louiselle, director of development for Trinity School at River Ridge

U.S. Senator Norm Coleman spoke at the River Ridge grand opening on February 9.
Welcome to the new River Ridge building, now home to Servant Branch and Trinity School at River Ridge.

Of course it would have been wonderful if we all could have been there for all the official unveilings of our new community center and school—for the first community meeting, or the first day of classes, or the first wrestling match or the giant grand opening. Since we obviously couldn’t, we wanted to do the next best thing—use the power of photography to give everyone the chance to take in the sights from the first month of our life inside the new River Ridge.

As you peruse these pages, feel free to ooh and aah just like you would if you were there. Better yet, feel free to shout praises to God and to see, in every archway, science classroom and light-filled space, our Creator’s superabundance.

So many brothers and sisters planned, labored, prayed and fasted, saved and scrimped for years so that this building could come into being, many more than we could name. Construction alone took more than a year, and the story goes back several years before the groundbreaking. For more on the history, background and people involved in this project, we invite you to look back to the August, 2006, and October, 2006, issues of Vine & Branches.

All that energy and effort, put together with a long string of miracles, produced this shining place. This issue is dedicated to displaying the results. We hope you enjoy it.

—Sean Connolly
EXPLORE!
A Walk Through In Pictures

AUDITORIUM
The new auditorium comfortably seats around 700, although 1,000 can fit in a pinch. Designed for both People of Praise community meetings and Trinity School music and drama performances, the room features a thrust stage, a high ceiling and professionally engineered acoustics. Sound waves are directed out and up into ceiling acoustical panels known as clouds, then bounced to additional panels against the back wall so that sound can be dispersed equally throughout the room. “The acoustics are outstanding,” says music teacher David Jorlett, “making it a perfect setting for the various performing groups at Trinity School as well as for outside professional chamber groups.”
**COMMONS**

Capital campaign co-chair Laurie Coleman spoke in the commons at the ribbon-cutting ceremony on January 4. In the foreground is the Trinity School logo.

Ron Radke of Gundlach Champion, project manager and construction superintendent, notes that the commons area is bright and cheery even though it is entirely surrounded by other parts of the building. This is due in part to high-quality light fixtures (top right), which supplement the small, high windows near the ceiling.

The commons has room for 20 tables, each seating about seven people (above). "The commons has such architectural beauty that I respond on many levels," says faculty member John Vogel. "My daily walk across the commons is always invigorating."

Architect David Cihasky of Short Elliott Hendrickson, Inc., (above) designed the building to have a bit of a Mediterranean-Middle Ages flavor, using natural stone, arches, sculpted shingles and niches. Of the commons, pictured here, he says, "The commons did turn out to be a fun area—I wanted enough space for people to gather between prayer meetings, between games, for lunch and for other social events that routinely occur. I wanted an overlook and staircase to add some drama for those events."
MUSIC
“The two music rooms are well designed for the choirs and the seventh- and eighth-grade music classes,” says music teacher David Jorlett. “The auditorium will be a perfect setting for the various performing groups at Trinity School and outside professional chamber groups. The acoustics are outstanding as was demonstrated at the grand opening when Beethoven's "Choral Fantasy" was performed with organ, our very own grand piano, and the combined voices of our Concert Chorale, Chamber Singers, faculty and alumni (left). For the first time the choirs have a rehearsal space of their own. It will make a great deal of difference in the quality of their education.”

ART
(Left:) Sam Claassen points out some of the highlights of the art room to U.S. Representative John Kline. Art teacher Jennifer Soriano tells more: “The art room's nine glorious windows face a gorgeous southwest view of woods and ponds and let in natural light that helps students see correctly. We have a bigger work space now, with new chairs and desks that have tops that can be raised like easels.”
Students stand for the National Anthem before the first Friday night basketball game in the new gym on January 18.

(Left:) Though primarily used for athletics, the gym is also used for overflow lunch seating, and students regularly congregate there throughout the day (sans shoes). Athletics secretary Linda Stauble says, “Every day I look out my office door into the gym and see piles of similar black shoes. I don’t know how they tell them apart!”

(Left:) Servant Branch’s principal branch coordinator Joel Kibler adds, “We can also use the gym for People of Praise wedding receptions and large social events. Recently we pulled out the bleachers and set up tables seating 250.”

GYMNASIUM
Trinity School’s new gymnasium is 13,500 square feet; large enough to seat 1,000 on bleachers, and also big enough to be divided in half by an electric-powered curtain to accommodate two practice games. Four locker rooms and storage space support its activities.
FAMILY ROOM
(Left:) “We are particularly pleased to have room 110—what we call the ‘family room’—for small People of Praise gatherings such as area meetings or groups of senior community members,” says Joel Kibler. “It can accommodate 80, and has a fireplace, sofa, stuffed chairs, six tables, sink and refrigerator. It’s a very comfortable space.”

KITCHEN
The new building features a kitchen with two sinks, a dishwasher, lots of cupboards, a walk-in cooler and 110-square feet of countertop.
(Right:) Collin Anderson and a crew of folks—including 10 from Dinky-town—prepare food in an assembly line for the grand opening.

MEDIA CENTER
Near the commons is the media center, which also serves as the school’s library. Seating 80, it is ideal for parent meetings and meetings of parent volunteers who serve Trinity School. The People of Praise also uses it for area gatherings. A large screen in the room can scroll down from the ceiling for media presentations. Often used for tutoring, it also serves an after-school study hall.
Harry and Jan Sweere: A Can-Do Couple

By Claire Holovaty

Those who knew him for decades report that the phrase “We can’t do that” never left Harry Sweere’s mouth. Harry, an entrepreneur and evangelist who died in 2005, was a “How can I make this happen?” man. So it’s fitting that a generous gift from his wife, Jan, went a long way toward turning a building project that was bigger than anyone had imagined into a bricks and mortar reality.

“It’s been a blessing to have money to give to Trinity Schools and to the Lord’s causes, but I don’t really like the attention that comes with giving,” Jan admits. “The money is not from me, it’s from God.” She’s convinced that the Lord and the many hard-working employees at Ergotron, the company she and Harry started, were the main players in the story of this remarkable gift.

In 1982, Harry was working as computer consultant to the president of Northwest Airlines when he needed to find an adjustable computer monitor stand that reservation agents could use. There was no stand that could tilt and swivel to suit employees of varying heights, so he invented one. He used an automobile universal joint and constructed the first stand in his basement.

Harry quickly realized he was onto something important, so he asked several couples in Servants of the Lord community to help him pray about whether he should stay at Northwest or launch his own company to build monitor stands. With the couples’ encouragement, the Sweeres soon started Ergotron.

“The community was a part of Ergotron from the beginning,” she says. “I had the women in my women’s group help me stuff advertising envelopes and mailings, and Harry loved to hire sons of community families right out of high school and college.”

Harry took every opportunity to encourage and invest in young men. He owned a boat, and he liked to invite sons of community members to water-ski and eat pizza with him, talking to them about the Lord all the while. In 1996, at age 62, Harry trained for months so he could hike with high-school students from around the community in the Rocky Mountains at the first High Country Adventure.

David Zimmel (South Bend) was one of many sons of community members to benefit from Harry’s friendship. “Harry was a brilliant guy who could succeed in almost anything he wanted to do. But the Lord was the biggest thing in his life. He was always talking about how important friendship with Jesus was.”

Later in life Harry was at home battling cancer, and David remembers visiting him with Josh Caneff (Allendale) and Abe Olson (Indianapolis) “He urged us to evangelize, giving us strategies for talking to people about the Lord and teaching us role-playing exercises so we could get better at ‘selling the Lord.’”

Throughout his life, Harry practiced what he preached. “He was so excited about the Lord, and about sharing the Lord with others,” Jan recalls. “Sometimes he’d pick up a hitchhiker, and by the time Harry would drop him off the hitchhiker would have given his life to Jesus.”

Love for the Lord and for young people led Harry and Jan to use profits from their success at Ergotron to provide scholarships to Trinity School. “It’s a place where young people can get a good education as well as learn to love the Lord better,” Jan says. “That’s not very common these days.” Among many other gifts over the years, the Sweeres set up a fund to purchase orthodontics for Trinity School students who needed them. As a salesman, Harry knew how important a smile is for relating to people. That work continues through the Sweere Foundation, which has made Trinity Schools one of its official funding priorities.

When asked about her recent gift to help build the new River Ridge, Jan answers with unassuming simplicity: “It seemed like something Harry would have wanted to do. One of his first loves was young people. It’s a legacy for Harry.”

From left: Joel Kibler, Jan Sweere and Sam Claassen at the groundbreaking in the fall of 2006.
THE MOVE:

By Catherine Bulger

It’s a nine-mile trek down Interstate 494 from the old River Ridge in Bloomington, MN, to the new one in Eagan, and for nearly three days in mid-December, three 53-foot moving trucks practically wore grooves in the pavement, rumbling back and forth until every last book, box and chair got moved.

The trucks toted 600 classroom chairs, 800 auditorium chairs (that by itself was two separate round trips), 200 tables and 45 faculty desks. They carried drama supplies (hats, belts, swords, fake fruit, ribbons, purses, boots and costumes), along with bulky blue mats for the wrestling team, surplus uniforms, college guidance materials, library books, projectors and Christmas decorations.

Meanwhile in Eagan, crates were arriving regularly, with new furniture to fill the extra 34,000 square feet available at the new building: science tables, art tables, computer room tables, seminar tables, book cabinets, pencil sharpeners, corkboards and dry erase boards, to name a few. And in typical People of Praise provident and resourceful fashion, many of these items did not arrive assembled, but were pieced together gradually by an able crew of Servant Branch retirees—Herb Bruber, Bill Madden and Bill Wallace—along with River Ridge faculty members and many other volunteers.

In the months leading up to the move, laptop carts, glass dessert plates and flagpole stands all were catalogued on a spreadsheet noting their locations in the old building, destinations in the new one, and sometimes even their measurements in square feet. Starting in September a team of Trinity School faculty—Linda Baisch, Beth Schmitz, Emily Schroeder, John Stauble and team leader Steve Hendrickson—met at 3:30 on Wednesday afternoons to plan the transition to the new building. As December grew closer, their meetings stretched, often lasting until 8:00 at night, with grading and lesson-planning and other teaching duties crammed in afterward.

“They were champions,” Steve
Old School to New School in 6 Days

A. Math teacher Steve Hendrickson led a crack crew of faculty members who organized the logistics of the move and planned the transition to the new campus. B. Steve Hendrickson. C. Latin teacher Dennis Rayl. D. Unloading at the new River Ridge in Eagan. E. Volunteer Veronica Putzier helps unpack. F. Associate head of school Dave Beskar makes a point.

Above: Students leave the circle assembly area on December 14 after their final assembly at the Bloomington property.

says. “As our planning meetings wore on into the evening, I would usually try and say that we could stop and finish up later, but they’d all want to keep going and get it done.”

The timing of the move left little room for error. Classes at the old River Ridge campus ended Friday, December 14—meaning very little could be hauled over before then. The first official event at the new building was a ribbon-cutting on January 4. Packing, loading, moving, unloading, unpacking, assembling and arranging all had to be wedged into a three-week gap, together with Christmas and New Year’s Day.

On Saturday, December 15, Action division members and volunteers arrived to break down lockers and do other disassembly work. The next Monday, everything in the school got packed. The move began in earnest on Tuesday, ended on Thursday, and by Friday there was little left to do but wait for the rest of the new furniture to arrive. Staff members arrived on December 26 to continue setting up.

Now all the moving is nothing but a whirlwind of memories and souvenir spreadsheets.

“We developed some strong friendships on the transition team,” Steve says. “It was because of everyone’s insights that things went so smoothly. We had to make a lot of adjustments during the move. The team responded with a remarkable amount of grace.”

Fortunately, they won’t have to haul those wrestling mats anywhere else for a long, long time.
A Month of Firsts

Left: Servant Branch members held their first community meeting at the new building on Sunday, January 6, celebrating with food, drinks and building tours.

Below middle: Coach Pat Murphy (Servant Branch) urges his team on during the first athletic event held at the new facility, a three-way wrestling meet on Thursday, January 17. Trinity School won. Below: Trinity School’s Luke Stephens (junior, in blue) wraps his opponent in a front headlock.

Trinity School’s main stairway (one of three) is in the commons, leading up to a balcony and upper-level classrooms.

Above: Head of School Bill Wacker welcomes students and faculty members on their first class day in the new facility, Tuesday, January 15.

Left: About 900 people attended the first evening of basketball games at Trinity School on Friday, January 18. The junior varsity boys’ team and the varsity girls’ team both won their games.

Far left: Veteran boys’ varsity basketball coach John Buri arrives at the gym.
Science experiments inside Trinity School’s new labs aren’t just breaking through, they’re frothing and fizzing, and sometimes even exploding.

“In the old River Ridge building, to do a chemistry lab, we’d mix two things together and watch them bubble,” explains junior Sam Mertz. “Now we have a fume hood for exhaust and we can do minor explosions.”

With all this potentially noxious intermingling taking place, long-time science faculty member Dr. David O’Hanley (Servant Branch) has seen a new level of seriousness in the classroom. “The change hit home when we showed the students how to shut off the gas lines in each room and how to turn on the showers in case of chemical splashes.” Those are just a few of the safety precautions in place in the new labs.

A heat source in the classroom allows demonstrations that couldn’t be done in the old building. Distillation is just one example. “In distillation, two liquids of different compositions can be separated by boiling them,” Dr. O’Hanley says. “There’s no better way to understand boiling points.”

The new lab classrooms also feature sinks and spigots, wide tables where small groups of students can gather, and adjacent rooms for storing beakers, chemicals, dissection tools or physics experiments. “The labs are designed for us, to do what we do,” Dr. O’Hanley says.

There are four lab classrooms: two that ninth- and tenth-grade biology and chemistry students share and two for eleventh- and twelfth-grade physics students. Two additional eighth-grade science rooms feature display cases for rocks and a computer that captures real-time weather information from instruments on the roof.

Each of the four labs has a fume hood—a protective glass box with a lift door that shields students and teachers from hazardous experiments. The hood is connected to the building’s ventilation system, and filters dangerous chemical particles and fumes out of the air before they exit the building.

In a recent experiment, Dr. O’Hanley used the fume hood to demonstrate the vaporization of a pressurized gas, in this case butane (the gas in cigarette lighters). He lifted the glass door a few inches, and then held a lighter and a drill inside the box. Next he bored a hole in the side of the lighter with the drill. When the pressurized liquid butane inside was exposed to air, the students heard a loud hiss and saw the liquid butane disappear.

All science classrooms have wireless and hard-wired Internet access, and one of them has a state of the art smart board donated by 3M. The board can display images that come from a laptop computer connected to a projector, images like a world map, live video news, a Rembrandt painting, a PowerPoint presentation—anything that can be displayed on a laptop screen. It’s also interactive. A student or faculty member can write on a projected image using a special pen, or touch the board with a finger, to mimic a computer mouse. For example, Dr. O’Hanley used the board to project typed lines of computer code. Then he used the pen to circle and underscore important pieces of the code.

Not everything that happens in the new labs is so high-tech. Seniors used old-fashioned wood and chicken wire in physics class to build a human-sized Faraday cage, which insulates a person inside from electric shock.

“We’ve always taught our students to think like scientists,” concludes head of school Bill Wacker (Servant Branch), “but in our new lab-oriented classrooms, we can help them do science like scientists.”

Let the explosions begin.
With a frigid Minnesota winter standing between the October, 2006, groundbreaking and the December, 2007, target for completion, raising the new River Ridge building posed timing and logistical challenges. The deadline was firm, because of the narrow, one-month window that would allow Trinity School to swap campuses during semester break, rather than moving at mid-semester or delaying until the summer of 2008.

“We knew that it was ambitious to plan on finishing in a little more than a year,” says Sam Claassen who oversaw the whole project for us. “We set up a tight schedule and moved aggressively to meet it.”

This meant busy days and nights for project manager and construction superintendent Ron Radke of contract management company Gundlach Champion.

“We ran into delays acquiring the proper building permits,” Ron says. “So we couldn’t start pouring the concrete foundations until late October, but we still got three-quarters of the work finished before it froze.”

The hard, frozen soil dug up during foundation work had to be hauled away and soft replacement soil had to be trucked in so the foundation could be backfilled. These and other creative measures allowed work to proceed throughout the winter, though not without additional difficulties.

“The masonry contractor had to enclose the areas he wanted to work on so he could install the masonry without freezing the mortar,” Ron explains. “Of course, all this took extra time.

“Every spring, as the roads are thawing, the city and the state impose road restrictions. We anticipated these, but we didn’t anticipate that the restrictions would be enforced longer because of the harsh winter. We couldn’t install the concrete for the floor slabs when we had planned.”

Deadline Met

By Chris Meehan

In spite of these delays and the need for meticulous coordination to get all the ventilation, wiring, drywall, ceilings, flooring, painting and finishing details done, the move from one River Ridge campus to the next went ahead on schedule.

Bill Rademacher managed the day-to-day details of the project. “Bill communicated with the construction manager daily,” Sam says. “He was at the site a lot, working with the phones and security systems, training our employees on grounds maintenance. He did an excellent job.”

At the grand opening on February 9, Servant Branch principal branch coordinator Joel Kibler honored Ron for his efforts. “Ron is highly competent, humble, straightforward and service-oriented. Everyone who worked with him on the project was happy to have him.”

The building’s state-of-the-art computer-controlled heating and cooling system includes 15 heat recovery units, one make-up air unit, 16 air-handling units, 16 condensing units, 12 exhaust fans, nine cabinet unit heaters and two compact boilers that are about the size of two side-by-side industrial refrigerators.

The commons under construction.
In the fall of 1987, Trinity School opened in Minnesota. (The original campus opened in South Bend in 1981.) The school was housed in an auxiliary building (bottom) owned by Gethsemane Episcopal Church (below) and located on 4th Avenue in downtown Minneapolis.

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The new River Ridge building in Eagan, MN.

“How shall I repay the Lord for all his goodness to me?” (Ps. 116:12)