Dive Into the Underwater World of Dolphins!
Meet Whit Au, Hawaii’s Marine Mammal Expert
Most weekday mornings Whit Au (Oahu) waits on a pier for his ride to work, a Boston Whaler that carries him across crystalline blue waters toward a tiny Hawaiian island surrounded by lagoons. His office is on 29-acre Coconut Island, the same puff of land pictured in the final shot of the introduction to the 1960s TV show *Gilligan’s Island*, and now home to the world-class research labs and floating captive-animal pens of the Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology.

Whit, chief scientist of the University of Hawaii’s Marine Mammal Research Program, studies killer whales, humpback whales, shrimp and, especially, dolphins. Unlike most of his colleagues and graduate students, he isn’t a zoologist or a biologist. He’s a self-described “non-huggy” scientist who doesn’t swim with or pet his research subjects. (“There are trainers for that,” he points out.) Whit is an electrical engineer by training, one of the first to enter this field, and he’s an expert on dolphin sonar or echolocation.

Dolphins are known for their keen intelligence (though there is no way to prove the common notion that they are among the most intelligent of animals, Whit says) and for their remarkable communications capabilities. They make two noises primarily: several-second-long whistles (audible to the human ear) and millisecond, high-frequency clicks (inaudible to humans). Scientists believe dolphins use whistles to communicate with one another, and bottlenose dolphins even have unique signature whistles that act like names—they’re used for calling other dolphins and for identifying themselves.

Whit’s research has focused on the high-frequency clicks. In the 1950s scientists first began to suspect that dolphins used these clicks for echolocation. Just as bats use sound waves to navigate in the dark, dolphins send sound waves through dark and cluttered ocean waters, bouncing them off objects and then using the echoes to glean information about the distance and nature of the items in their environment.

“Amazingly, they can tell the difference between identical-looking small aluminum and steel spheres at 50 meters or better. Spotting a 30-centimeter cod from 100 meters away is no challenge. A human swimmer, being that much larger, is probably visible to them beyond 200 meters,” Whit told *Wired* magazine. “They have the best sonar on this planet,” he said in another interview with *National Geographic*. They eclipse all instances of man-made, technological sonar. The US Navy knows this, and has trained teams of dolphins to act as underwater intelligence gatherers. In 2003, the Navy dispatched a dolphin team into the Persian Gulf to detect underwater mines and then deposit detonation packages by the mines. (The packages are not detonated until the dolphins have returned safely.) “Dolphins can not only find objects like mines buried in the seabed, but they can distinguish them from clutter such as coral, rock and man-made debris,” he says.

For many years, Whit designed experiments with captive dolphins. For example, he would place suction cups
over dolphins’ eyes and then dangle balls in front of them at varying distances, to test and measure the strength and accuracy of their sonar. The results of his experiments are summarized in his book, *The Sonar of Dolphins*, published in 1993, the first modern study of the subject. Whit’s long-term goal is to learn enough about dolphin sonar to help scientists design better technological sonar.

“Research is so much fun,” he says, “discovering new things never known or documented before, writing papers. I tell my students, if you’re not having fun, forget it, you’re in the wrong field.”

Whit never expected to work with dolphins. In the early 1970s he and his wife, Dorothy, came to Hawaii for two months after Whit had finished his Ph.D. Toward the end of that visit, they felt a sudden and overwhelming urge to stay, a desire both later concluded had come from the Lord. Although Whit had a research job in his field (electromagnetism) lined up in San Diego, he decided to widen his job search and look around for any kind of research.

Then he encountered a man, nicknamed Crazy Evans, who worked in an artillery bunker on the Marine Corps base on Oahu. He was busy starting an underwater environmental research team, and through him, the door into the world of dolphin sonar opened. It was also around this time that Whit and Dorothy became involved with charismatic renewal, and then, in the late 1970s, with the People of Praise.

In the late ‘90s the Navy lab Whit had worked at for over two decades closed, and he faced a crucial decision in his career. He could either transfer to the main laboratory in San Diego or move from the federal government to the state, taking a job at a University of Hawaii research facility. Again, the Lord moved him to stay, and Whit has been working with the Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology since 1997. His research there has broadened to include other marine animals and their interaction with their environments.

He throws out some questions: Did oceanic dolphins

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**Left:** Coconut Island is the site of the University of Hawaii’s Institute of Marine Biology, but it’s more recognizable to the public as the island pictured in the opening for the 1960s TV show *Gilligan’s Island*.

**Right:** Whit (in red) with his son Wes, Wes’s wife Johanna, their son Mark and B.J. (in water).
become coastal or did coastal dolphins eventually become oceanic? What other kinds of long-term relationships do humpback whales maintain in addition to “mother and calf”?

A recent experiment uncovered an answer to one question: How do spinner dolphins forage for food in the dark ocean water? Whit and his graduate students used five echosounders to track dolphins and their prey during their nightly feeding period. The complexity of what they discovered surprised them. Spinner dolphins hunt in groups of 14–26, first forming a circle to surround their prey (fish, shrimp and squid), then morphing themselves into a fast-moving three-dimensional cylinder that packs their prey in even tighter. The dolphins use whistles to communicate with one another and maintain the integrity of their enclosure. Then they take turns feeding, entering the enclosure in pairs.

Whit’s own fieldwork and consulting work for other researchers takes him all over the globe: Iceland, Canada, Bahamas, New Zealand, Alaska, Netherlands, etc., and students from all over the world clamor to come to Hawaii to study under him. He repeats how blessed he is, how the Lord put him in the right place at the right time.

“It’s an interesting life. The more you study certain animals, the more you appreciate what humans are—we are ‘fearfully and wonderfully made’” (Ps. 139:14). Whit feels his life as a scientist resonates with what the Lord said to Adam: Take dominion over the earth. “A scientist seeks truth in a particular field,” he says. “This is one way of taking dominion over the earth.” It’s a life calling.

Or, as Dorothy translates: “He is never retiring.”

“Nope,” he grins broadly: “this is way too much fun!”

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**ECHOLOCATION**

*by Whit Au*

Dolphins produce their echolocation signals in their heads, in an area close to the blowhole and the nasal system. They don’t use vocal cords like we do; instead, they produce sounds by blowing air through special lips inside their nasal system. These sounds travel through the melon, which is a lump of fatty tissue that helps to channel sounds into the water.

Dolphins have no external ear lobes, so sounds have to find a different way to enter their ears. They receive sounds via the lower jaw, mostly through the mandibular window (an area of very thin bone) and then along fat channels into the middle and inner ears.

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After K.S. Norris, 1968, from E.T. Drake, ed., *Evolution and Environment*
Our sister Hilary Bollman “grabbed on to Jesus and held on tight,” said Paul Barrett as he opened the South Bend branch’s celebration of Hilary’s life on January 8. After battling a series of cancers and related illnesses for 14 years, Hilary died January 4 at the age of 32.

Valerie Day shared, “I thank God for the honor of being part of her life. She was a strong, spiritually well-rooted woman of God, passionate about many things.”

Passion, energy and enthusiasm were typical of Hilary: her zeal for learning and then sharing what she learned, her competitiveness playing games like Settlers of Catan, knitting, gardening and singing.

“She was just as bold and forthright as she was considerate and loving,” noted Beth Sanford. “She spoke her mind. She faced these cancers directly and always asked for prayers for healing. She had a strong faith and called us to be stronger in faith and in our relationships.”

She was extremely considerate. Suzanne Thomas recalled the time Hilary and her mother Charlene offered to take Suzanne’s daughter Madison to the King Tut Exhibit in Chicago. “Hilary thought about others; she wanted to do good things for them.”

“I received so much encouragement from Hilary when I was diagnosed with cancer in 2003,” recalled Ann Thomas. “She wrote down Scripture verses to help me get through. Hilary knew a lot of Scripture from memory, and she was always a quiet comfort to me. It was inspiring to see her setting new goals, even when she was going through bouts of life-threatening illness and treatment.”

Hilary was born November 5, 1975. She graduated from Clay High School and played bassoon in the South Bend Youth Symphony. She received a B.A. in Spanish from Notre Dame in 1997 and came underway that November. Her first bout with cancer occurred as a sophomore, when one lung was removed. With typical determination, she graduated with her class and with the grade point average that she’d set as her goal. She taught Spanish in several local high schools, but the recurrence of multiple tumors and a diagnosis of bone cancer eventually prevented her from teaching.

Four years ago, the doctors told her she had only a few months to live. Before starting 18 months of chemotherapy, she donated her long hair to Locks of Love, a program that makes wigs for children who lose their hair because of cancer treatment. Six months after the treatments, Hilary learned the cancer had spread. A few weeks before her death, facing still more chemotherapy, she donated her hair a second time.

With help, Hilary was able to fulfill a number of wishes. She visited the dolphins at the Indianapolis Zoo, traveled to Seattle and Palm Springs, visited friends in the northern Virginia branch and even met President Bush. She was always engaged in the People of Praise, even when she couldn’t come to meetings, and everyone in the branch held her up to the Lord constantly for his healing and mercy.

Early on January 2, Hilary was taken to the hospital, where family members and brothers and sisters in the community gathered to pray, sing, read Scripture and care for her with tender embraces, kisses and hugs right through the moment of death. “She insisted we celebrate her life,” says Charlene, “not mourn her death.”

Hilary let her mother share some things from her journal: “I hate that I can’t change what is going on! I can’t stand feeling out of control.” She was being honest with God about her feelings, and eventually she found positive notes in her illnesses. “It has given some people an awareness of God’s faithfulness, given me the opportunity to share about it, and also put me in a place to minister to people with the knowledge I’ve learned.”

She also wrote down a thought that would sustain her while she suffered: “I will live my life in the sure knowledge that I am a unique, irreplaceable, free and uniquely loved child of God.”
Our campus divisions in Minnesota (Dinkytown) and South Bend face big organizational challenges, because their 65 or so members vary so widely in age and in life situations. Some are college students, majoring in art, engineering, English, geology or nursing. Others are young professionals with jobs in community businesses such as One:Ten Communications or other divisions of the LaSalle Company. Others work directly for the community: with the accounting department or with Vine & Branches. Still others work outside the community as physical therapists, Montessori teachers or web-site developers.

What they hold in common are shared goals of community growth and city-building, but in practical terms they must deal with a wide diversity of schedules and talents and interests. Their vast reservoirs of untapped potential have equally vast needs for training in practical skills, from financial planning to evangelism. At the same time, there’s work to be done now to further our long-term goals: building 200 cities in 40 years, growing to 200,000 members, expanding the community’s presence on the Internet, helping to organize summer Action trips, telling others about the Lord, and on and on.

Challenging circumstances require new approaches to organization, so campus division leaders came up with one. The centerpiece is a flexible grouping which they are calling a “section.” This term is already familiar to many community members, since it is used when a geographic area within a branch is organized into smaller units, also called “sections.” But a section in a campus division is a little different. It is part project team, part household, part “we’re-all-in-this-together” community spirit, and part apprenticeship and career mentoring. Each campus division section has its specific purpose: harnessing the power of the Internet for community growth (the technology section); producing multimedia materials about the community (communications section); helping to inspire and train Action division members (Action section); etc. There are currently seven sections, three in South Bend and four in Dinkytown.

Section life can link up professional workers with college students who are thinking about going into the same field. For example, the technology section includes professional computer programmers as well as college undergraduates majoring in computer science and engineering.

But there’s more to section life than the career angle. Members also work together on projects, eat breakfast and dinner together, pray together and recreate together. Many sections dedicate time to meditate on Scripture. Members pray about a Gospel passage by themselves, and then join others to share what they learned. With so much repeated contact throughout the day—in living rooms, dining rooms, offices—some interesting situations can develop. Students can write papers next to professional writers. At any moment a conversation might erupt about a common project (such as the upcoming online People of Praise directory). A more experienced section member might teach another member how to write a few tricky lines of computer code.

“There are many ways we could have organized ourselves,” explains program coordinator Nick Holovaty, who is responsible for campus divisions, “but we chose
to organize around purposeful work. One very effective way to share our lives is to work together—studying, building web sites, supporting community businesses, taking care of our properties, creating videos, etc. We decided to center our lives around those purposes, always leaving plenty of room for recreation, common meals, prayer and fellowship.”

Numerous benefits can develop out of this new organizational model: training in specific professional skills, progress in city-building and community growth, deeper friendships among section members and deeper friendship with the Lord.

What have campus division sections done already? As you will see in this issue, they have supported the People of Praise accounting department in implementing its decision to automate its bookkeeping. They have produced videos about our work in Allendale and Indianapolis. They have talked to students from 18 different countries about the Lord and the community. And more is on the way.

In this issue, we’re proud to profile all seven of our campus divisions’ sections, and to bring you the voices of the students and young professionals who are laboring and living in this newly minted mode of life.

Management Information Systems (MIS)

Location: Dinkytown
Section head: Kevin Daly
Members: Collin Anderson, Karen Coleman, Dan Ficker, Malia McCabe, Rachel Miller, Elizabeth Pease, Alicia Pozarski
Morning prayer: 6 a.m.

The field of management information systems involves helping businesses and work groups to manage their own information more effectively using technology. The MIS section has supported the People of Praise’s move from a paper system to an electronic system in the accounting department. This included a 16-page proposal and a weekend trip to South Bend to implement the system.

Section members have had to learn about technology themselves in order to do this work. First-year schoolteacher Karen Coleman recalls when fellow section member Collin Anderson taught her to install RAM (computer memory). “Collin handed me a screwdriver and told me to open his computer. I told him I’d never even taken the battery out of my laptop! But I did open it. The next week, Malia McCabe and I replaced the RAM in four computers.”

MIS section head Kevin Daly says that a highlight of the section’s work has been communicating with brothers and sisters from all over the community. “Working intensely on the same projects creates unity,” adds Elizabeth Pease. “You can’t help but get to know and love folks better when you all stay up until 2 a.m. writing a proposal together.”

Fun Fact: The section likes to broadcast some of its meetings live on the Internet.
**Action**

**Location:** Dinkytown  
**Section Head:** Ben Reinhardt  
**Members:** Isaac Bolduc, Joe Bowar, Michael Coney, Kristin Elliot, Angie Hass, Nicole Gapp, Mary Reinhardt, Amy Rice, Marie Schmitz  
**Morning prayer:** 6:00 a.m.

Action section members are college students and twentysomethings who attend all Servant branch Action division meetings. They’ve taken leadership roles by writing and delivering talks covering topics like freedom, developing and delivering a personal testimony and the history of the Action division.

Section members are also working to establish friendships with their younger brothers and sisters. “More high-school students come visit us in Dinkytown now,” says Angie Hass. “It’s something they really look forward to.”

The section is helping to plan summer trips to Allendale and Indianapolis. Their goal is to organize trips that are logistically self-contained. Summer volunteers would carry food, cooks, drivers and sleeping bags with them, so they can travel anywhere they’re needed. They’re calling the arrangement “Action in a Box.”

**Fun fact:** The section has developed its own board game, called Fractal.

**Missionary**

**Location:** Dinkytown  
**Section head:** Mike Wacker  
**Members:** Matt Brickweg, Amy Décelles, Abby Earhart, Anna Hagens, Catherine Ficker, Jon Gapp, Kathleen Mehaiffey, Chris Milliren, Colleen Murray, Gianna Priolo, Peter Putzier, Jen Torma  
**Morning prayer:** 6:30 a.m.

The 13 members of the missionary section regularly visit the University of Minnesota and adjoining neighborhoods, telling strangers about the Lord. They do about 60 hours of evangelistic work each week, typically traveling in pairs.

Section member Jen Torma remembers when she and Kathleen Mehaiffey visited a rundown neighborhood near the university, acting on a word Jen had received. “We found this woman walking into her house who said she needed some food. We ended up bringing her some leftovers and a gallon of milk we had extra. She let us pray with her for her back pain, too, and then she said she felt better. I remember it because it was very dynamic—I had a word, Kathleen had an idea, we went, and the word was lived out.”

**Fun fact:** Missionary section members have talked about the Lord and the community to people from China, Colombia, Equador, Ethiopia, France, Hong Kong, India, Kenya, Korea, Laos, Mexico, Poland, Qatar, Somalia, St. Lucia, Taiwan, Thailand and Ukraine.

**Finance**

**Location:** Dinkytown  
**Section heads:** John Bowar, Harold Coulter (work head)  
**Members:** Joe Cramer, Cara Dal Pra, Bart Durand, Mary Gaffney, Mary Grams, Jeremiah Laust, Rachel Osterhouse.  
**Morning prayer:** 6:15 a.m.

Members of the finance section hope to help educate campus division members and Action members about the impact of college debt. They’re creating materials for financial literacy courses they hope to teach. “We’re also trying to develop strategies for graduating with low debt,” adds section leader John Bowar.

Every Monday night, section members gather to learn more about finances from accounting professor Harold Coulter (Servant Branch) and from section member Bart Durand, who works for a financial services company.

“It’s really about freedom,” says Mary Gaffney. “That’s what I love most, being free from undue worry about money because of the work we’re doing.”

**Fun fact:** On the coldest weekend of the year (~14 degrees), the section lost heat in the building where most members live.
Business
Location: South Bend
Section head: David Zimmel
Members: Patricia Brewer, Mary Claire Busk, Meghan Couch, Claire Mysliwiec, Melissa Rader, Anne Va-revice, John Xenakis
Morning prayer: 6:40 a.m.
Business section members have a variety of academic interests: nursing, engineering and art, to name a few. However, work on property management-related projects has turned them into a focused team of friends.

The section has repainted and redecorated parts of the Gilbert House on the Greenlawn property, and they’ve cleared bushes and brush to make room for a new sidewalk to the back door. Their current project is developing a comprehensive site plan for the property, using free time on Saturdays to do surveying work.

“I like learning things that I would never have contact with in my everyday life as a biology major,” says Saint Mary’s senior Melissa Rader. “There’s absolutely no academic reason why I should be doing a surveying project, but I get to do it and I love it.”

Fun fact: Business section fun events have included a lesson on how to juggle a soccer ball, throwing pots in the art studio at Saint Mary’s and going out for sushi.

Communications
Location: South Bend
Section head: Sean Connolly
Members: Catherine Bulger, Joe Gleason, Elizabeth Grams, Claire Holovaty, Chris Meehan, Gretchen Rolland
Morning prayer: 7:00 a.m.
Communications section members are training to be reporters, writers, graphic designers, photographers, video editors and even video directors. They hope to become experts at using a variety of media to explain what the Lord is doing in the community to all kinds of audiences. Section members write articles and design layouts for Vine & Branches (several are full-time staff members) and lately they’ve been working to produce videos about the community that are posted on Peopleofpraise.org and on the popular video-sharing site, YouTube.com.

“I like being grounded in a project much larger than myself,” notes Notre Dame English major Joe Gleason. “For example, this semester I’m taking a video production class. I take really detailed notes, and then figure out how to apply what I learned to our video work for the People of Praise.”

Fun fact: The section is known for organizing thematic Lord’s Days and events. They’ve done a 1950s-era Lord’s Day, an Indian Lord’s Day, a music night and a literary Lord’s Day where attendees brought poems and book excerpts to share with one another.

Technology
Location: South Bend
Section head: David Salmon
Members: Annie Bulger, Paul Hommes, Laura Ficker, Lisa Ficker, Evan Lent, Liz Loughran, Jeremy Osterhouse, Eric Yost
Morning prayer: 6:40 a.m.
The technology section includes employees of One:Ten Communications and undergraduate students studying engineering, computer science, math and chemistry. Section members aim to learn more about computers and technology, so that they can use the Internet to help with community growth.

The section has a weekly computer class where they’re learning the Python programming language and studying how computers work. “Eric Yost condensed everything he learned about transistors in four years of college into an hour and a half,” notes Annie Bulger.

Two of the undergraduates, Annie and Lisa Ficker, will work as One:Ten interns this summer. “Even when we’re not in programming class we’re still learning about computers and such,” adds Lisa. “It’s not just something we do—it’s a lifestyle!”

Fun fact: The technology section’s undergraduates expect to complete 143 math and science tests and projects in college this year. Also, they claim to lead all the other sections in uses of the word “boron” at the dinner table.
Gerry and Patti Deakin, the newest People of Praise members in Allendale, arrived on February 16 from Colorado Springs. Their two-vehicle, two-day trip was the culmination of over nine months of visits, discussion, prayer and planning. The transfer was approved in October, but they needed to sell their townhouse in Colorado before they could leave. The closing was on February 14.

“People of Praise moves are always amazingly quick, orderly and great fun,” notes Gerry. “Just like when we moved from South Bend to Colorado Springs, the Lord gave us the grace to feel right at home immediately.”

“Our Father gave us his heart for Allendale—for the long-time residents as well as for our household here,” adds Patti, “and we’re honored that he has allowed us to be a part of it all.”

Chris Vieck, head of the South Bend branch’s music ministry, directed a performance of Antonio Vivaldi’s sacred music classic, Gloria, in the Greenlawn chapel on February 8. Written in the early 18th century, this popular work is in 12 movements.

Several members of the branch’s campus division joined in, swelling the music ministry choir’s size to 20. Branch instrumentalists joined the group, too, as well as four professional guest musicians who played for the sheer joy of the music. Says Chris, “Music ministry member Jim Grondin worked hard to prepare our instrumental ensemble—we couldn’t have done the concert without his expertise!”
The Buffalo branch held their third annual winter picnic on February 10. This started when some snowbirds from their branch seemed to be gloating (good-naturedly) about their first winter in Florida. Principal branch coordinator Tom Shriver boasts, “We in Buffalo can have a good time even in harsh weather. To prove it, we organized an indoor event with hot dogs on the grill and lots of summer food, plus a wonderful time of praise and worship. We closed the Lord’s Day and then played board games with lots of great summertime music in the background. Never mind that it was minus-2 degrees Fahrenheit with a 40-mile-an-hour wind, creating minus-20-degree wind chills. We were indoors enjoying the warmth of God’s love and the love of our brothers and sisters. I did take a few moments to catch a few rays outside in preparation for my trip to the Jamaica branch that Saturday.” (Four other branch members accompanied him!)

After visiting the Indianapolis missionaries and seeing their bare quarters, Walt Seale (Northern Virginia) got the idea of collecting furniture from his branch to share with them. The missionaries came up with a wish list, and on February 23 the result was one 26’ truck full of couches, chairs and tables, mattresses, bedding, bunkbeds, lamps, cleaning supplies and a vacuum cleaner.

Action members packed up the truck, and two carloads of them accompanied Walt and his wife Pam, Bill Sjoberg and Matt Harris to Indianapolis. South Side residents, missionaries and members of the Muncie and South Bend branches helped with the unloading and joined the Indianapolis branch for their Lord’s Day celebration afterward. From left: Joe Ridenour, Chris Walker, Bill Sjoberg, Matt Harris, Pam Seale, Walt Seale, Michael Cassell, Collin Crimmins and Zach Loughran.

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In Buffalo: A Below-Zero Bash
A box of 8,400 silver screws arrived at Raclin Hall on March 7, and along with them came some cardboard boxes carrying piles of three-hole-punched music sheets and moss-green leatherette covers. These are the components of the new People of Praise songbook, the first of its type since the red and blue *Sing Out Your Praise* volumes of 1988 and 1993. The timing of their arrival—just four hours ahead of the opening of the communitywide music conference—could not have been better.

“We think this is the right time to bring our music together in a way that enhances our unity and moves us forward in understanding and worship,” notes overall coordinator Craig Lent. “We are one community in many branches, and we want members to be able to travel from branch to branch and still know the music.”

Among the 117 songs are some community standards (“Cause To Celebrate,” “In Your Light, We See Light”), songs from the More of the Lord music influx of the 1990s (“The Lord Almighty Reigns,” “Let the Peace of God Reign”), a few traditional hymns (“Jesus Christ Is Risen Today”), Pentecostal choruses (“Let All That Is Within Me), and about 40 pieces penned by People of Praise members (“Great Is the Glory of the Lord,” “Love So Strong”), including several written in 2007 (“Jesus Lives,” “Our Life”).

The book is small enough that it can be held open with one hand, and its metal screws are musician-friendly, so pages can be removed and spread out on a music stand.

“We also want the book to be useful at branch, area, section, division and small group meetings,” explains Mike Zusi, who introduced the book at the conference on behalf of the board of governors. “We want it to be useful for morning prayer and in opening and closing the Lord’s Day. Great music is one of the characteristics of our community, and we want a songbook that supports that.”

These 117 songs are simply the first installment of what Mike and Craig hope will be an ever-expanding collection. The metal screws leave plenty of room for additional pages, and the plan is to add about 12 songs per year.

“We don’t want a music book that froze at a particular time in our history,” Mike says. “As our life grows and new music comes forth from our life, we want a way to share that new music throughout the community.”

The publishing process began in early 2007, when the board of governors asked Chris Vieck (South Bend) to supervise the project and convene a song selection committee. The committee included representatives from large and small branches, musicians, music leaders and nonmusicians.

The committee asked every branch to submit lists of songs they use regularly. This generated a master list of about 600 songs, which committee members whittled down to 117 by a process of discussion and ranking.

Elizabeth Grams and Gloria Murphy (both South Bend) developed music sheets for the songs, which Jim Grondin (South Bend) proofread. Then Elizabeth contacted songwriters and publishers to obtain copyright permission to print the songs. She navigated a complex maze of song publishers, royalty payments, contract negotiations and a very tight deadline. The last verbal permission came on Valentine’s Day, a few days before the songbook needed to go to the printer so it would be ready in time for the conference.

“As our life grows and new music comes forth from our life, we want a way to share that new music throughout the community.” —Mike Zusi
In-between talks, music conference participants learned some of the newer songs in the book. From left: Guitarists Ellis Ogilvie (Grenada), Lydia Gaudet (Mobile), Pete Hammer (Buffalo) and George Meyerhofer (Buffalo).

Tracking down Martha Butler, the author of the song “Alleluia, He Is Coming,” took weeks of letter-writing, e-mailing and calling, not to mention daily prayer. No one seemed to have her current contact information. Martha composed the song during personal prayer time, and has never written anything else. Elizabeth finally found her, soon before the book was due at the publishers, and she was delighted to have her song included.

Just a few hours ahead of the music conference’s opening, Louis Grams, author of “Gladly, Lord” (No. 27) and an early arrival for the conference, placed a set of printed music sheets on their screws and attached the green front and back covers, creating the first of 2,800 new books that will help put the same tunes and lyrics on the lips of brothers and sisters from Tampa to Oahu and create a new harmony everywhere in-between.

Editor’s Note: Songbooks are available for $10. Contact your branch office for details.

Music Conference: Singing at the Heart of our Life

There were no cymbal clashes or trumpet blasts, but for a few days in early March several dozen guitarists, a couple of keyboards, drums and a flute made enough happy clatter to satisfy even the noise-loving enthusiasm of the author of Psalm 150.

Overall coordinator Craig Lent led this gathering of more than 100 musicians and community leaders, held at the South Bend branch’s center. “This is the first time we called together two different groups of people, pastoral leaders and musicians, and gave them time not only to consider one another’s roles and responsibilities, but also their working relationships,” Craig said.

He opened the conference with a talk tracing the role of music in various groups, from Israelite psalms about Mount Zion, to monastic chants about the risen Lord, to the thousands of hymns that grew out of the 18th-century Methodist movement. “Music played a big role in the identity and the unity of each of these groups, and it works the same way with us in the People of Praise. We need to pay close attention to music because it’s a key to who we are and how we relate to the Lord.”

He developed this point more in a talk about lyrics, examining the words of a few popular worship songs. He pointed out examples of words that were too sappy or romantic, too self-centered or too enmeshed in a two-story view of the universe. “The images and language of our songs should support the reality of what is happening between us and God,” he said.

Hugh Springer, Jr. (Servant Branch), says that Craig’s talks made him want to think harder about how songs fit into our life. “I learned that some music impacts us for a specific time, but it’s helpful to recognize when that time has passed because we see God doing something different.”

Kevin Ranaghan (South Bend) directed a talk to pastoral...
“Music is a key to who we are and how we relate to the Lord.”
—Craig Lent

leaders about their responsibility for all aspects of community gatherings, including music. Fellow board of governors member and former music ministry head Mike Zusi (South Bend) described the role of music leaders in branch gatherings. “The meeting works better when the music leader remembers his or her role as servant. The music leader needs to be alert to what the Lord is doing with the branch, to know the meeting leader’s mind and to come prepared with a variety of songs with appropriate lyrics and melodies.”

J-T Kelly (Indianapolis), the author of numerous songs in the community’s new songbook, addressed some of the challenges involved in songwriting. He encouraged aspiring writers to have realistic expectations about whether their songs will be useful in branch gatherings (many songs never make it), and to be humble about how songs finally get arranged. He urged songwriters to write lyrics that help brothers and sisters say what they really want to say, putting good words in their mouths. “Consider writing songs about real people and events that illustrate who we are as a people.”

Craig introduced the new songbook and spent some time explaining its forward-looking focus. (See accompanying article.) To get a jump-start on integrating the new book into our life, South Bend and Servant Branch music ministry members led practice sessions to teach some newer songs, including J-T’s “Glorify,” Hugh’s “Our Life,” and Eric Heintzelman’s “Love Like a River.”

“The way the teachings were presented was very helpful,” noted Servant Branch music leader Jim Rolland, “and this combination of coordinators and music leaders was a good idea. Plus, I believe the new music gives us a focus for the future—it’s sure to bring energy and life.”

“I love the way the songbook is put together,” adds keyboard player Carrie Gonzalez (Indianapolis). “It’s sturdy, and two-page songs are put on facing pages. I currently have a big 4-inch-thick binder stuffed with music—some of it outdated—so I’m happy to replace all that with this new book. I also love the new music and the fact that it’s us. I can’t wait to learn it and teach it.”

The conference closed with an appropriately noisy prayer meeting, including reggae-style singing led by Jamaican musicians and some sing-along Calypso numbers led by Dominic Jeremiah and Ellis Ogilvie of Grenada. And lest anyone leave this conference with the impression that we like the timbrel but not the dance (see Psalm 150:4), Noel Shirley (Kingston) got the crowd jumping in the aisles during a joyful rendition of the Jamaican song, “Take a Grip.”
Randy and Cindy Bontjes have been transferred from the Appleton branch to the Rockford branch, effective February 22.

Joseph Mutidjo has been transferred from the Buffalo branch to the Kingston branch, effective February 22.

Congratulations to Walt Seale (Springfield, VA). In December he received an M.A. in English, specializing in teaching literature and writing, from George Mason University.

Linda Finke (South Bend) won honorable mention for her photograph of morning glories in a competition sponsored by the St. Joseph County Public Library.

Congratulations to Matthew Ride-nour (Fairfax, VA) and Cynthia Gannon, who were married January 5 at St. Raymond of Penafort Catholic Church in Springfield, VA.

While volunteering once a month at the Fox Cities Community Health Care Center, Dr. Michael Madden (Appleton) saw the need for a physician’s presence on site at all times. “There were many people with chronic conditions who needed a relationship of trust with their provider,” he said. The health center sees over 250 patients per week, most of them uninsured or underinsured. Many live in poverty. In February, Michael was named the clinic’s new medical director, so he and a larger staff are now working to provide their patients with the same quality of health care that is available at other local providers.

Steve and Amee Pable (Neenah, WI) are thanking God for the wonderful gift of Mia Lucille, born February 2.

Gregg and Patti Sorg (Muncie) are delighted to welcome into their family Catherine Gabrielle, who arrived on December 28.

Russell and Elizabeth Adams (Manassas, VA) are rejoicing in the arrival of Noah Wade on February 28. Noah weighed in at 8 lb. 3 oz.

Dave (Junior) and Maggie Temel'es (Annandale, VA) are announcing the wonderful news of the birth of Luke Anthony on February 28.

Kevin and Anna-Lisa Rodriguez (Kingston) are celebrating God’s great gift of Nathaniel Michael, born February 11.

We remember with love our sister Sandra Williams (Webley), a member of the Kingston branch, who died on December 8. Please pray for her husband and two young children and all the branch members at this time of loss.

From the Executive Office

Servant Branch:

Ann Schiffer was released from the covenant of the People of Praise on February 15, 2008.

South Bend:

Bob and Jaci Byrne were released from the covenant of the People of Praise on February 14, 2008.

Martha Eck was released from the covenant of the People of Praise on January 24, 2008.

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Front cover photo: Julie Oswald of the Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology
Back cover photo: Gretchen Rolland
Mary Claire Busk (left, South Bend), an art major at Saint Mary’s College, shows Genevieve (center) and Maria Kane how to throw a pot.

“Then I was beside Him like a master workman and I was daily His delight” (Pr. 8:30).