SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

OUR STORIES
1963–71: The fireworks that formed us
2008: More fireworks in Indy and Allendale
The Something from Left Field

“The first thing we had to deal with was our own reaction,” explains Kevin Ranaghan—“shock and skepticism.” Shock and skepticism about “something from so far out in left field.”

He is talking about the rumors that were whipping around Notre Dame campus in March of 1967, rumors about the Something from Left Field.

Left Field: From the perspective of the network of educated and engaged Catholics on campus at Notre Dame, Left Field was speaking in tongues, working miracles and giving prophecy. Left Field was like the Holy Rollers or Pentecostals.

“They were as far apart on the Christian spectrum as you could get,” remembers Tom Noe, then a Notre Dame undergraduate. Hand-raisers (Pentecostals) and kneelers (Catholics).

Or, as one newspaper writer put it, “it seemed incongruous that a movement previously associated with lower class Protestantism . . . should take root in a Catholic university ablaze with the progressive light of the [Second] Vatican Council.”

Incongruous! In other words, Left Field.

The Something was a new intimacy with Jesus, a cardiac fire, or, in Kevin’s words, “a personal experience of the closeness of the Lord and the power of the Lord.” It arrived in a strange way . . . not from more time spent kneeling in church at 10:00 a.m., but from the laying on of hands in someone’s apartment at 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning, sometimes with no priest in sight.

And the hands that transmitted this new thing? Well, sometimes “we literally felt our hands burning!,” Dorothy Ranaghan recalls.
The Something, rumor had it, might just turn you into “a new person,” into someone who would give away your wedding presents, or drop out of graduate school, or raise your hands in a prayer meeting, or . . .

The Whole Treatment

“Nothing much happened to me . . . I just couldn’t put Scripture down. I read Scripture all night long.”

That’s how philosophy major Gerry Rauch first brought up the Something with physics professor Paul DeCelles. After an impromptu lunch with Gerry and his roommate, Jim Cavnar, in Notre Dame’s North Dining Hall, Jim followed Paul back to his office. He brought out a Bible and read aloud . . . four chapters! . . . all of 1 Corinthians 12, 13, 14 and 15.

“I was quite bewildered to have an undergraduate student taking all that time doing that in my office,” Paul remembers. (Later that evening, Jeanne DeCelles was quite bewildered when Paul read the same four chapters to her while their dinner burned.)

When Jim got to the end of his recitation, Paul had a question.

“Is there anything to this laying on of hands business?”

“I don’t know,” Jim replied. “Everybody does it.”

“Give me the whole treatment!” Paul said.

Five days later he got it, while he was rummaging through a closet looking for Jeanne’s coat. “I actually felt like the Lord kicked me in the middle of the back and I blurted out speaking in tongues. . . . It was almost like I was praying in tongues in spite of myself.”

Jeanne remembers first asking the Lord not to give it to her. But two weeks after Paul prayed over her, at a prayer meeting in her own house, someone said to her, “I think you have the gift of tongues!”

“I went into the bedroom by myself, knelt down and made an effort as I had been counseled to do and began praying in a new tongue,” she remembers.

The whole treatment came to the Ranaghans in a basement meeting room in the house of Ray Bullard, a janitor and leader of Pentecostal businessmen. Ray was nervous enough about the occasion (praying and talking with Catholics? From Notre Dame?) that he invited a few Pentecostal ministers to come over in case he needed back-up.

The ministers and a few more Pentecostals, about 20 people total, sat or stood on one side of the room, while nine Catholics sat nervously on the other side. A minister gave a talk on speaking in tongues. Then, in Dorothy’s words, “Kevin was sitting there on the end of his chair, preaching in a language I had never heard. It sounded like half Hebrew and half something else. My jaw was hanging open.”

“I was just gone,” says Kevin. “I could hear people around me, but it had very little impact on me.”
People wrote letters, including a graduate student named Kerry Koller: “Your sources are factually incorrect . . . a mélange of second and third hand information . . . misleading”!

More objections rolled in from campus intellectuals: “It’s Protestant. It’s not Catholic. It’s too experiential. It’s too emotional. It’s elitist. The theology is bad. It’s mass hysteria” (Tom Noe’s summary.)

Others damned with faint praise: “The pentecostal experience somehow provokes a startling release of emotion which is, I fear, of ambiguous value.” This came from a theology professor and priest who also said, “One is just slightly afraid that the student who shouts ecstatically, ‘I love you, Jesus,’ may be, for all his intensity, just as much infatuated as the student who murmurs ecstatically, ‘I love you, Madeleine!’"

This last charge, that the burning hearts came from infatuation, seems particularly hasty when you consider that years before the Something there was something else solid happening around Notre Dame. Many of the first people to participate in campus Pentecostalism were already serious Christians—engaged in church-renewal efforts, in evangelization, in prayer meetings, in Bible reading and study, in eating, meeting and praying together, in liturgical renewal and in serious talk about community. Some had been doing this since the early 1960s.

In 1963 and ’64, for example, Fr. Charlie Harris, Paul Ferment

Later in the evening one of the Pentecostals approached a student. “Now that you’ve been baptized in the Holy Spirit, when are you going to leave the Catholic Church?”

Leave the Catholic Church?

Ray spoke up, “I think we ought to just let the Lord do what he wants to do. If he wants these people to stay in their church, then that’s what they ought to do.” (Twenty-three years after his death, on the Internet, he is still taking heat for those words.)

“The Smell”

It was inevitable that the press caught a whiff of it. “There are real parallels between this and LSD,” declared an unnamed psychology expert, quoted in “As the Devil Left, I Smelt Clearly the Odor of Burning Sulfur.” The article, published in a campus magazine in April of 1967, was a review of the campus prayer meetings, which by that point had attracted priests, university officials, guitar players, gawkers, students from Michigan State, Bible readers and more Pentecostals.

The same article reported that, at 1:30 in the morning after a prayer meeting, some people (Jeanne DeCelles was one of them) came across a car accident. The accident had knocked a student unconscious, but when the prayer meeting people prayed over him he was able to breathe and speak in a normal voice.

Another take: “[The new movement] has been criticized by virtually all Protestant leaders as just another of the modern efforts to escape reality.” This came from the editors of Our Sunday Visitor, a Catholic newspaper with national circulation, and the editors’ intent was clear: prayer meetings were, just like marijuana, just like LSD, another method of escape, a sham of the Holy Spirit. As the article’s title put it, they were a spiritual “Easy Way.”

People wrote letters, including a graduate student named Kerry Koller: “Your sources are factually incorrect . . . a mélange of second and third hand information . . . misleading”!

More objections rolled in from campus intellectuals: “It’s Protestant. It’s not Catholic. It’s too experiential. It’s too emotional. It’s elitist. The theology is bad. It’s mass hysteria” (Tom Noe’s summary.)

Others damned with faint praise: “The pentecostal experience somehow provokes a startling release of emotion which is, I fear, of ambiguous value.” This came from a theology professor and priest who also said, “One is just slightly afraid that the student who shouts ecstatically, ‘I love you, Jesus,’ may be, for all his intensity, just as much infatuated as the student who murmurs ecstatically, ‘I love you, Madeleine!’”

Ferment

This last charge, that the burning hearts came from infatuation, seems particularly hasty when you consider that years before the Something there was something else solid happening around Notre Dame. Many of the first people to participate in campus Pentecostalism were already serious Christians—engaged in church-renewal efforts, in evangelization, in prayer meetings, in Bible reading and study, in eating, meeting and praying together, in liturgical renewal and in serious talk about community. Some had been doing this since the early 1960s.

In 1963 and ’64, for example, Fr. Charlie Harris, Paul Ferment
the Ranaghans already had a prayer meeting scheduled in their apartment.

“When baptism in the Holy Spirit came to Notre Dame, it went like wildfire all over the Cursillo connections and student connections,” Paul says.

On and around campus, there were weekly masses, meals together, group reunions, Cursillo leaders’ meetings . . . even prayer meetings. “The prayer meetings were stilted by today’s standards,” says Dorothy. “People would come with Bible readings already picked out, and read out prayers they had prepared ahead of time.”

In 1967, when Bill Storey from Duquesne University arrived in South Bend with the news that some students and professors there had been baptized in the Holy Spirit,
Pat Rath was a banker in those days—moving from Boston to Los Angeles to take a better job with Bank of America. Pat had met Paul and Jeanne in 1966 in Switzerland during a summer tour of Europe. (The DeCelleses were living there that year.) By 1969, though, there was a boxing match going on in Pat’s mind, with money in one corner and God in the other.

“I was a combination of miserable and powerful,” she says. “They were going to make me an officer of the bank, and they were going to give me tons more money.”

The banks had excellent long-distance phone service so Pat stayed in touch with Paul and Jeanne by phone. She read about the prayer meetings in their house on the front page of the National Catholic Reporter.

One day, Paul asked Pat a question. “If you could do anything you wanted to do, what would you do?”

She didn’t hesitate. “I’d move in with you guys.” She quit her job and arrived in South Bend on Monday night, November 17, 1969. On Tuesday night, Paul and others prayed with her for baptism in the Spirit at the prayer meeting.

Jeanne told her daughter Jeannette that Pat would be living with them for a long time. “It might be six weeks,” she said.

When the meetings were through, Paul would check the floor joists to make sure they were still solid.
It became two years, and through that time they stumbled onto a new kind of relationship between a single person and a family. “It was kind of extraordinary because I fit into the family without being a member of the family,” Pat says. “There was no name for what I was. I was not an aunt. I was not a sister to the kids.” She was something new, and sometimes it was funny.

“The kids and I spent a lot of time together. I used to take Johnny on bike rides and he used to have imaginary birthday parties in my bedroom at 6:00 in the morning. He would turn the knob, throw the door open, sing and welcome in his imagined friends. ‘Happy Birthday to you. Come on, Anne. Come on, Mary Faith.’ (Anne and Mary Faith were Kevin and Dorothy’s girls, safe at home in bed, but there in Johnny’s imagination.)

“When you’d been up until three praying with somebody and you hear ‘Happy Birthday. Come on, Anne. Come on, Mary Faith,’ you wonder what in the world is happening to you.”

What in the world was happening?
It was a new way to live.

The AI
A problem kept coming up in the loosely knit community that was happening around the prayer meetings—graduation. In the spring of 1969, Andrew Plodowski (a lawyer and Cursillo veteran) and Paul started talking about how Kerry Koller was finishing his studies and needed a job. Wasn’t there something they could offer to keep him in South Bend? And what about others coming up the pipeline, like Kevin Ranaghan?

They didn’t come up with anything in time to keep Kerry. (He and Barbara left for the University of San Francisco, where they spread baptism in the Holy Spirit and started the John the Baptist community.) Later, Paul, Andrew and Leon Kortenkamp did hit on an idea that could keep people busy. It was an idea whose time was ripe, training permanent deacons for the Catholic Church.

At that time, the notion of laymen becoming permanent deacons had fallen on hard times in the church. But there was a move afoot to begin ordaining more deacons, voiced and approved at the Second Vatican Council. In 1967, Pope Paul VI issued an Apostolic Letter with norms for ordaining deacons. By the time Paul and Andrew got to talking about the idea, there were only a few permanent deacons in the U.S. (There were seven, according to the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate. There are more than 15,000 today.)

Andrew, Paul and company had something in mind that was a bit more than drafting laymen for liturgical service. “We had a vision of training leaders, of starting a school that would train deacons whose job would be to be community builders.” After many meetings, a trip to Washington, D.C., and more waiting, their idea was approved by Bishop Leo Pursley.


Paul and Andrew figured they needed a building to serve as their training center, so, in early 1970, they bought a two-story brick house a few blocks from

Left: Pat Lewsen (Rath) and Leon Kortenkamp at a party at the Apostolic Institute.
Right, from left: Dorothy Ranaghan, Kevin Ranaghan, Paul DeCelles, Jeanne DeCelles and Tom Finke at an early Lord’s Day celebration in the LaSalle Building.
Kevin Ranaghan became its first director. Paul taught a yearlong course on building Christian community which many prayer meeting leaders attended. Tom Noe moved in and became the caretaker.

Just outside the AI, God saved Cathy Freidman (now Van Den Dreissche), a student and regular at the prayer meetings, from a horrible car accident. Cathy was walking down the street (the sidewalk was under construction) when suddenly she saw a car drive out of its lane and veer toward her. With no time to dodge, she froze. “I felt like something was gluing me down to the street. I couldn’t move.” Then suddenly she started to pray. “As soon as I did, the moon went behind a cloud. The sky became pitch black. In the darkness, the car totally disappeared, right into thin air.” The car was just gone, and Cathy never saw it again.

Community

As numbers increased at the prayer meetings, some felt a need for more stability, more commitment. Along with these sentiments, there were many prophecies about community, like this typical one, recorded by Tom Noe and given in April, 1971: “I am building my kingdom among you. . . . Once you were no people, but now you are a people!” More words came, about becoming one, becoming a community of love, becoming God’s house, his building, his people.

“People began to realize that they needed more to hold them together as a group,” wrote Dan DeCelles in 1974. “We began turning to Scriptures, like Acts 2 and 4. We were looking at how, in the Jerusalem community, they just threw everything in together, radically. We also began to notice that every time the gifts of the Spirit are mentioned in St. Paul’s letters, he was talking about community.”

There were as many ideas about community as there were people at the prayer meetings, Dorothy recalls. They all had questions: “Should we form a group that will serve the poor and start a soup kitchen? Would being a community mean having one more meeting every week, besides all the prayer meetings? Would we wear a habit like monks?”

And more questions (these recorded by Tom): “Did the Lord want one community? Several communities? A residential community on a farm growing its own food? A community with all its goods held in common? A neighborhood of families? A group that would serve the poor?”

Many of the prayer meeting folks already thought they were part of a community, and they called themselves “the community.”

Others decided to get started. In 1971, a group of students and younger folks formed a community called True House, splitting themselves off from Kevin, Paul and the prayer meetings at Saint Joseph’s Grade School. The True House community dissolved in 1974, and many who were
left in the wake, like Joel Kibler, John and Jill Boughton, Tom and Linda Finke, accepted an invitation to be part of the People of Praise.

In 1970, Pat Rath remembers giving her life to the community—the one she was experiencing, growing quietly out of Paul and Jeanne’s home. “In Paul and Jeanne’s living room, they had this really nice cross. I knelt there and I told the Lord that I just really wanted to belong to this people. I knew that I wanted more than a prayer group, that lots of people would be coming from all over and that I would belong to them and they would belong to me. I envisioned thousands of people that I didn’t know.”

**People of Praise**

In August of 1970, Paul and Kevin sent about 100 copies of a letter to people they knew around town, folks who had been coming to the prayer meetings, students and others affiliated with Notre Dame, people in the deacon training program, ordinary working folks and townspeople. The letter was an invitation to meet, talk and pray about forming a “model Christian community.”

“We are talking about a weekly community formation meeting,” the letter said, “about further small gatherings of friends in Christ, about finding ways to pray together, to work together, to relax together. So while we envision lots of meetings and projects, what we really have in mind is a total sharing of life together.”

For Clem and Julie Walters, going to these Friday night meetings was a big decision. They had young kids and might need a babysitter, and on top of that, Friday was their night to be together, their date night.

“I wanted to be obedient to what God wanted for us,” Julie remembers. “So I prayed for a passage and received one that said basically, ‘Do not stay away from the meetings of the community as some do.’ We decided to go and see what God had in mind for us.”

Close to 40 people came to the first meeting, held on August 20 at the Apostolic Institute. As they continued meeting on Friday nights, they talked about a name for the community (“Family of Faith” was an early favorite), about the need for a weekly community meeting in addition to the prayer meetings, about structure and money. There were songs, sharings, prophecies, discussions and breaks for beer and coffee. Outside the meetings there were picnics, movies and hot dogs.

Less than two months after they had begun, on October 8, Kevin read aloud a covenant that summarized all their conversations. Everyone had a week to think and pray about it.

On Friday night, October 15, 29 people made the covenant during the offertory of a mass at the AI. They were six couples, 13 singles, two married men, one married woman, one Roman Catholic priest and one Protestant, Bob Oleson.

“I just felt that I was going to go with my friends,” Clem says, describing his decision. “If that meant making the covenant and having a continuing relationship with this band of brothers, then that was what I wanted.”

**Epilogue:** Bob Oleson died on December 3, 1972, becoming the first member of the People of Praise to enter the fullness of the kingdom of God. During his final illness, the community kept a 24-hour prayer vigil. Members often visited Bob’s hospital room and two brothers were there to hear his last words, uttered with one hand in the air, “Praise the Lord.”

By 1978, there were 447 adults in the community, 147 Protestants and other Christians and 330 Catholics.

*Left: Joel Kibler flips burgers at the Apostolic Institute. Right: A picnic on the lawn at the Apostolic Institute. John Boughton is in the back in an orange-collared shirt.*
In the Fountain Square neighborhood of Indianapolis, there’s a stretch of gray gravel that neighbors still call Crack Alley. The name appeared on a sign that someone put up at one end of the alley, and referred to the drug dealing that used to happen at the other end. The sign and some of the drugs are gone now, but the name still has currency.

Near the place where the sign stood, green plastic frog figurines dangle from the ceiling of a gray porch. Below the frogs, Walter, a young man in cargo shorts, a baggy white polo shirt and a ballcap, stood holding a large shopping bag filled with DVDs, peddling a copy of *Prince Caspian* to the woman who lived there.

Missionaries John Bowar and Hannah Brummer noticed Walter when they were walking by the porch. They slid some glass liquor bottles aside and aimed to sit down near him. John thought about the sense he’d had a few weeks earlier. He’d met Walter carrying his DVDs in a guitar case, and John felt that the Lord had something for Walter to do. Hannah leaned back into a musty, upholstered armchair, and felt the springs needling her.

Walter was blinking rapidly and rubbing his right eye. The day before, he’d been working a temp job at an engine repair shop, when a speck of metal sheered off an engine mount and lodged itself in his eye. The pain had kept Walter from returning to the job.


“Does your eye hurt at all? Do you have any pain?” John asked afterward.

Walter started blinking again, staring at the peeling gray porch, testing his eye.

“No, the pain is gone!”

A few weeks later, Walter slipped in quietly to a prayer meeting the missionaries held in a Fountain Square back yard. He told a small group of neighbors that his eye hadn’t hurt at all since John and Hannah prayed against the pain—the first healing our missionaries saw in Fountain Square.
When they saw Robbie the first time, Nick Holovaty, Hannah Brummer and Melissa Rader were sitting on a porch with Walt, an older fellow they’d met while trying to help someone else jumpstart an old Harley. Walt’s sleeves were rolled up, his eyes hidden by shades, his hair greased, and his mouth cradling a cigarette.

“I’m a hillbilly, Bubbie,” he said, adding that in West Virginia, “Bubbie” means “friend.” A guitar player, Walt pulled out his instrument, played some songs and then got teary-eyed when the missionaries strummed and harmonized about the marks the nails made when they poked through Jesus’ hands.

And somewhere in there, Robbie strode by. He was shirtless and scruffy, showing the meaty, tattooed arms of a young tree-trimmer, though he wasn’t at all fit. He’d had some seizures, and screws were put in his ankle during a recent surgery. Both problems threatened his job, he told Nick.

During another visit with Walt, Robbie came by again, limping this time, bringing the full weight of his frame to bear on his right foot. He had re-injured his ankle moving some furniture, he said. Nick offered a healing prayer.

“God can’t do that,” Robbie retorted. “This isn’t a job for God. I know what the problem is. I’ll go to the doctor and he’ll fix it up.”

“Well, what do you have to lose?,” Nick asked.
Robbie shrugged and then sat down on the curb. Nick squatted down beside him and palmed his ankle, praying.

“Why don’t you stand up now, and see if it still hurts?,” he suggested.

“It still hurts,” Robbie said.
Thinking of all the times the missionaries had secured a healing by praying with someone two or three times, Nick asked if they could pray a second time.

“It won’t work,” Robbie countered, but eventually, he sat down again and let Nick grasp his ankle to pray.

“Do you want to get up again, and see if it hurts?”

Nick asked afterward.

“Naw. It ain’t going to work, dude,” Robbie said. He stayed on the curb.

“Well, on a scale of one to 10, how bad did it hurt before?”

“Eight.”
“And how bad does it hurt now?”

“Four.”

“There you go. It hurts half as much! God is healing you,” said Nick.
Robbie stared.

“Wait a minute,” he said. “It doesn’t hurt at all anymore.”

He got up and started walking around, testing the ankle, spreading his weight around evenly between his legs. “What did you do? How did you do that?”

Some friends wandered by and Robbie showed off his righted foot, slamming his ankle hard against the ground. He didn’t even grimace.

“I thought you all were joshing me,” he said later of all the prayer. “Seriously. It was throbbing. It was hurting real bad. Then it just quit. Just like that the pain went away.”

Stories from the South Side of Indianapolis

Ryan Hardin (left, Indianapolis) and missionary Claire Mysliviecz walk down Union Street with visiting Action team members David Bowar (Servant Branch) and Mary Hanlon (Oahu) following.
M

issionary and nurse Mary Timler, perched on the edge of an armchair in a tiny living room, couldn’t help but notice the Get Well Soon cards and kids’ drawings taped to the wall across from her.

Michelle, a short woman whose collection of dolphin figurines stood on surfaces throughout the room, was sharing about how she had come to know the Lord’s love for her. When she was 15 she had contracted a rare leg cancer, but the Lord’s help had seen her through it.

As she spoke, Mary noticed Michelle’s right hand creeping toward her stomach. She had the half-closed eyes and stooped posture of a woman who had experienced pain.

“Is there something we can pray with you for now?,” Mary asked her.

Her gall bladder wasn’t working right, Michelle said. It had swollen to three times normal size, as big as an orange, and she was scheduled for surgery a month later. She wasn’t in pain all the time, thanks to medications.

“So if we pray for you, how will you know you’re healed?,” Mary asked.

“The pressure on my right side will go away,” Michelle replied.

Mary, Ellen Putzier and Charles Chow prayed with Michelle, and afterward asked her how she felt. Michelle said she had felt the pressure go down somewhat during the prayer, so the missionaries prayed again. The second time Michelle said the pressure was totally gone.

She walked into the kitchen and came back carrying three bottles of water. As she walked, she tried bending back and forth. Then she put her hand near her abdomen. “Wow, it feels completely different,” she said.

About six weeks later, Michelle told Mary that the doctors had put off her surgery. A CT scan revealed that her gall bladder had shrunk to slightly smaller than its normal size, and it was working fine. Michelle said she hadn’t had any pain since the missionaries’ prayer, a fact that her doctor simply could not explain.

We stopped at a one-story house with lace curtains. The shrubbery, though overgrown, appeared to have received good care at some point in the past. I envisioned the owner as an older widow.

Sure enough, a woman who looked 75 or 80 opened the wooden front door. She was thin, with white hair that looked regularly permed. She wore a coordinated slacks and shirt outfit that would have been appropriate for work.

As we stood on her tiny stoop, Abe explained that we were Christian missionaries. Her demeanor seemed pleasant enough, so we chatted for a bit, and soon Abe asked her about whether she ever listened to God or talked to him.

Her face quickly saddened. She shook her head, let it hang and said quietly, “No, not since my four-year-old son died.” Then she stepped back into her mudroom and shut the door on us.

I was stunned—it all happened so quickly. Later I had a chance to reflect on the encounter. I couldn’t tell if the woman’s sadness came more from her son’s death or from her estrangement from God. She seemed to be blaming God for her son’s death, and ever since then, for decades, she had simply stopped talking to him.

As we left her stoop, we prayed about whether to go back or not, but we weren’t inspired to return, so we moved on to another block, asking the Lord to share some of his joy with her. At the same time, I know that our presence already had been an invitation to talk to the Lord again, to share in his joy. Sadly, she turned it down.
Vanessa is a usually quiet but confident 10-year-old who also likes belting out praise songs, especially two that the missionaries picked up from the Kingston branch, “Take a Grip” and “Lift Jesus Higher.” She has reddish hair and brown eyes, and ever since she accepted prayers for baptism in the Holy Spirit, she’s been spreading the fire around.

A couple of weeks after the prayers, Vanessa’s mother Joanie called Mary Timler, hoping for a ride to a pharmacy. Mary and Joe Gleason drove over to Joanie’s white one-story house. They walked into the living room and saw smudged make-up on Joanie’s face and heard about an urgent family crisis that had just come up. The three of them sat on the living room floor talking about it.

When Vanessa, Michelle and Cesar (Vanessa’s younger siblings) poked their heads through the door, Joanie sent them off to clean their rooms. Joe followed the kids, presiding over the gathering and folding of clothes, some prayer and praise songs, Bible skits and a game of charades. Mary and Joanie talked and then went off to the drugstore.

When Vanessa, Michelle and Cesar (Vanessa’s younger siblings) poked their heads through the door, Joanie sent them off to clean their rooms. Joe followed the kids, presiding over the gathering and folding of clothes, some prayer and praise songs, Bible skits and a game of charades. Mary and Joanie talked and then went off to the drugstore.

Vanessa looked at her mother, her eyes still red from tears. “Do you want to receive the Holy Spirit?”

When they returned, everyone gathered in the living room and Mary got them talking about the Holy Spirit.

“I’ve received the Holy Spirit,” Vanessa told the group. “When you’re baptized in the Spirit, the Spirit is with you all the time and never leaves. He makes you happy when you’re sad, and when you’re afraid, you can say, ‘Fear, be gone in the name of Jesus’ and it will go away.”

Vanessa looked at her mother, her eyes still red from tears. “Do you want to receive the Holy Spirit?”, she asked. Her mom nodded.

Next Vanessa looked at Michelle and repeated the question, and then she asked five-year-old Cesar. One by one, Joe, Mary and Vanessa prayed with Joanie, Michelle and Cesar.

Later that summer, Joanie and her kids moved to a trailer court on the outskirts of Indianapolis. One day a friend of theirs from their new neighborhood, a boy named David, had a rupture in his brain that caused him to fall and hit his head on a concrete floor. He wound up in the hospital in a coma.

“I was outside walking around trying to deal with the bad news, when it came over me that I should try to pray for David,” Vanessa remembers.

Vanessa got Joanie to come with her, and together they knelt down in the middle of one of the trailer court’s streets. They held hands, cried a bit, and raised their hands in the air in prayer.

“People would stop by and ask what we were doing, and I’d invite them to join us,” says Vanessa. “We ended up with 10 or so people in the circle—I’m a good attention-getter.

“At one point I went in the middle of the circle, standing in for David, and they all laid hands on my head. A Hispanic man who knew English joined the circle. He hung around a while asking me questions about the Creation. Later, I found a Spanish Bible and gave it to him.”

Joanie says that David is doing better now and doesn’t seem to have suffered any long-term damage to his body or his abilities. “David’s mother attributes it to medicine,” Joanie says. “I told her, ‘I love you, but God was responsible for this one’.”

Yes, God and his new friend, Vanessa.

On the South Side, Rus Lyons thumbs through his Bible, while missionary Annie Bulger (standing) looks on.
Rus Lyons and his friend Nick Cruz, who was visiting the missionaries from Minnesota, had a little more bounce in their steps as they walked toward a white house with a plywood wheelchair ramp out front. The bounce came from the fact that they’d just prayed over 13 people in a swimming pool for baptism in the Holy Spirit. They were wondering whether the owner of the wheelchair ramp might want some prayer, too.

A broad-shouldered young man named Chad answered their knock at the door. When Rus asked him if he wanted to talk about Jesus, Chad smiled and said he was already a Christian, but then he glanced back inside.

“We don’t play those games!,” barked a voice from inside the house, protesting the missionaries’ presence.

Chad moved to shut the door on Rus and Nick. Before he could, Rus caught his eye. “Can we pray with you for healing or anything?,” he asked.

Overhearing, the voice barked back again, and this time it was a friendly bark. “Bring them on in here!”

In the living room, cardboard boxes stood waist-high against the walls, while crumpled beer cans littered the floor. A skinny man named Dave sat in an armchair near a bedpan. He wore aviator sunglasses and a partially unbuttoned collared shirt and had a scraggly goatee.

“Can we pray with you?,” Rus asked.

“I’m really messed up,” Dave said. “I’ve made too many mistakes. I might kill a man because of all the anger I got.”

For a few minutes he swore a lot and said over and over again how messed up he was. He hated all the people who had taken advantage of him over the years, he said.

Rus shared with him about loving his enemies, about forgiveness, about freedom from hatred, and he kept pausing to ask Dave if they could pray for him.

“Okay, fine. Let’s pray,” Dave said finally.

Rus and Nick loudly cast out an evil spirit of hatred, but Rus thought something else had to happen.

“Do you forgive?,” he pressed. “Can you do it? Will you do it?”

Rus held his breath and waited through a long silence.

“I forgive!,” Dave said at last.

He wept.

He wept more, smiled and laughed, then grasped his own shoulders and shook himself.

“Wow!, he said, “The weight has come off. I feel light!”

“That’s the Holy Spirit!,” Rus said.

“Wow!,” Dave said again. “Now you’ve gotten me all light-headed!”

He could barely get words out through all the tears, but he made sure Rus knew that he and his friends could come back any time they liked to visit.
Abe Olson stood in the middle of Harlan Street chattering into his cell phone. It was 3:30 p.m., 30 minutes before the scheduled start of the missionaries’ first prayer meeting in an Indianapolis neighborhood called Fountain Square, except they didn’t have a place to meet. The meeting was supposed to take place inside an empty house just up the street (the residents were moving out), but after an afternoon of unanswered phone calls and knocks, a former resident had finally arrived to confirm what Abe already feared, the house wouldn’t work for the meeting.

“What about the lady up there?,” Abe asked, motioning toward a white duplex with bikes and empty 7-Up cups in the yard and a short woman standing on the porch.

Abe, Hannah and Melissa hurried up to introduce themselves, and the woman called inside for her mother, Linda, a middle-aged woman who stepped outside squinting. Melissa glanced through the screen door into a dark living room and saw a jumble of cardboard boxes loaded with her things. Linda said she was new to the area and wanted to come to the prayer meeting to meet some other Christians. Melissa and Hannah agreed to come back to pick her up, as soon as they had a meeting location pinned down. Abe left to make more calls.

Twenty minutes later, Melissa knocked on Linda’s door. Linda rose from her chair and stepped halfway out onto the porch, her hand still clutching the doorknob. She felt a heavy nausea, she said.

For months, she explained, she had been having migraines. A few times that week, they had caused her to black out and fall onto her kitchen floor. She was afraid to come to the meeting, afraid she might black out and leave her 17-year-old grandson, Michael, who lived with her, without a clue where she was.

Melissa saw the dark circles under her eyes. “I really think the Lord wants you to be there today,” she said. “Can I pray with you for healing?”

Melissa prayed while Linda whispered softly, “Jesus, Jesus.”

“Headache, I bind you and cast you into hell,” Melissa said. Linda’s eyes widened.

“I’m better. I’m not nauseated anymore,” she said.

She gathered some of her things and walked down the steps toward the car.

They drove a few blocks to tiny Living Waters independent church, led by Bill Weddle, a Pentecostal preacher in his early eighties who lives upstairs, presiding over a small congregation and a large vegetable garden out back. Abe had driven over to see him, and the pastor had eagerly agreed to host the meeting. He said he wanted his church to serve the neighborhood, and he didn’t care about the short notice.

Linda came to the meeting that day, and has come regularly ever since. The missionaries learned that she had been baptized in the Holy Spirit 30 years earlier, but a few of them prayed with her again to receive the gift of tongues. Linda met her neighbor Shirley at the meetings, and soon Linda, Shirley and Ellen Reed began the first women’s meeting in Fountain Square.

One time, as the missionaries dropped Linda off at her house after a meeting, Shirley called out after her.

“Hey, Linda, aren’t you glad these people picked our neighborhood?”

“I am!,” Linda replied.

Her migraines stopped the day the missionaries first arrived on her porch, and ever since that day, whenever she starts feeling nauseous, she prays. Then the nausea disappears.
Mulling a Gospel story over in his mind, Rus Lyons surveyed the folks around a cluster of old houses on Minnesota Street. A young man stood shirtless in a patch of dust and grass, yanking at a lawn mower. A toddler and blonde-haired woman sat on the front porch of a dilapidated duplex. Another young man came out the duplex’s front door.

Not sure who to talk to, Rus spoke up and addressed them all. “Have you guys ever heard the story of the blind man who got healed at Siloam?”

No one nodded. Rus began telling the story.

Three more men got out of a white sedan and started talking about what kind of tattoo the driver should get. The young man with the mower stopped what he was doing and came closer to Rus.

Rus raised his voice so the three men could hear him explain how Jesus had spit on the ground, making a mud paste, before rubbing it on the blind man’s eyes to heal him.

“Do any of you need healing?” he asked the group.
The young man with the mower, Justin, raised his left arm. An ugly scar circled his arm, the result of a reciprocating saw accident. Two of his fingers lacked full motion.

“God can heal that,” Rus said. Then he prayed with Justin.

During the prayer, Justin said he felt something funny happening to him, but the two of them didn’t see any change in his arm.

“That’s the Holy Spirit moving,” Rus said. “As soon as you start to feel better, you should start praising the Lord.”

He began telling Justin the story of the man with the withered hand. Then another thought flashed through his mind.

“Justin, I think you have a lot to seek forgiveness for. You need to join God’s side, dump the world’s ways of doing things and ask God to forgive you for the ways you’ve offended him.”

Justin nodded. Thinking him sincere, Rus offered to teach him how to say a prayer of repentance, a dedication of his life to Christ the king. He started going over some words. Then he noticed Justin repeating them, softly.

“Do you want to do this now?” Rus asked.

“Yeah,” Justin replied.

Rus knelt down on the tree lawn and Justin knelt down beside him. Together they finished going through the prayer.

“There’s a party going on in heaven over your return,” Rus said.

Justin smiled. “He seemed lighter, almost laughing,” closer to the kingdom of God, Rus said later.

One of the neighbors came out of his house—a tattoo artist. He leaned against the hood of the white sedan with the other men. Together they flipped through a book of tattoo designs, mulling over their options.

By Elizabeth Grams

Missionary Melissa Rader (right)

Está and her friend Penny are sitting on Está’s porch, smoking, talking, passing the time. A cockatiel keeps watch from a lavender cage above them. Beside them Está’s amiable pit bull, Jack, also watches.

Penny is watching her house across New Jersey Street. Three strangers approach her front porch, stepping up to the door.

“Hey, I’m not home! I’m over here,” Penny shouts. Before they can respond, two more strangers, a wiry, gray-haired woman and a young woman with a backpack, come up to Está’s house. They say they’re Christian missionaries, but when they start talking about the kingdom of God, Penny cuts them off.

“I’m already a Christian. I know this stuff.”

The missionaries talk more and ask Está and Penny about their lives. Está is jobless. Her children are grown and gone. Penny is her usual company.

Hannah Brummer interjects. She’s the one with the backpack.

“The world’s a mess,” she says.

“Yes! That’s kind of what we were just talking about,” Está chimes in.
“I received a word in prayer this morning,” adds Ellen Reed, the wiry woman. “Ask and you shall receive. Do you have anything you’d like us to pray for? Would you like us to pray for a job?”

Esta isn’t sure.

“Well, is it all right with you if we just say a prayer right here?” Hannah asks. She and Ellen kneel on the concrete and pray a blessing on Esta and Penny. When they look up they see tears in Esta’s eyes.

A few weeks later, Ellen visits Esta again, bringing visitors: Denise Hurley from South Bend and Cara Dal Pra, a college student from Minneapolis. Esta welcomes them and offers refreshments.

The three women have resolved to share their experiences of being baptized in the Holy Spirit. As Cara gives her testimony about receiving the Holy Spirit in Allendale a few years ago, Esta fixes her gaze on the young woman.

“You stick with it, now,” she says, encouraging her.

The missionaries keep visiting Esta.

More weeks pass and Esta is hosting a prayer meeting for missionaries and some neighbors. Her porch is full of folding chairs, and in her back room, chips, popcorn and soft drinks sit out on a table. Her front room is immaculate and lit with a string of lights.

By 2:00 p.m., several missionaries and neighbors are standing there. As they wait for more neighbors to arrive, Nick Holovaty strums a hymn on his guitar, “Blessed Assurance,” at the request of Latanya from down the street.

Two more women and five children enter and Charles Chow begins the meeting. Esta glances furtively at Chris Vieck. They’ve talked frequently during the past month, and a week earlier Chris and Claire Myśliwiec prayed with Esta for baptism in the Holy Spirit.

“I’ve got something to say,” Esta murmurs.

Charles doesn’t hear, but Chris speaks up loudly, “Esta has something to say!”

All eyes turn to Esta. She’s a good head shorter than most adults in the room. “I . . . got the Holy Sprit!” she announces.

The room breaks out in cheers. Esta smiles and her eyes twinkle.

“There’s something else I want to say to you missionaries,” she continues. “It doesn’t matter how many houses you go to and get turned down. You could go to 20 or 30 and get turned down, but don’t get discouraged, ’cause if you can just get that one . . . then that’s one more.”

A few more weeks pass and Esta calls Chris’s cell phone. Chris is not surprised by the call, since Esta often phones for advice, for prayer or just to talk.

“You know that book you gave me?” she asks. (She’s talking about the Good News Bible Chris gave her.) “I love it, I really do. Now I know why Jesus had to die on the cross. I was reading the book of Hebrews. They used to sacrifice animals every year but it didn’t take away sin. But God sent his son Jesus, and that one sacrifice took away sin. Is that right?”

Chris agrees.

Bit by bit, the neighbors start talking about Esta like she’s one of the missionaries, since she keeps telling them about the Lord. She goes to prayer meetings and women’s meetings all the time. Penny takes notice. “You know, if I were you, I would sell it all and join those people!,” she tells Esta.

A few weeks later, the house on New Jersey Street has no birdcage and no pit bull named Jack. Esta is moving to Karcher Street, just a couple of blocks away from the missionaries.

“I hope this is the last move I ever make,” she tells Chris. “I just want to put down roots!”

“You can root yourself in us,” Chris replies.
Tyrone
By Nathan Barrett

Tyrone is a short and fast-mouthed nine-year-old whose name-calling and picking fights meant that he often left our Allendale day camp early, frustrated and alone.

One day at camp I saw him at a picnic table in a crowd of young boys. Voices rose and two of the boys seemed to be at the center of the shouting, Tyrone and Jaylin. When I pulled Tyrone out of there, he mumbled something about two dollars, and said he was afraid he might get jumped.

Jaylin told me that Tyrone had promised him two dollars if he rode him to the store on his bike, but after they got to the store, Tyrone ran off. The two boys had been fizzing at each other for more than a week, and the pot had finally bubbled over.

Tyrone admitted he’d gotten the ride, but he wasn’t admitting anything about the money. “I want to hear the truth from you,” I insisted.

Tyrone looked like he was ready to storm off, but finally he changed his tune. “I need to apologize for lying about the two dollars,” he said. He cried, and I sat him down by himself to cool off.

Later I told him that it was wrong to lie, but I knew that the situation wouldn’t be fixed unless he paid Jaylin. Since part of the trouble was that he didn’t have two dollars, I figured I had a chance to buy his forgiveness with my money, imitating in a small way the way Jesus bought our forgiveness with his body.

I put two bills in his hand, and Tyrone eagerly asked Jaylin’s forgiveness, handing the bills over. Jaylin apologized for some things he’d said, and they shook hands.

A few minutes later I found Tyrone crying again, sitting by himself near Ron and Ruthanne Seitz’s garden. I asked him if he wanted to stay there or take a walk around the neighborhood with me. He rose and we walked down Harvard Street for a while, until he spotted one of his uncles and went to talk with him.

Later in the summer, I saw him again. He was walking next to Miss Dorothy, an older neighbor who needed help finding our barbecue. Tyrone was guiding her sweetly and carrying a cake she was bringing. He asked me if I was going to preach at the barbecue. “Can I stand next to you when you preach?”

Later that evening, I stood on a picnic table and talked to our neighbors about how sin was ruining Allendale: fighting, murdering, drinking, spending rent and food money on casino gambling, neglecting kids, talking bad about other neighbors. I invited people to come forward and repent. I stood for two minutes and no one came. I could feel Tyrone there the whole time, though, sitting at my feet, dangling his legs off the picnic table.

He called me the other day while I was driving home from church. “Can I come with you to church next week?” he asked. Of course I said yes.

We talked with boys about forgiveness and reconciliation all the time this summer, boys who have fathers, older brothers, cousins and friends who sell drugs, rob, stab people, steal cars and get thrown into prison before they can graduate from anything. Sometimes I wonder whether we’re getting through to the younger boys.

When I think about Tyrone, I know we’ve got a chance.
In July I traveled from South Bend to Allendale to work, but I really went to experience something. I was walking around the neighborhood, picking up kids for day camp, when I noticed a bright lime-green house. The house was neater and tidier than most around it. Large plants blocked it off from the street.

Behind those plants, someone is inside that house, alone, I thought. I prayed, bring them outside, Lord!

Later, Heidi Busekrus (Oahu) and I passed by that house again, while we were out inviting neighbors to a barbecue. I saw a woman sitting on the porch and I remembered my prayer.

“How are you?” I asked.

She pointed to a statue in her yard, testing me.

“Do you know who that is?”

I smiled while Heidi replied, “Oh, sure I do. That’s Joseph holding the baby Jesus!”

The woman motioned to us and we walked down the hill towards her porch. She looked to be in her mid-thirties and had striking, golden-brown eyes. Her name was Yvette. We talked for a while and invited her to the barbecue, but she had to work that evening.

Afterward, I went home and showered, a little disappointed that she couldn’t come back and join us for the barbecue. Then I walked outside and saw her standing on Yale Avenue, in the rain, talking to Ruthanne Seitz. She was crying.

“I was always too afraid to come out,” she explained.

For years she had been praying that the Lord would send someone to help out in the neighborhood. She had seen us living on Yale and had watched us walking around the neighborhood, but had been too afraid to leave her house and meet us. She had even been praying that some of us would knock on her door. I was the answer to those prayers!

“We’ve been waiting for you to come over,” Ruthanne told her. “You’re home now!”

Ruthanne described the weekly Bible study she has organized for neighborhood women. Yvette marveled at the prospect of Christians meeting in the neighborhood. “You mean there are people like me, here?” She also gave Ruthanne a wad of money and said the Lord wanted her to help us.

Later, she walked me part of the way to the vacant lot where we have the barbecues.

“When are you going to leave?,” she asked.

“Ma’am,” I said, “We’re not leaving you. We’re here forever. We’re not going anywhere. We want to build businesses and schools and hospitals.”

Yvette couldn’t believe it, couldn’t believe we wanted to build a whole new neighborhood, a new city, that we had camp all summer long for kids, that high schoolers raised money year-round so they could come to Allendale to fix houses, that the People of Praise had more than 20 branches all over the place. I had only learned some of this myself during the talks the week before.

“I believe that God sent you to me,” she said. “We were supposed to meet.”

I’m sure that the Holy Spirit has tried to guide me in the past like he did in Allendale, but I had never experienced it so personally. Sure, I would hear missionaries talk about the Holy Spirit moving them to talk to people, but I had wondered if the Holy Spirit could ever get through to me. Now I know the answer.

Since meeting Yvette, I’ve been more aware of other people, more open to the Holy Spirit moving me. I want to talk to more people in the future, and I really want to go back to Allendale and see Yvette.
People drinking, playing cards and killing time always spilled off the porch at 1517 Harvard Avenue in Allendale, but inside the house Lula was lonely. The house was hers, but she didn’t know or even interact with many of those front porch squatters. Instead, she wore herself out inside, caring for her sick husband, Brady, for her grandchildren, for the grandchildren’s children. “I was cooking, I was cleaning up, I was shopping,” she says.

In the summer of 2007, Lula’s neighbor Sharon told her about the People of Praise volunteers who visit Allendale to fix up houses. Lula liked the sound of those summer fix-it-up projects, so she walked up the hill to Yale Avenue, one block away, to where our missionaries live. She met Laura Brummer, one of 10 year-round People of Praise missionaries, and the Allendale home repair project organizer. Before long, Action volunteers had primed Lula’s house and were brushing on bright blue paint.

After the volunteers had made it shine, Laura and fellow missionary Jeanette Zimmel continued visiting with Lula, talking with her about Scripture, stopping by regularly through the fall and winter. When Pentecost came around, Lula told them she wanted to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, so the missionaries laid their hands on her.
“I felt like a brand new person. I can get down on my knees and pray and feel God within me,” she explains. Lula also had a new thought about her house. “I want my home to be a Christian home,” she declared.

This past summer, Action volunteers, led by Jack Busekrus (Oahu) and Brian Weber (New Orleans) refitted Lula’s kitchen, adding new cabinets, counters, flooring and a sink. They emptied out a small, unfinished, cluttered storage room, put up new sheetrock and painted it cream with brick-colored trim, creating a den that Lula uses for quiet prayer and conversation. Each summer morning, Lula and the volunteers prayed and sang together in her front yard, and it wasn’t long before some of the squatters began joining in. The group prayed with Brady a few times, too, before cancer eventually took his life.

Full of the Spirit, Lula began sharing the Lord more and more with the people who hung around her house. “I got out there on the porch, and talked about how God wants things to be,” she says.

Some didn’t like what they heard and stopped coming to drink and play cards, but her grandkids started pitching in with the household chores, giving Lula more time to spend with the visitors who stayed.

One evening toward the end of the summer, the missionaries, acting on a word from the Lord, decided to hold an impromptu prayer meeting at Lula’s. They walked around Allendale inviting everyone they met. One neighbor accepted the invitation and joined a delighted Lula and the missionaries at her newly refinished home. The porch overflowed with people. The group prayed over each of the nine rooms, dedicating the whole house to the Lord.

“Since we prayed over the house, things have really changed,” Lula says.

Lula has changed, and her house has changed, barely resembling the place it once was. It’s a new place where Lula, her family and her new friends can work, rest, pray and praise God. It has the same exterior walls and the same old address, 1517 Harvard Avenue, and yet it also stands at a new intersection, still under construction, the one being built between heaven and a new earth.

They continued visiting with Lula, talking with her about Scripture, stopping by regularly through the fall and winter. When Pentecost came around, Lula told them she wanted to be baptized in the Holy Spirit.
The New Math:
How Home Repair Projects Are Changing the Equation in Allendale
By Bill Crimmins

Two plus two does not always get you four.

In the math of the new heaven and the new earth, for instance, if you take 12 adults living year-round in Allendale, add in 74 Action volunteers (young and old community members who spend fall, winter and spring washing cars, throwing fundraisers, dinners, dances, etc., so they can buy gas, sandwiches and insurance for two-week trips to some of America’s more forgotten corners) . . . and if you throw in another 22 traveling staffers (college students, mostly, forgoing cash and recreational travel to handle logistics and leadership for the Action volunteers—feeding, clothing, housing and moving all of them in the right direction) . . . and if you put all of these people together inside northern Louisiana’s sweltering 71103 zip code during the prime of summer vacation season, then what you get is . . .

Well, you get bathrooms and kitchens redone, toilets and other plumbing fixtures set right, structural weaknesses remedied, cabinets replaced, windows, doors and more installed, drywall hung, new flooring laid, walls and ceilings painted, rooms cleaned—in short, more than you bargained for, and not by mere addition but by multiplication.

Yet, this description is a bit too neat and clean, a bit too impersonal and imprecise. Some elements have been subtracted from this equation . . . like the stench of clogged toilets, the heat and heavy humidity and sweat, the dirt and cockroaches, the dog bites and the poison ivy. And some other elements haven’t been added in yet . . . like the budding friendships with neighbors, the chances you get to talk about what the Lord has done in your life, to sing and pray with people you’ve never met before, people who need what you have brought with you.

And don’t forget that this equation also pumps out some . . . SKILLS! Picture Bruce Brand (northern Virginia), an amateur plumber, using a 50-foot snake to tackle a dirty, miserable, plumbing job for Stan and Pam, finally freeing up their pipes with a little help from professional plumber Charlie Lindemayer and his pressure packer.

Imagine Loyd Fortenberry, a retired Biloxi trucker, who knows how to jack up a house. He’s right in there at Fanny’s house at the corner of Norma and Jordan with his crew of much younger backs, and they’re extracting a deteriorated structural beam that’s threatening the integrity of the home and putting solid wood in its place . . . and while they’re at it, they throw up a new porch and replace a second-story window.

Above left: J.T. McManmon (Servant Branch, in back) and Bob Hackel (Tampa) reconstruct a bathroom floor.
This equation also spits out Jack Busekrus (Oahu) and Brian Weber (New Orleans), men who led the overhaul of Lula’s house (see p. 20), and another crew who put up a noise-reducing fence around Windows, Doors and More Outlet, the community business that Josh Caneff manages.

To put it another way, this equation yields muscle and manpower from 11 People of Praise branches (that would be Biloxi, Colorado Springs, New Orleans, northern Virginia, Oahu, Saskatoon, Servant Branch, South Bend, Tampa, Vancouver/Portland and Shreveport), cities in five different North American and Pacific time zones, people who travel thousands of miles just to make some needed tangible improvements to the dwelling places of folks who live on streets named Harvard, Yale, Dove, Norma, Walnut and Lakeshore in an area no bigger than a few square blocks.

Halfway around the globe and a couple of millennia ago, Jesus found a crowd sitting beside a Galilean lake on a sticky summer day. As he stared at those folks, his heart filled with compassion because they seemed like sheep without a shepherd. So he took the loaves and fishes his friends had brought, blessed them and turned them into precisely what the people needed at that moment. He multiplied. And the people ate and had their fill.

Above: Ben Reinhardt (Servant Branch) scrapes paint. Below: Neighbors and Action volunteers line up for barbecued chicken. Right: Action team members relax on a neighbor’s front porch.
It's been about a year since *Vine & Branches* covered our missionary work in Indianapolis in detail. What is the Lord doing with the Missionary Company now? Or, to put it another way, what are you all up to?

Our activities are really very simple. We’re talking to people. We’re encountering folks in a very direct, unmediated way, on the streets and in houses: a woman whose husband has just died, a group of kids who’ve never heard of Jesus, a talented high-school boy with no summer plans, a cancer patient waiting to die in his own home, a man so angry he wants to kill someone.

We’re listening and responding: with prayer for healing or baptism in the Holy Spirit, with a 911 call or an immediate ride to the emergency room, with help cutting the grass, with a long conversation, with inspired words and prophecy, with teaching, with God’s forgiveness. We don’t really have a program. We have a lot of encounters.

It looks like many of the stories in this issue are about first encounters. Are you getting better at having initial conversations with strangers?

Definitely. We’re learning to respond right away. We experience a strong sense of urgency, a sense that there’s something at stake in every meeting, a moment of opportunity, a chance for someone to come closer to the kingdom of God. If we give people a choice, a decision they can really act on, then we count that encounter as a success.

Suppose people do want to take steps toward the Lord. Do you go back to visit them?

We listen to the Holy Spirit. Sometimes the Lord wants us to go back to see someone several times. Sometimes we want to go back but don’t have the manpower or the time to do so, or we just can’t locate the person again.

Other times the Lord has something else in mind. One time, we were scouting a new area and met a woman whose ex-boyfriend was threatening her. The police had told her there was nothing they could do to help her. We encouraged her, told her she didn’t have to be afraid, that Jesus was right there with her. She said, “You’re right. That’s true, and I know it because you all came here tonight.”

I know God wanted us to see her that night, just to comfort her, and I’m also quite sure he isn’t calling us to that particular neighborhood. Follow-up isn’t always what the Lord is doing with us.

Fruitful encounters and joining the community are two different things, right? How do all of these encounters tie in with growing the community?

We’re like gardeners transplanting wild plants. We go out into the fields and forests and find all these sprouts we want to transplant, people we want to integrate into our garden, the People of Praise. Some sprouts are struggling to survive and they need water, so we go back and water them with visits, with love, knowing that they’d probably struggle to survive if we tried to move them too soon into community life.

Fruits grow on the trees we water, of course. The Lord has called us to make the whole world yield its fruit, which means he’s growing the church, the People of Praise. Sometimes we see a lot of growth, sometimes not. Some of our members are leaving us, others are coming to us. Sometimes it’s the body of Christ as a whole, the church, that gets the growth. For example, there are some times when we lead someone to the Lord and never get to see the person again. The People of Praise isn’t growing when that happens, but the body of Christ has just gained another member.

An Interview with Nick Holovaty

Ellen Reed (left) and Naomi Canef install a subfloor in the Triangle area of Indianapolis.
Missionaries can be very hard to keep track of. Where are you working now?

We have 10 missionaries in Allendale, 17 in Indianapolis (I’m one of them), five in Dinkytown, one in South Bend and one in West Lafayette, Indiana, at Purdue University. In Indianapolis, five live near the joint campus of Indiana University and Purdue University (IUPUI) in an area we call the Triangle. Twelve more live in two adjacent houses on the South Side.

We’ve had a lot of success on the South Side, especially on Union Street and the surrounding blocks. We’ve been doing mission work in that area since June of 2007. Many of the neighbors near Union Street have already had a chance to decide about us and about the Lord. This past summer, we branched out to new areas of the city, including a neighborhood called Fountain Square, a couple of miles away from Union Street. Nowadays, we host three prayer meetings on Sunday afternoons, at 2:00, 4:00 and 6:00. Two are near Union Street and one is in Fountain Square.

What do you look for when you’re looking to target a new neighborhood? Why Fountain Square?

Early this summer, we wanted to see if there were other areas of the city like the area around Union Street—places where you can go out for three hours on a weekday afternoon and spend practically every minute talking with someone about the Lord.

Fountain Square really is that way, too. It’s bigger than the Union Street area, more populous. In Fountain Square, there are lots of people who will tell you right away that they don’t want to talk about God. They’ll say that they already know everything about him because their Granddaddy was a preacher. Then they let you up onto their porches and spend a couple of hours spilling their life stories, really opening up and listening to you.

Like Union Street, Fountain Square is a poor area, with many abandoned houses and other kinds of problems.

As we travel through the Mississippi Valley, I expect that we’re going to find many more neighborhoods and areas that are open to the Lord, just like Fountain Square and Union Street.

Are you still planning to move on to Memphis?

We’re very eager to move on wherever and whenever the Lord calls us. We’ve already made scouting trips to Memphis, Tennessee, and to Louisville, Kentucky. Our plans are always developing. Lately, we’ve been thinking Kentucky might be the next place to start, somewhere a little closer to Indianapolis than Memphis. Many South Siders have Kentucky roots, and we’re curious to see if we can continue to succeed in the places they came from.

But before we can do any of that, we have to move more community members to the South Side. We need people who—returning to my gardening metaphor—can take our young transplants, feed them and shape them into a thriving garden. I have in mind people who can teach about personal prayer, right speech and homemaking, people who can help people find jobs and help strengthen marriages, people who can provide all of the stability and faithful love found in branch life. These are skills that many community members have.

Incidentally, most of these things aren’t strong suits for missionaries. Our calling is meeting people and inspiring them to join our life. We value mobility, and right now we tend to be younger and less experienced in pastoral matters and in practical living skills.

So you’re looking for people from other branches to move to the South Side of Indianapolis?

Yes, absolutely. We’re also looking for people willing to move to Allendale and to the Triangle area of Indianapolis, near IUPUI.

Besides moving to new starts, what can community members do to help? Do you need anything?

Many South Siders now have a desire to move closer to one another, to live together in Christian community. The People of Praise has already acquired one
house on the South Side, and soon we’re going to need more properties where new community members can live. That means we’re going to need donations to the Growth Fund, so we can purchase more houses. We’re also going to need lots of volunteers to do home renovations, especially skilled electricians, plumbers and carpenters, etc.

Our missionaries need toiletries. We need socks and good shoes. Most of all, we need prayers. I know that our success so far is the result of prayers from all over the community. Prayers are a huge source of strength for us.

**Is the Missionary Company expanding?**

Yes. There are 34 of us now, up from 27 a year ago. Our numbers include three married couples. Also, three women from the Sisterhood are working with us in Indianapolis this year: Ellen Reed, Mary Timler and Chris Vieck. Another Sisterhood member, Amy DeCelles, serves in Dinkytown.

---

**What have the Sisterhood women added to missionary work?**

Ellen can strike up a conversation with anyone. She hears the Lord talking in her prayer time and she goes out and repeats whatever she heard—that’s a really valuable trait in a missionary. She is adventurous, and her life experiences—she was a Trinity School math teacher before retiring in 2007—make her a natural when it comes to relating.

Chris is in charge of our house for women missionaries on the South Side, where we’re training some of our newest members. Girls and women of virtually all ages look up to Chris, and South Siders are no exception. She’s had a very big impact. I could say plenty more about Amy and Mary, too.

---

**After almost two years of missionary work, what are you learning about what it’s going to take to keep going—to win the whole Mississippi Valley for Christ?**

There are more than 60 million people in the Mississippi Valley. We’ve had thousands of encounters like the ones described in this issue. We need to have hundreds of thousands more. We need to keep covering ground, visiting many more neighborhoods and cities, facing more opposition and even persecution. Every time we go out, we’re making the Lord more known. We simply have to keep going out until we’ve talked to everyone, the whole Mississippi Valley. That means we need more missionaries!
Kerry Koller has announced that Trinity School at River Ridge has been awarded its second Blue Ribbon Award from the US Department of Education. Congratulations to everyone associated with the school. This is a great milestone.

Brian Couch, who made the covenant in South Bend on October 5, is a member of the fourth generation in his family to make the covenant. He is the son of Beth Bradley Couch, the grandson of Bev Miller Bradley and the great-grandson of Clem and Mary Lou Miller. All covenanted members!

Nathan and Genevieve Barrett (Allendale) are rejoicing in the gift of Paul Nathan, born August 30.

Matt and Beth Sanford (South Bend) are very thankful to God for the safe delivery of their daughter Maria Ruth on June 11.

Harlan and Julie Klein (Kaneohe, HI) are happy to announce the birth of Eden Mirelle, who arrived on March 25.

Congratulations to Anne Swan (South Bend), who has received her B.A. in history, with a concentration in modern Europe, from the University of Chicago.

Congratulations to Michael Madden, MD (DePere, WI), who has received his MBA from the University of Massachusetts.

Congratulations to Bruce and Anita Brand (Springfield, VA), who celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary in June.

Two members of Servant Branch died since our last issue, Herb Bruber on July 30 and Edith Kadera on August 2. We express our sincere condolences to all their family members and friends in this time of loss.

Bill Dalgetty (Vienna, VA) has stepped down after many years at the helm of Christians in Commerce. Terry Cassell (Annandale, VA) has been chosen as the new president. Best wishes to both.

Congratulations to Lisa Tychsen (Falls Church, VA). In May she was awarded the Office of Secretary of Defense Medal for Exceptional Civilian Service for her work on the Department of Defense housing privatization initiative, which successfully partnered with the private sector to renovate and replace over 173,000 military housing units.

Congratulations to Linda Scrofani (Tampa), who graduated May 10 with a master’s degree in pastoral studies from Loyola University in New Orleans.

Congratulations to Don Ferber (St. Paul), who retired September 2 after more than 37 years with the State of Minnesota, Department of Human Services.

Congratulations to Emily Siebers (Appleton, WI) who has received a promotion at R&R Donnelly (formerly Banta Corporation). Emily has been with the company for eight years.

From the Executive Office

Buffalo:
Congratulations to Jim Hippert and Bruce Wansart, who made the covenant of the People of Praise on May 10, 2008.

Northern Virginia:
Congratulations to Monique Franco, who made the covenant of the People of Praise on October 19, 2008.

Servant Branch:
Congratulations to Tom Beckley, Mike Coney and Areta Thomas, who made the covenant of the People of Praise on September 14, 2008.

South Bend:
John Zwerneman has been appointed to a second six-year term as principal branch coordinator, beginning October 15, 2008.

Congratulations to Brian Couch, Thomas Duddy, Elizabeth Grams, Wendy Heinrich, Claire Holovaty, Rus Lyons, Abe Olson and Jeremy Osterhouse who made the covenant of the People of Praise on October 5, 2008.
These eleven brothers and sisters were among the first 29 people to make the covenant of the People of Praise on October 15, 1971.