Inside
Prescription Drugs: Are You Paying Too Much?
Editor’s Note: The Deakins moved to Allendale one year ago. They were approaching retirement age, but instead of slowing down they sold their Colorado home and headed for Yale Avenue to join up with the Allendale missionary household. Vine & Branches staff wanted to find out about their experience of missionary life.

Gerry and Patti lived in the South Bend branch from 1974 to 1998, then moved to Colorado Springs to help build the new branch there. In Colorado, Patti was a records assistant for the registrar’s office of Colorado College. Gerry worked as a sales representative for the LaSalle Company, Inc. and continues that job in Allendale.

Gerry, what brought you to consider moving to Allendale?

Gerry: During the summer of 2006, I had spent a week working and living there with an Action team. The Lord captured my heart: for the neighborhood, for the people, but especially for the missionary household who had taken this on.

I saw a need. These young men and women, and Ron and Ruthanne Seitz, a retired couple, needed some servants with life experience who could help them carry their load. I saw a place where even older people like us can do purposeful work.

It probably helped that we weren’t total strangers to the intense common life of the missionaries. During our early community years, we lived in a household on the ninth floor of the LaSalle Building that had 28 people living in it at one point! We put everything in common there.

Patti, how about you?

Patti: When Gerry suggested the idea of moving to Allendale, I was really surprised. I knew Gerry was excited about his visit, but…a move? I had never been there. I’ve never considered myself a front-line evangelist. Also, we had already made a huge jump moving to Colorado Springs from South Bend.

Then were you reassigned to Allendale?

Gerry: Yes. After talking with Paul DeCelles and Nick Holovaty, we made a formal request to Craig Lent that we be sent to Allendale. We told them our family would probably think we were nuts!

Patti: We expected someone to say, “You guys are too old for this.” But Craig reassigned us.

Did you have any concerns about making the move?

Patti: Since Gerry was already working long-distance, it wasn’t a big deal for him to switch locations. However, both of us worked in Colorado, due to the high cost of living there. The prospect of my needing to find a new job in a new city, close to retirement age, was daunting. We decided we’d try living off Gerry’s job alone in Shreveport, and so far that has worked for us.

Another concern was that we had accumulated a lot of stuff like furniture, and we didn’t want to be burdened with it. Plus, we wanted to live more like our neighbors in Allendale—nothing fancy. Our solution was to give things to our kids that we would have given to them when we died. Then we sold or gave away other items and set aside

Every individual is so needed in a smaller branch. What could God be thinking, to move us elsewhere?

I decided to visit Allendale with Gerry to see what had so moved him.

As we drove into Allendale in May of 2007, I was shocked. The place was all so much more depressed than I’d expected. Broken windows, houses falling apart, glass and debris on the roads, yards filled with junk. I was just overwhelmed that first day.

I asked myself, what would I have to offer here? At first, I thought I could get a job and help support the missionary household financially. Then one day some visiting college women were cutting loaves of garlic bread in the kitchen. They were short on time, hard-pressed to butter each slice. I suggested cutting them the long way and buttering it through the middle. It just seemed like common sense to me, but the main cook looked at me like I’d told her Jesus had risen. It started me thinking. Because I’m older, I have a lot of life experience: cooking and organizing, for example. There might be something I could do here.

Gerry and I came home and decided to think and pray seriously about moving to Allendale. In the end we both wanted to go.

Gerry prepares the lawn on Yale Avenue for sodding.
the proceeds in an account for our retirement.

Gerry: We didn’t want things like healthcare quality or finances to stop us. God has worked them out nicely. For example, professionals like our dentist often give us deals, because they respect what we’re doing.

Isn’t it difficult being away from family?

Patti: We’re not any farther away from family than we already were. I’m more available to them, now that I’m not working a regular job. I can catch rides to South Bend pretty easily.

I spent a lot of time with my “grandchildren” in the Colorado Springs branch; they were just as dear to me as my own grandchildren. That can usually happen in whatever branch you find yourself in. I get to babysit Nathan and Genevieve Barrett’s baby, Paul, regularly.

It must have been quite an adjustment to move into the Allendale neighborhood.

Gerry: It was like moving to a foreign land. We’re still learning the language! It has taken a year to even understand some of the speech here.

It had also been a long time since we’d lived such intense common life, although we’ve almost always had household. With us living so close together, the Lord has an opportunity to hold a mirror up to your face, which isn’t always something you want to see!

Patti: At first, it seemed like nothing about being here was comfortable. I wonder, though, how hard it was for Jesus to move around like he did. That is something I can share with the Lord now.

Gerry: We found that it’s helpful not to be too comfortable, to be in a position where we have to rely on the Lord and on others.

What have you been doing since you got there?

Gerry: Every week we share morning prayer, meals, men’s and women’s groups, chores, fast days, the Lord’s Day celebration, prayer meetings and missionary outings with the rest of the household.

Patti supports the household in any way she can during the day, which could mean cooking, assisting Joan Pingel in logistics, grocery shopping with Cathy Grill or taking care of baby Paul so that Genevieve can work part-time. She might be inventorying what we have in the freezer because a neighbor needs food. She goes walking with some of the neighbor women three days a week. She gives women rides to and from Ruthanne’s Bible study group. She often does mission work with Laura Brummer and Jeanette Zimmel in the afternoons.

I work during the day, and also take care of the grounds on the five adjacent People of Praise properties plus the Seitzes’ house. We just got the whole yard sodded. I enjoy helping the neighborhood kids keep their bicycles up and running.

On Fridays we both spend the afternoon visiting couples in the neighborhood. We have regular date nights. We go to a neighborhood Christian Methodist Episcopal church with Laura Brummer on Sundays. A group of us help neighborhood kids with their homework on Monday afternoons.

What do you like most about your life in Allendale?

Gerry: I enjoy the newness of the Lord’s work each day. A highlight of the year was our neighbor Lula’s decision to clean her house up, not only physically but spiritually. She’s changing her life and the life around her. That’s really cool to see!

Sounds like you’re keeping pretty busy.

Gerry: That’s why I’m here. I can use every bit of my time to serve the Father.

There are not a lot of us down here. We need people—more men, in particular. There is a lot of work to do.

Patti: Some people think we’re crazy, too old for this. But, even at 61, I still have my whole life to give to the Lord; it’s just not as many total years. The zeal is the same. I may not be able to offer as much as some, but there’s still lots I can do.

Gerry: One thing about us older men and women in the community—we have time. I remember thinking, when we were sent to Colorado, Lord, there are 15 to 20 people I can think of right off the top of my head who could do this better. But he said to me, If folks will just go and do what I want done, I can use them!
D

o you know what your pre-
scription drugs are costing
you? Maybe you only fork
over a $10 bill for an occasional sinus
infection. On the other hand, maybe
you need tens of thousands of dol-

ars worth of medications every year.

Whatever you’re paying, chances are
good you’re paying more than you
want to—maybe even more than you
need to—unless you’re willing to talk
to your doctor and scope out some
good deals.

Americans spent $2.2 trillion
on healthcare in 2007, 10% of which
got into prescription drugs, accord-
ing to a report from the U.S. Depart-
ment of Health and Human Services.
That’s $7,421 per person on health-
care, and $742 on prescription drugs.

That average may not seem astro-
nomically high, if you have a steady
income and an insurance plan, but
for the tens of millions of uninsured
Americans, costs can be a hindrance
to buying needed medications. More-
over, for elderly people, who gener-
ally have less income but take more
prescription drugs than the average
American, the financial burden of
medications can be suffocating.

Drug prescriptions have become
standard medical treatment interna-
tionally, making them hard to avoid.
According to the Kaiser Family Foun-
dation, the average American took 12
prescriptions in 2007, and The Cen-
ters for Disease Control reports that
an average physician visit in 2006
resulted in the prescription or dis-
tribution of two medications (National
Ambulatory Medical Care Survey).

If the U.S. citizens in the People of
Praise have medical expenses that
roughly reflect the American average,
The Price We Pay

The retail price of one of your prescription drugs could range anywhere from a few dollars to several thousand dollars, though the most commonly prescribed brand-name drugs cap at a couple hundred dollars per month, and generic drugs usually sell for less than $100.

If you have health insurance, you pay only a fraction of a drug’s retail cost out of your pocket. The copayment your insurer requires for prescribed generic drugs could be as small as a few dollars, typically about $10. Brand-name drugs will typically cost you a $20 to $50 copayment per prescription, depending on your plan. Many insurance providers, however, will not cover any of the cost of drugs which are not on your plan’s formulary (a list of preferred drugs).

Insurance plans can keep your out-of-pocket costs minimal. Still, if you have health complications and a tray of pills to take every day, the copayments can add up fast, and if the costs add up too fast, you may reach the limit of your plan’s coverage.

If you hit the limit, or if you are prescribed drugs that aren’t on your plan’s approved list, or if you never had coverage to begin with, the bottom line is the same: footing for yourself with full-price medications.

Everyone in the country is affected by the high drug costs. The higher the cost of drugs, the higher the cost of health insurance. High insurance costs make it harder for many consumers to afford coverage and harder for insurers to cover a full range of medicines and procedures, creating a vicious circle. They make it harder for businesses who offer insurance as an employee benefit, and harder for employees who typically share some of the costs of their insurance with their employers. On average, one family insurance policy cost employers about $12,000 in 2007, $3,000 of which was taken from the worker’s paychecks (averages from Kaiser Family Foundation, 2007). Drug costs burden some individuals with insurance, overburden the uninsured and those at the limits of their coverage, and strain business budgets, creating a ripple effect through the whole economy.

Good News

But there is good news for prescription drug consumers. In 2006 Wal-Mart launched a $4 prescription drug program, which has set off a national chain reaction of drastic price cuts in prescription drugs.

Wal-Mart and Sam’s Club offer hundreds of commonly prescribed generic medications on their “$4 list.”

The Prescription Drug Benefit in Health Insurance Plans

If you have insurance and your doctor prescribes you a medication, the portion of the retail price you pay depends on the terms of your health insurance plan.

- The insurance provider, in a typical employer-sponsored health insurance plan, requires that you pay a certain fixed amount for prescription drugs. Your payment is called a “copayment” (or “copay”). The provider pays the rest—everything above your fixed copay.

- However, the insurance plan does not normally cover all possible prescribed drugs. The insurer receives significant discounts for a broad range of medications. The list of these preferred drugs in your insurance plan is called a “formulary.” Some providers won’t pay anything for drugs not on the formulary.

- Usually your provider sets three levels of copayment: one price you pay for generic drugs, a higher price for brand-name drugs on the formulary, and an even higher price for nonpreferred drugs which are not on the formulary. Again, drugs not on the formulary may not be covered at all.

Here’s how that might look for you. You are required to pay either an $11 copay for a month’s supply of a generic drug, or a $25 copay for a brand-name drug on your plan’s formulary, or a $43 copay for any drugs not on the formulary. (These figures represent the national average copayments for three-tiered drug cost sharing in 2007, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation.)
by taking a generic version of their medications. This is helping to keep the cost of the company health insurance plan down.

“I think the Wal-Mart effect is the single best thing to happen in medicine in the last few years,” Tom says. “It’s transparent: you know what you’re going to pay.”

**Taking control of our prescription drug costs**

Even if you need expensive name-brand drugs that aren’t on the $4 lists, there may be more choices open to you than you realize:

- If your doctor prescribes a brand-name drug, you could ask whether there are any generic alternatives for it.
- If your doctor prescribes a drug not on your insurance plan’s formulary, and if there are no generic alternatives, you can ask if there are other brand-name drugs that might have a similar effect. (Make sure you know what drugs are included in your insurance plan’s formulary.)
- You could bring your doctor a list of cheaper generics from your local drugstore and ask if any of the medications you are currently taking could be substituted with something on the list. (Check the drugstore’s web site for the list, or ask at the pharmacy.)

Tom points out that the very best medication available isn’t always worth the price. “A lot of people

**Medicare**

Medicare, the U.S.-government-administered health insurance option for adults age 65 and over, works a little differently from a regular health insurance plan.

The prescription drug benefit is one of the parts of Medicare which is not free. Beneficiaries must pay a monthly premium. In addition, there is a window—between the first $2,700 of total expenses and $4,350 of out-of-pocket expenses per year (in 2009)—for which the insured receives no coverage on prescription drugs. That means that, even if you have a small copayment initially, once the total cost of your drugs reaches $2,700, you are on your own until either the next year hits or you have spent $4,350 out of your own pocket, at which point catastrophic coverage takes care of all but 5% of any further prescription expenses.

They include medications for allergies, antibiotics, blood pressure, skin conditions, heart conditions and even stopping smoking. That’s $4 straight up for a 30-day supply of medicine, with or without insurance; all you need is a prescription from your doctor. What’s more, for $10 you can get a 90-day supply of any of the generic drugs on a list of 300.

Target quickly followed Wal-Mart’s lead, and now many drugstore pharmacies—including CVS, Walgreens and K-Mart—have similar prescription drug plans or will match competitors’ prices on these generic drugs. Some drugstores now offer select medications such as prescription antibiotics for free. The bargains benefit the drugstores, because they draw in customers. For the customer, a bargain is . . . well, a bargain.

Dr. Tom Seasly (South Bend), a family physician, has seen the impact of this trend. “One kid I treated several years ago had a condition that kept him quarantined from school. He was on Medicaid, and the only medication he could afford had horrible side effects. There was a great medicine for his condition, but it was $14 a pill! So he couldn’t take it and he couldn’t go back to school. The good news is, last year that medication got on Wal-Mart’s $4 list.”

The news is also good for our community businesses. The LaSalle Company now regularly reminds employees that, although they only make a small copayment for their prescription drugs, the drugs often cost the company much more. Employees sometimes save the company hundreds of dollars a month...
could be on cheaper meds,” he says. “I spend a lot of time telling my patients, here’s this thing that’s 90% as good and way cheaper.”

“Shop around,” suggests Dr. Bernarda Zenker (Servant Branch), a family physician. “Just because a particular generic drug is not available at one store does not mean it’s not available elsewhere.” If your local Wal-Mart or Sam’s Club doesn’t have what you’re looking for at a discount, possibly K-Mart or CVS will. You might also try an online pharmacy, though these vary in reliability.

“It pays to know what you are being prescribed so that you can do this,” Bernarda adds. “The patient needs to be educated!”

You could also save money, Cliff points out, by cutting pills in half. (You can find $10 pill-cutters at your drugstore.) Frequently a given medication is available in pills with bigger and smaller doses, but a 30-day supply of the bigger dose costs about the same as a 30-day supply of the smaller dose. If you buy, for example, a bottle of 40 mg. pills when you only need doses of 20 mg., you could cut the pills in half and end up with 60 days’ worth of medication in 20 mg. doses. You’ve spent half of what you would have spent if you had purchased the 20 mg. pills. Not all pills should be or can be cut, however. You will need to check with a pharmacist or your doctor.

Bernarda, Cliff and Tom add a strong caution to all cost-cutting measures: patients should make sure their doctor advises them. Some generics do not produce the same therapeutic results as brand-name drugs. Mixing some drugs with others could produce dangerous interactions. Cutting some pills in half could lessen their effectiveness.

“It’s complicated,” Tom says. “People have to talk to their personal doctors about it.”

Our prescription drugs are going to cost us time and money—no question. It takes legwork to be both frugal and careful with prescription drugs. But there is a lot we can do to keep the costs under control. It’s good news: we have many ways to multiply the Lord’s resources! ■

Helpful Links

Generic Drug Savings Programs:
CVS Pharmacy’s $10, 90-day prescriptions

K-Mart’s $5, 30-day prescriptions
http://content.kmart.com/ue/home/$5.pdf
K-Mart’s $10 and $15 90-day prescriptions
http://content.kmart.com/ue/home/this_list_10_15.pdf

Target’s $4, 30-day prescriptions and $10, 90-day prescriptions
http://sites.target.com/site/en/health/generic_drugs.jsp

Walgreen’s $12, 90-day prescriptions

Wal-Mart’s and Sam’s Club’s $4, 30-day prescriptions and $10, 90-day prescriptions
http://i.walmartimages.com/i/if/hmp/fusion/customer_list.pdf
Eye Healing in Rockford

John McKnight and the brothers in his Rockford branch men’s group regularly get together on Tuesday nights to talk and pray, serve branch members and, of course, eat pizza. One summer night they healed John’s eye of a condition that threatened blindness.

Neither Stu Ambrose nor Terry Bomkamp remembers anything special about their prayer that night. “We normally pray for our intentions near the end of the meeting,” says Stu, “and that’s when John mentioned his eye, so we immediately laid hands on him.”

The night before, John, a retired 61-year-old, was watching a movie on TV with his wife Myung (pronounced “Mee-young”). He suddenly realized that he couldn’t see anything out of the upper left quadrant of his left eye. He tried closing his right eye, and the dark area was even more noticeable.

John had undergone laser surgery for diabetic retinal disease just a month earlier, and so he was still at high risk for vision loss and even blindness. He had never experienced a blind spot like that, but he knew that it probably meant blood vessels in his eye were leaking. Though he could receive more laser treatment, it might be too late to restore the vision he’d just lost.

John calmly mentioned the blind spot to Myung, who urged him to visit a doctor. He went to an ophthalmologist the next day. The doctor confirmed that the eye was bleeding, and immediately set John up for an appointment with the same retinal specialist who’d treated him earlier.

“That night was my Tuesday evening men’s group,” John says, “so of course they laid hands on me as soon as I mentioned the bleeding. While they prayed, I felt a calmness come over me which I attributed to the Lord.

“The next day, after checking my eye out as best I could, I felt like my vision had returned to normal and concluded I had been healed.”

That Thursday, John decided to keep his doctor’s appointment. After examining John’s eye, the doctor expressed some confusion.

“You don’t have any bleeding in your eye,” the doctor remarked. “I’m not sure what the ophthalmologist was looking at.”

A month and a half later John returned to the specialist for a checkup. The doctor still found no signs of bleeding.

John proclaims healing!

New Men’s Household at Purdue

Four young men on assignment from the South Bend branch—Abe Olson, Brian Couch, Eric Yost and Peter Coleman—have formed a men’s household in Lafayette, Indiana, just across the river from Purdue University and 150 miles from South Bend.

All four are members of the Company, a group of young men committed to serving the Lord by building the People of Praise together. They went to Purdue for an education directed to that end. Abe is working toward a doctorate in physics and Eric a master’s in electrical engineering, while Brian and Peter pursue undergraduate degrees.

They agreed upon a common schedule which usually limits schoolwork to an 8-to-5 work week. They dedicate evenings and weekends to Christian formation, service, prayer and fellowship. For example, they have studied community teachings, helped a neighbor winterize her house, and put on an Action retreat for high-school students in the South Bend branch.

The men live just one hour from Indianapolis and two from South Bend.

“We often go to the Indianapolis missionary houses for Lord’s Day celebrations or for their Sunday prayer meetings,” Abe says. “Last semester, I took two other physics grad students down to Indianapolis with me. We worked on remodeling People of Praise properties for the day and then had a Lord’s Day dinner with the missionaries.”

Living in a house off-campus, sharing rent and buying their own food allow the household to spend less than if they were using university-provided housing and meal plans.

“We live simply,” Abe notes. “We keep our food, utilities and entertainment costs to a minimum.
Getting a more economical education is just one way we can take care of one another materially, spiritually and financially.”

It helps that Purdue’s tuition is $7,750 for Indiana residents in the 2008-2009 school year. By contrast, tuition at private colleges averages about $25,000 nationwide.

“If you’re a 16-to-21-year-old guy looking to serve the Lord, come and visit us!” Abe adds.

**Plenty of Action in Northern Virginia**

“It’s a real-time revolution; it won’t wait for us to graduate,” sang J-T Kelly a few years ago.

Today some students in the northern Virginia branch have picked up the same tune, baptizing people in the Holy Spirit, preaching on street corners and experiencing some persecution all before getting a high-school degree.

Action members packed their evenings and weekends last fall with teaching and training sessions, a six-hour workday helping out a family in need, an evening of street evangelism and a Pentecost Seminar.

A team of both students and adults in Action put on a Pentecost Seminar in November, working together to plan, administer and give talks and sharings. The students invited 16 guests, 14 of whom were prayed with to be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

“The teams’ efforts were rewarded,” comments Action coordinator Jim Mysliwiec, noting that several seminar attendees have since become involved with Action.

Eager to do at home what they had seen missionaries in Indianapolis and Allendale do during their summer Action trips, a pack of Action members descended on a Falls Church outdoor shopping center one evening in December, some of them singing songs like “New Creation” for passersby, and others going around in pairs to talk to people about the Lord and to offer prayer.

Action teens Michael Cassell and Fiorella Bellini noticed three young men outside a restaurant across the street, cursing loudly at a group of Action members. Michael and Fiorella walked up to the young men and offered them prayer. One confessed that he was worried about getting into college, and wanted wisdom and discernment to make a good choice. The three prayed together while the young man’s friends mocked him.

“I wanted to experience missionary work firsthand,” says Michael, “even getting rejected for the sake of Christ.”

Action members hope to do even more evangelization this semester, on top of their regular schedule of training and raising funds. They intend to send 25 people to Allendale and Indianapolis next summer.

“I was baptized in the Holy Spirit at last year’s seminar,” says Katie Hazelton, an 18-year-old underway Action member, “and I want to do for others what has been done for me.”
People of Praise Members Establishing Charter School

Thomas MacLaren School, conceived and founded by three members of the Colorado Springs branch, Eric and Mary Faith Hall and Katherine Brophy, has obtained conditional approval from the State of Colorado to open for the 2009-2010 school year.

Modeled after Trinity Schools, Thomas MacLaren will nonetheless be a public school under the state’s jurisdiction. It is completely funded by grant money or donations from federal and state government, charitable foundations and local donors. The school takes its name from a Scottish architect who designed many civic and residential buildings in Colorado Springs when he settled there in the early 20th century.

The three founders began to discuss the possibility of creating such a school several years ago.

“We wanted a better education for our own children and the children of others in the branch,” says Katherine. “Our part of Colorado Springs doesn’t have any schools with a classically based curriculum like Trinity’s, so we knew that this school would benefit the city as a whole.”

They began to take steps to open a charter school based on the nonsectarian aspects of Trinity. Mary Faith consulted with Meadow View Head of School Andrew Zwerneman (northern Virginia), to adapt Trinity’s curriculum. (Andrew has years of experience working for Trinity Schools, and he also ran a similar charter school based on the Trinity curriculum, Tempe Preparatory Academy in Tempe, Arizona.) Mary Faith also wrote the grant proposals for funding and the 250-page application to the State of Colorado.

The new Colorado Springs program adds a sixth-grade year and expands the music program, though it did have to let go of other parts of the Trinity School curriculum, such as Scripture classes. While inspired by Trinity’s curriculum and philosophy, Thomas MacLaren School is not affiliated with the People of Praise or Trinity Schools, Inc.

Now that Colorado’s Charter School Institute has conditionally approved the project and its budget, the founders have passed on all responsibilities to a newly created seven-member board, which includes Eric and Katherine. Eric, an attorney, acts as the board’s chair and spokesman, while Katherine directs marketing for the school, coordinates advertising for enrollment and keeps supporters up to date.

Katherine sees the Lord’s hand in the whole project. “The Lord led us to the right people to talk to and collaborate with. He has given us hope and strength to soldier on in spite of unfavorable odds,” she says. “Brothers and sisters in the Colorado Springs branch and throughout the community pray for us, encourage us, watch our kids, make us meals and otherwise hold us up when we are weary. We look forward to the day when the fruits of these labors will be a blessing to all of these brothers and sisters, whether they have children who attend or not.”

Several obstacles remain before the school can open this fall. The board must find a head of school, key faculty members, a minimum number of enrolled students and a facility. Fundraising will be an ongoing project. Eric isn’t worried, though.

“We have a variety of workable sites available and a number of interested parties who would like to teach at or head the school,” he says. “There are several other charter schools in the wider region offering a classical education. They have a combined waiting list of 3,000, so we don’t expect any trouble filling our classrooms!”

Moving Closer in

“City-building.” “Increased common life.” “Clustering.” The words are in the air and on the lips of a group of men and women in Servant Branch. Some branch members with big plans have been exploring more possibilities for living closer together, starting from the ground up.

Two dozen men and women began meeting last May, especially interested in building custom-made dwellings that would facilitate common life on a larger scale than traditional households. They called themselves the “Ground Up Group.” They’ve been sharing research findings and discussing their hopes and ideas for more common life.

Many of the folks who showed up at the open Ground Up meetings were recent or soon-to-be empty-nesters. Patricia Ficker, one regular, saw a need for brothers and sisters in the branch to move closer together and care for one another as they age.

“We all spend lots of time eating, working, doing chores,” she points out. “Why should we all do that independently of one another? Why should some of us live by ourselves? We need to somehow figure out a reasonable alternative.”

The group took field trips to undeveloped parcels of land and looked at buildings that could host multiple
families and singles, targeting the area surrounding the community center and Trinity School at River Ridge in Eagan, Minnesota. They researched cooperative housing arrangements and townhome developments. But they spent most of their meetings hashing out what they would want their life together to look like.

“Our meetings have been very helpful and fun,” says Ed Mertz. “It turns out there are lots of ways to interpret the phrase ‘common life.’”

The group encountered a challenge in the tough real-estate market. Many members are not in a position to sell their homes in the near future. A smaller crew of Ground Up members, however, has now concentrated their efforts into simply moving closer together, whether in a traditional or more original housing arrangement, within the next few years. They continue to explore practical ways they can share more life with one another.

One in the group, Chris Raway, says he can hardly wait. “I want to share meals, prayer times, coffee pots, couch-potato time, tools, chores, driving, vacations. You name it, I’m open to sharing it!”

**Thanksgiving in February**

Hannah Roth, her parents Dave and Lisa (Indianapolis), her three brothers and the entire Indianapolis branch are celebrating the one-year anniversary of Hannah’s liver transplant last February.

In October of 2007, doctors discovered a grapefruit-sized, cancerous tumor in 15-year-old Hannah’s liver. Several exhausting rounds of chemotherapy ensued, in an effort to shrink the tumor to a manageable size.

In January of 2008, Hannah and her parents faced a difficult decision. They could opt for a liver resection, in which the tumor and part of the liver would be removed, or a complete transplant. Either choice entailed risk. Dave, Lisa and Hannah decided to make a short retreat together to bring the matter to the Lord. After they had each prayed separately about it, they found that they all wanted to go for the transplant.

Patients frequently sit 30 days on the waiting list, but doctors found a liver for Hannah in only 11 days. The transplant was successful.

A year later, Hannah is back in school and playing on her basketball team, though not quite back up to speed. She has passed through the period of highest risk for liver rejection and continues to gain in health.

While brothers and sisters interceded for Hannah across the community, the Indianapolis branch got to work on the scene from the very start of Hannah’s health problems. Before Hannah even returned from her first hospital stay, a crew of branch members transformed the Roth family dining room into a temporary bedroom, complete with privacy curtains, so that Hannah could stay on the first floor of the house when not in the hospital.

In the following months, women’s groups made many meals for the Roths; branch members cleaned their house, did the laundry and visited at the hospital. Some folks would come just to play cards and games with Hannah. Household member Jenny Sergio maintained a CaringBridge web site which kept friends, family and community members around the country up-to-date with medical information and prayer requests.

“Throughout the past year, friends of the Roths from their church and neighborhood would comment on the support the People of Praise gave them, even as they helped the family generously themselves,” says Dave Porter (Indianapolis). “The Roths handled everything with grace and the Spirit of God. It was all a witness to Christ’s presence in the community.”

“Sometimes you read about people who wouldn’t trade the experience of having cancer for anything,” Hannah says. “I wouldn’t go that far, but the Lord did use it!”

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In October of 2007, doctors discovered a grapefruit-sized, cancerous tumor in 15-year-old Hannah’s liver. Several exhausting rounds of chemotherapy ensued, in an effort to shrink the tumor to a manageable size.

In January of 2008, Hannah and her parents faced a difficult decision. They could opt for a liver resection, in which the tumor and part of the liver would be removed, or a complete transplant. Either choice entailed risk. Dave, Lisa and Hannah decided to make a short retreat together to bring the matter to the Lord. After they had each prayed separately about it, they found that they all wanted to go for the transplant.

Patients frequently sit 30 days on the waiting list, but doctors found a liver for Hannah in only 11 days. The transplant was successful.

A year later, Hannah is back in school and playing on her basketball team, though not quite back up to speed. She has passed through the period of highest risk for liver rejection and continues to gain in health.

While brothers and sisters interceded for Hannah across the community, the Indianapolis branch got to work on the scene from the very start of Hannah’s health problems. Before Hannah even returned from her first hospital stay, a crew of branch members transformed the Roth family dining room into a temporary bedroom, complete with privacy curtains, so that Hannah could stay on the first floor of the house when not in the hospital.

In the following months, women’s groups made many meals for the Roths; branch members cleaned their house, did the laundry and visited at the hospital. Some folks would come just to play cards and games with Hannah. Household member Jenny Sergio maintained a CaringBridge web site which kept friends, family and community members around the country up-to-date with medical information and prayer requests.

“Throughout the past year, friends of the Roths from their church and neighborhood would comment on the support the People of Praise gave them, even as they helped the family generously themselves,” says Dave Porter (Indianapolis). “The Roths handled everything with grace and the Spirit of God. It was all a witness to Christ’s presence in the community.”

“Sometimes you read about people who wouldn’t trade the experience of having cancer for anything,” Hannah says. “I wouldn’t go that far, but the Lord did use it!”
There’s a handy new place where you can find accurate phone numbers, home addresses and e-mail addresses for nearly all of the community’s 1,850 members. Plus, with a little browsing, you just might find a plumber to unclog your pipes . . . or a few of your fellow fly fishermen . . . or the name of that new college student with the red hair who just came underway.

That place is the community’s new online directory, an addition to the People of Praise web site. It’s part digital-age address book and part communitywide photo gallery. It includes all People of Praise members, with helpful pictures, maps, work details, hobbies, interests, personal news and a Google-style search bar that puts all this info at your fingertips.

Best of all, whenever you get a new e-mail address or move to a new house, you can update your contact information yourself, so that the directory can remain current. No more waiting around for next year’s printed version.

“Connecting people across branches is the big idea behind the directory,” explains Craig Lent. “This has so many potential uses for us. You can think of a name, and the directory can help you remember where that person lives or works. You can recall a face, and use the directory to find the name. If you’re headed on a visit to another branch, the directory is a natural first stop.”

One:Ten Communications, a LaSalle Company division that specializes in web site development, built the directory at the request of Craig and the community’s board of governors.

“They did a tremendous job,” Craig says. “It’s bright and colorful. It’s easy to navigate, and it’s a great example of how digital technology can help us build unity.”

The directory’s success as a connecting tool ultimately hinges on widespread participation, Craig notes.

“Though it has huge potential, the directory will only be as useful as the information we put into it. I hope that everyone in the community can get involved: by updating profiles, by putting up pictures, by helping men’s and women’s group members who are less comfortable with technology to do the same. The more information and photos we can put into the directory, the more connected we can be. But it’s going to take some work to achieve this.”

Getting in

I know what you’re thinking. Yes, there’s minor panic erupting right now near the top of your stomach. You’re thinking that this all sounds great, but you’re probably going to need your old Peopleofpraise.org user name and password in order to get in on the fun. Okay, that crumpled-up sticky note you scribbled it down on three years ago is . . . well, it’s . . .

Relax. Take a deep breath. There’s hope.

If you have an e-mail address, and it’s listed in your branch’s directory, you can use it to get into the new online directory. Start out at the Peopleofpraise.org home page and click the word “directory” at the top of the page. You’ll arrive at the directory’s home page, where there’s a link to a simple form. Just type in your e-mail address on the form. If it matches the one on file, the directory will immediately e-mail you a link that you can use to get in. Once you’re in, you can create your new user name and password.

Note: this new user name and password will replace your old one and serve to get you into other parts of Peopleofpraise.org too, like your branch’s home page or the Center for Christian Studies file library.

If you don’t have an e-mail address listed in your branch’s directory, just type in your contact information, including an e-mail address. In about a day, someone on the directory support team will e-mail you a link that will let you log in.
Now that you’re inside, let’s take a look at some of this new directory’s features.

**Filling Out Your Profile**

After you log in, the directory will transport you to your profile page. This is a page of the directory expressly dedicated to, well, . . . you!

At first, you’ll notice that your page has only a little bit of information listed: your name, address, phone number and perhaps an e-mail address. But you can add a lot more information to that. (In fact, the more information you add, the more useful the directory as a whole will be to your brothers and sisters.)

Start by clicking on the “edit” link that appears next to your name.

If your contact information is wrong, you can easily fix it. You can also type in more phone numbers (like work or cell-phone numbers) and add more addresses (work, a lake home, etc.).

You can enter professional information (e.g., self-employed carpenter or lawyer or tax accountant). You can list as many hobbies and interests as you’d like (surfing, quilting, archery, pantomime, etc.).

In the “about me” field, you can write a short paragraph describing yourself. Later you might update it from time to time with personal news. (I just graduated from the University of Minnesota, or, We’re expecting child number three in August, etc.)

If you want to change your user name and password, you can do that too, any time you’d like. Start by clicking on the “account” tab.

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**Uploading a Picture**

Right now the directory has just a few profiles with a picture in them. It needs many more of our faces to become really useful as a memory-jogging tool, and we hope there will soon be hundreds of pictures.

If you already have a digital picture of yourself, adding it is simple. From your profile page, click on the “edit” link and then click on the word “picture.” You can browse through your computer and pick out a nice photo of yourself (head shots work best), and then click the “upload” button.

If you don’t have a picture already, perhaps you could seek out someone in your men’s group or women’s group with a digital camera. Branches and areas might consider setting up photo booths at their meetings as a way to help those who don’t own cameras.

**Searching**

One of the directory’s most potentially powerful features is its search bar, located in the top left-hand corner of every page. Want to find everyone in the community whose first name is Joe? Just type in “Joe” and hit “enter.” (By the way, there are 15 Joes in the community.) Want to know who plays the guitar? Type in “guitar.” You can search for names, hobbies, interests, occupations, anything that comes to mind. Of course, again, the power of the search bar depends on the level of everyone’s participation in the directory. If you don’t find many results for the thing you’re looking for, consider updating your own page and encouraging folks you know to update theirs.

(Continued on next page)
Browsing by Branch or Area

On the left side of every directory page, there’s a green-bordered navigation box containing a list of all the community’s branches and divisions. Click on a branch name and you’ll go to a page displaying the first few names on that branch’s roster, in alphabetical order, along with their photos and basic contact information. Clicking on the “next page” link at the bottom of the page will yield more names farther down the alphabet.

If you’re interested in browsing through the photographs of branch members, click on “photo view” at the top of the page. Or, if you want to see a condensed list—branch members’ names without the photos—click on “list view.”

You can also browse through the names and photos of one particular area or division within a branch. Start by clicking on the branch’s name in the green-bordered box. If that branch has areas or divisions, a list of them will appear. Then click on the area you’re interested in exploring.

F. A. Q.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I find the new directory?

Start by typing www.peopleofpraise.org into your web browser. At the top of the page, click on the word “directory.” This will take you to the directory home page, where you can begin logging in. (See the “Getting in” section in this article for details.)

What if I need more help logging in or working with my profile?

First, try talking to someone in your branch who is computer-savvy, perhaps your branch’s local site administrator. The directory also has a help page, located at https://directory.peopleofpraise.org/help/. Finally, you can always e-mail the directory support team at the address directory@peopleofpraise.org.

I like my paper directory. Is my branch going to stop printing one?

The directory is not meant as a replacement for printed directories. The decision about whether and when to print a paper directory rests with each branch.

Can I print out information from the directory?

Not at this time.

What about information security?

Banks and large e-commerce web sites like Amazon.com use a security system called Secure Socket Layer to encrypt user names and passwords in order to prevent eavesdropping. Our directory does this as well. Also, like banking web sites, the directory will log you out automatically after a few hours, if you forget to log out on your own.

Note: the single biggest thing we can do to protect information in the directory is to keep user names and passwords strictly confidential. That way, only community members can get in.

Finally, the directory prohibits using community members’ information for mass e-mailing or for commercial purposes (See below.)

Are there any restrictions on what I can do with this information?

Here’s the directory’s appropriate use policy (online at https://directory.peopleofpraise.org/privacy/):

The online People of Praise directory contains contact information and personal information for community members. It has two purposes: to foster informal contacts and friendships among members of the People of Praise, and to facilitate the communication of official People of Praise matters. Information in this directory may not be used to generate mass mailings for commercial purposes or unsolicited mass e-mails of any type. All contact and personal information in this directory is private. It may not be given to a third party without permission from the individual involved. Information in this directory may never be sold to a third party.

Do children and high-school students have pages on the directory?

The current version of the directory is for underway and covenanted members of the community only. Children and high-school students cannot have directory profiles at this time unless they’re underway.
LifeNotes

The LifeNotes page in V&B is the place to spread the word about key events and milestones, new babies, adoptions, college graduations, awards (academic or work-related), major promotions, accomplishments (sports, professional, hobby), retirement or job changes. Send items to Tom Noe at veritas@trinityschools.org. When in doubt, send it in!

- Peter and Sarah Hammer (Amherst, NY) are sharing the happy news of God’s gift of Isaac Robert, born December 8.

- Congratulations to Michael Coney (South Bend), who graduated in December from the University of Minnesota with a B.S. degree in mechanical engineering.

- Congratulations to Mary Carolyn Gaffney (St. Paul), who graduated in December from the University of Minnesota with a B.S. degree in biological sciences and business management.

- Michael Coney has been transferred from Servant Branch to the South Bend branch, effective this February.

- Congratulations to Sean Connolly and Gretchen Rolland (both South Bend), who were married at Holy Cross Catholic Church in South Bend on January 3.

From the Executive Office:

Vancouver/Portland:

Congratulations to Mark and Heather Ronayne, who made the covenant of the People of Praise on June 8, 2008. Since they were longtime members of the Vancouver/Portland branch, they chose to make the covenant there, just before their transfer to the New Orleans branch.

Jo Clark, Jeannie Dang, Ann Davis, Carmen Fraga and Stephanie Justen have been elected as handmaids, effective January 9, 2009.

From left, Heather Ronayne, Charlie Fraga (Vancouver/Portland), Mark Ronayne.

Branch life in Grenada. Above left: Branch Christmas celebration in the Jeremiahs’ back yard. Middle top: Sister Marcel, a friend of the community, with Edwardlina Sylvester, celebrating Grenada’s 25th anniversary as a branch of the People of Praise. Middle bottom: Dominic Jeremiah. Above right: A hillside in Grenada.

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“From generation to generation we will recount thy praise” (Ps. 79:13).