THE PEOPLE OF PRAISE • "CHRIST IN YOU, THE HOPE OF GLORY."
On Meditations

An Interview with Overall Coordinator Craig Lent

At the most recent Leaders’ Conference for Men (March, 2009), you taught a specific method for making meditations. Why are you teaching this type of prayer?

When the board of governors met in June, 2008, we decided to respond to a desire for increased friendship with God that we saw growing in the community. For many people, this desire came from attending the retreats on the love of God that Paul DeCelles and Mary Frances Sparrow developed.

Making meditations on the life of Christ has been a practice for many centuries in Christianity, and it has been a practice in the People of Praise since our earliest days. The board worked to put this tradition into a format that we could teach throughout the community—a method that would be accessible to ordinary working adults and sustainable over the long term. The method is based on the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola, and its purpose is growth in friendship with God.

What’s your plan? Will everybody in the community get to learn this method for making meditations?

Yes, our goal is for everyone to have a chance to learn and practice this method—to experience its fruits and decide how best to incorporate meditations into everyday life. At the same time, making these meditations isn’t a new requirement.

What’s the schedule for teaching the method?

This fall, I’ve taught it via retreats in northern Virginia, Oahu and South Bend. Kevin Ranaghan will be doing this too, as he travels to branches this fall and winter. Some of the leaders who attended the conference here or will be teaching the method in their branches. Also, next March, the Leaders’ Conference for Women will focus on the meditations.

It takes some time to teach a practice to the whole community, and in this case we’re not just aiming to convey a one-time retreat experience, but a method that requires skill and practice and has a long-term payoff.

Could you talk more about the goals?

The most basic goal is growing in knowledge and love of the Lord. We all know that you have to invest time and effort to really get to know someone well, and it’s no different with the Lord. Meditations require a block of time and they give a structure for that time. They ask us to gaze directly on the Lord, to watch him in action, to witness the unfolding of his personality. All of this requires taking our focus off our own crises and concerns for a time.

So it’s different from praying about the things you’re most concerned about, for example.

Yes. In fact, it’s rarely a good idea to focus exclusively on problem-solving, even in prayer. In the 21-31 method we teach in our Christian Living Series, for example, praying about personal concerns is one of several elements, along with praise, repentance, thanksgiving, praying for passages, etc. All these elements are important in prayer.

With these meditations, it’s essential to put personal concerns aside during the first part, when you’re trying to imagine a scene from Scripture. Of course, we’re always eager to hear what the Lord has to say about the very personal things we’re dealing with at the moment, and sometimes these things will come up during the conversation part of a meditation.

When you want to get to know someone, you’re not always talking about your own concerns; sometimes you’ve got to be with that other person and let that person set the agenda. Likewise, we should try to focus on what the Lord is dealing with, to get to know his mind and heart.

How do meditations fit in with other types of prayer?

They don’t replace other types of prayer, and I’m not recommending that people phase out their tried and true methods for daily personal prayer and phase in an exclusive program of meditations. Our goal with meditations is to add this method of prayer to our base of knowledge, a tool that has the particular purpose of growing in friendship.

How would community members incorporate these meditations into daily life?

When people ask that, I normally recommend looking for two hours in their week that they can devote to these meditations. For busy, working people that seems a reasonable pattern. One big goal is sustainability. This method pays off not just in the present, but over time, in a slow and steady growth of knowledge and love.

On retreats, you’ve distributed a packet with 55 meditations, with topics ranging from the announcement of Jesus’ birth to the days after Pentecost. Are people supposed to start at the beginning and work their way through?

Approach the list any way you like: start at the beginning, somewhere in the middle, or skip around at random. For beginners, I normally recommend starting with some of the meditations based on the public ministry of Jesus. Jesus is the central character in these stories, and
that’s helpful when you’re trying to learn the method.

**Any other advice for beginners?**

It’s helpful to be part of a discussion group where everyone does the same meditation and then gets together to share about it. We can glean tips and ideas for how to direct our imaginations in the future.

I was surprised to discover how valuable it can be to repeat a meditation two or even three times . . . or more. Often, the first time through, a meditation is hard—it requires great mental effort to construct the scene in your mind. But when you do it a second time, you have the benefit of your previous work. The scene is more vivid and you can focus more on the Lord.

**How does somebody listen to the Lord in the conversation part?**

This is a tough question because people hear the Lord in many different ways. Listening for complete sentences can be somewhat limiting. Or you can find yourself straining, but just hearing the water running in the pipes in the house!

God often reveals himself in the way you’re moved. This has to do with the fact that the Holy Spirit is present in you. He is involved in your imagination and in the movements in your heart as you experience the scene. For example, you might be very moved by the fact that Jesus gives Matthew the tax collector a new lease on life.

That movement of your mind and heart could be the Lord communicating with you. So it’s a good idea to pay attention to what’s going on in your heart and imagination.

**How do meditations fit in with the rest of community life?**

The Lord still calls us to build cities, to celebrate the Lord’s Day, to care for brothers and sisters, to run Trinity Schools and so on. Meditations aren’t meant to distract us from these tasks but to encourage us and strengthen our resolve as we follow the Lord.

It’s rarely a good idea to be acting only out of allegiance to a particular pattern or habit, even if it’s a very good pattern. Rather, we want to be responding to the person of the Lord, to do what he is asking us to do, and that’s one thing that meditations can help us with.

**That’s a longstanding practice in the community—acting in response to a prompting of the Holy Spirit.**

Yes, we’ve done some amazing things by listening to the Lord’s promptings these past 38 years. We’ve started three Trinity Schools. We’ve run thousands of small prayer meetings and some very large international conferences. Some of us have moved many miles, leaving homes and families, and we’re still on the move in Allendale and the South Side of Indianapolis. The knowledge and love of the Lord that well up in us when we make meditations will help us as we respond to the Lord this year and for the next 38 years of our life in the People of Praise. ■

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—Craig Lent
KINGSTON

Twenty-two men and boys traded homes for tents in Jamaica’s Cranbrook Farms nature preserve this May. They played soccer and badminton and swam at the beach. “It was a relaxing time—a great time to catch up with my brothers and goof around,” says Joseph Mutidjo. The group also held a competition with several events: a three-legged race, a piggyback race and a tug-of-war. “The competition was fierce,” Joseph says with a smile, “but mostly among the adults, even though there was no prize except the glory of victory!”

COLORADO SPRINGS

It’s become a tradition in Colorado Springs for Sean White to lead summer backpacking trips into the Rocky Mountains. Sean, Jon Grams, Kelly McMullan and six girls hiked near Monarch Pass this July. The crew split wood and learned to fish in gorgeous weather. The next weekend, Sean was back with his son and a smaller group of men and boys.

In recent summers Mike and Malia Busekrus (Oahu) and their family have swapped houses for a week with a family in Colorado Springs. This year the lucky family was Gerald and Romona Lange. Mike got to visit his brother Rick and his family while the Langes got a house to use in Hawaii. Here Mike chats with Louis Grams at a branch picnic.

From left: Shannon Triplett, Mackenna Triplett, Beth Luke and Elise White atop a 12,000-foot peak overlooking Upper Water-dog Lake.

This musical jam session began in the early evening and lasted past sunset as the men and boys hammered out some Jamaican folk songs and other tunes.
In July, the Muncie branch Boy Scout troop traveled to the Porcupine Mountains in Michigan’s upper peninsula for their annual summer backpacking trip. Under the able direction of Scoutmaster Peter Walters, four adults and nine boys aged 10 to 18 hiked over 30 miles, setting up a new camp each day.

The older boys took turns leading daily prayer. On the last day, as they stood on the highest peak in the area, overlooking Lake Superior on one side and Lake of the Clouds on the other, Taylor Davis prepared to read a Scripture passage mentioning eagle’s wings. Just then an eagle flew past. “It seemed to be a sign of God’s love for us,” says Terry Bomkamp.

The Oahu branch held their annual Family Camp over Memorial Day weekend at Pu’ukahea Baptist Camp in Waianae, HI. Forty adults and 20 children enjoyed capture the flag, a scavenger hunt, arts and crafts, time on the beach, a campfire and a talent show. Mike and Malia Busekrus served as camp directors.
SOUTH BEND

Over 200 people attended the South Bend branch’s annual ice cream social, held in the screened-in pavilion at their community center on July 10. Branch members consumed 24 gallons of ice cream while chatting, playing football and basketball and playing in the sandbox.

Among those enjoying the perfect weather were three members of the Kelly family: Terry Kelly and his younger sisters Alice Staffelbach (left) and Patty Barrett, who among them have 16 children. Their youngest sister, Margaret Crimmins, is a member of the northern Virginia branch and the mother of five.

VANCOUVER/PORTLAND

Twenty-six Vancouver/Portland branch members collaborated to create an elaborate day camp for 28 branch children of all ages for several days in early August. The camp sprouted up at various locations throughout their cities and the campers bowled, boated, swam, hiked, raced, baked, played volleyball, pitched pennies, cake-walked, ate pancakes and held a chariot race.


Below: No camp would be complete without camp songs, sung after Lord’s Day dinner, as a closing to the day’s activities.

Above: Lena Glover reads Bible stories about trusting in God. Saturday afternoon all the young children, their parents and other branch members came to Cougar Camp for activities.
The Buffalo branch ran its largest-ever camp—150 campers and 48 staff from 13 branches—at Camp Li-Lo-Li in Randolph, NY, near the Allegheny Mountains. The record-setting attendance was accompanied by another first—daily rain. The 8th-grade boys braved the weather in three-sided lean-tos and learned to build fires in spite of wet wood.

Top: Valerie Carnevale (Indianapolis) walks near a caboose parked at the camp. The caboose is a favorite site for sleepovers. Left: Older campers enjoyed their meals in a tent because of the record-setting number of People of Praise campers and counselors. Far left: Maurice Valerio (New Orleans) and George Kane (Indianapolis) join in a dodgeball game. Sam Craiker (northern Virginia) is in the background.

Middle left: Sam Craiker (northern Virginia, left), Justin Jeremiah (Grenada, right) and other young boys grapple with a low ropes game called the spider web. Left: Luke Kabele (Vancouver/Portland) enjoys a zip line that carries campers from land to an island in the middle of a man-made lake. Above: Lisa Roth (Indianapolis) carries a shovel full of topsoil towards a newly-planted maple tree. Lisa and her husband Dave led the ninth- and tenth-graders in a tree planting service project for the camp.
Ninety-five adults and teens ran a camp for 111 children June 7-12 at Camp Tannadoonah near Vandalia, MI. In addition to the usual small group activities like hiking, swimming and crafts, there were a number of much anticipated camp-wide events: Tournament Tuesday, capture the flag, carnival and field day.

Larry Day assists third-grader Grace Behrens in playing the shofar.

Top: Sixth-grader Will Sheffey (front left) enjoys an inner-tube ride with friends Jace Longenecker (right) and Josh Thomas (top). Above: Kathy Cramer (left) and Grace Thomas at a rock-climbing wall.

Joe Massa carries a bucket of sand through "The Hood" obstacle course. Joe was the fastest boy to complete the course.

Above: Beatrice Hall (Colorado Springs) takes on the Challenge Course, supported by her team, Julia Walker (Muncie) (left), Shelby Smith and Maria Kane. Jenny Slowiak looks on (far left).

Far right: When black clouds threatened to douse one evening campfire, the whole camp prayed and the bad weather cleared up just in time for the evening’s festivities.
On August 8, the water pump at Camp Phillipo broke—meaning no showers or working toilets for the 217 campers and 77 staff slated to arrive for Servant Camp the next day. “We were told it would be 36 hours before it was fixed,” says program director Jeanne Oberg, “but we prayed and within 12 hours water was running again.”

Later in the week, someone accidentally let the water out of the camp swimming pool during a routine cleaning, putting the pool out of commission for the remainder of a very hot week. But the camp staff came to the rescue, bringing out a large inflatable water slide that campers enjoyed perhaps even more than the pool.

Top: Campers and counselors process to the closing ceremonies on the camp’s final evening.
Above far left: Seventh-grader Ellie Krause finger a tiny toad.
Above left: With little money for commercially printed camp t-shirts this year, junior counselors took matters into their own hands, pressing hundreds of shirts with hand-made designs. This is one of four screens used to produce the 325 shirts.

Sixth-grader William Hrbacek conquers the climbing tower.

Harold Coulter (right) has been taking Servant campers on bike rides most years since 1994. Here, he leads the sixth-grade girls.

Younger campers, carried piggyback style, yell directions to their blindfolded older friends during this race.
Missionary work in Indianapolis moved forward in two areas of the city this summer: the Triangle area near the joint campus of Indiana and Purdue University, and the South Side. Crews in the Triangle worked to renovate a two-story home on Montcalm Street, already gutted by previous volunteers. They hung drywall, mudded joints, put down flooring and installed bathroom sinks, showers and fixtures. A household of single women is now living in the finished house and focusing on outreach to the IUPUI campus.

On the South Side, the community and some community members have begun purchasing houses for missionaries and neighbors to live in as part of our city-building efforts. Crews worked to gut one home, painted and installed gutters at another home and reroofed a third house where missionaries Ray and Robin Gonzalez live.

Eighty volunteers traveled to Indianapolis throughout the spring and summer, hailing from eight different branches. For the first time, teams included incoming high-school freshmen.
Left: Calla Couch (South Bend) works on the front porch of a house on Montcalm Street in the Triangle. Below left: Tom Melton (Corvallis) tuck-points the foundation of a house in the Triangle. Below: Charles Chow (Indianapolis, left) helps out in the food line at the block party.

Left: Action team members spent their evenings discussing our city-building plans.
Sixty-two Action volunteers helped repair homes and run a day camp for Allendale neighborhood children this spring and summer. Laura Brummer and Kevin McShane (both Allendale) led the work crews and took on a variety of small jobs aimed at making big quality-of-life improvements for neighbors. “It’s awesome when we can do a simple, inexpensive project that makes a huge difference in a person’s daily life,” says Laura.

The crews built an outdoor stair railing so one elderly neighbor could begin using her front door again without fear of falling. In another home they replaced a bedroom ceiling that had partially collapsed at the foot of the bed of the woman who slept there. Crews also installed security lights and a new first-floor shower and painted a wheelchair ramp.

This year’s camp ran for six weeks, under the direction of Claire Holovaty (South Bend) and Luke Olson (Allendale). The camp drew 28 neighborhood boys and 30 girls, with typical daily attendance running about half that number. Boys learned to build (and eventually erupt) papier-mâché volcanoes. Girls prepared and baked daily snacks and enjoyed creating friendship bracelets and sock puppets.

One of the counselors’ favorite stories involved a girl who took another girl’s marker. “This is Jesus’ camp,” the second girl said. “We don’t steal markers.” The first girl immediately returned the pen.

Above right: From left, John Zimmel (Servant Branch), Adelmo Gracia (Servant Branch) and Thomas Behrens (South Bend) raise a piece of sheetrock to repair a neighbor’s ceiling.
Right: Allendale girls eat chicken and watermelon at a barbecue attended by neighbors and members of the Action team and the Shreveport branch.
“This is Jesus’ camp,” the second girl said. “We don’t steal markers.”

Above: Shelly Gilliam (left) traveled from the South Side of Indianapolis to serve in Allendale, where she met Kaliyah (right).
Left: Mary Kate McShane (South Bend) and one of the campers try reading together. Often campers arrived early for daily activities in hopes that one of the staff might read to them.
CROSSWORD PUZZLE

by Tom Noe

Editor’s Note: Despite the fact that we’d never put a cross word in V&B, we thought a crossword puzzle would be fun. Many of the clues are pretty easy, but be prepared to stretch your minds to get the harder ones. Good luck!

ACROSS

2. Including members of many churches.
6. “No more like children, tossed to and ___.“
8. Don’t bushel it!
11. Woman elected to assist the branch coordinators.
14. If a door was closed, Shakespeare would ___ it.
16. Half a Trinity School name.
17. Don’t open one between yourself and God.
18. City-building target; two words, abbr.
20. This usually puts a stop to prayer.
23. Paul of Tarsus was ____ out for the Lord.
24. “_ ____ All 60-across Faithful”; 2 words.
25. Buy your books from the LaSalle __; abbr.
27. English form of “charism.”
29. What light does.
32. POP inits. *
33. ____ of the Lord.
34. One way we 64-across God.
38. French article.
39. Ratio taught at Trinity Schools.
41. What the lilies of the field don’t do.
42. Adj. for the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
45. Half a Trinity School name.
46. The first half of a fly; also the second half.
47. We should be ___ 96-down the Spirit.
48. Blessed are they.
50. The Son of Man wears one in Rev. 1.
52. Favorite Apostle of the Beatles.
53. Month of first covenant in 1971; abbr.
54. Be _____ with the Spirit.
55. POP inits.*
56. 12-down in the ____s’ den.
57. POP inits. *
58. It clings closely.
60. “24-across, All __ Faithful.”
63. Men’s and women’s ______.
64. Part of our name.
65. “I will ____ with the mind also”; Corinthians.
66. ____ in tongues.
69. “Take neither purse ___ shoes” (KJV).
70. The Bible, at last.
71. Blessed are they.
72. Our high-schoolers are ready for this.
75. Ground cover in southern branches.
76. __ the Spirit leads.
77. They were filled with the Spirit on 80-across.
78. Ancient platter (1940s); abbr.
83. Tri-branch state.
85. “____ thanks to the Lord, for he is good.”
86. King of Bashan (Num.).
88. POP inits.*
89. We ___ the 42-across gifts.
90. It accompanies those who follow Jesus.
91. POP inits.*
93. The community is made up of __.
95. “Holy __ the Lord.”
96. See 47-across

* Possible POP initials: CCS (Center for Christian Studies), LCW (Leaders Conference for Women), PRP (Provident and Resourceful People), PTI (Pastoral Training Institute), CFS (Christian Formation Series).

Answers on page 19.
I must have met Gary about 30 years ago, at one of the hundreds of potlucks that followed the charismatic prayer meetings I attended with my father and stepmother Jack and Haidy Busekrus (Oahu). I recall gathering around the television with Gary, watching football and listening to expert play-by-play from this loyal University of Hawaii Rainbow fan. He was so manly and big—with a big heart, a big appetite, big smiles and yet he was such a gentle giant. I felt completely comfortable conversing with him.

His big heart was for his ohana, the people he treated like family. Gary cared deeply for his growing boys Gary Paul and Joseph. Later he doted over his grandson Gary Boy at community meetings, sharing his love and concern for him.

Big appetite? . . . well, we local boys love to eat, but Gary certainly put me to shame! I couldn’t even come close!

He was so manly and big—with a big heart, a big appetite, big smiles and yet he was such a gentle giant.
Karl was a strong tower, physically, intellectually and spiritually. His height certainly commanded attention, but he never entered a room with a tall man’s “look at me” attitude, instead taking on the “look at you” approach of a humble man.

He was a college teacher and an expert in the Russian and German languages who served as a substitute in the Muncie and Yorktown school system during his retirement. He loved the kids, and the students loved “Mr. B.” and would often request him as their teacher or greet him with a bear hug (back when that practice was permitted in schools).

He carried over that love to our Muncie branch Boy Scout Troop 77, where he was instrumental in helping many boys achieve the rank of Eagle Scout. Even though he wasn’t interested in camping and didn’t have a son, he came to many father-son campouts and pitched in wherever he was needed, even cooking if necessary. Boys rushed to greet him whenever he arrived at a Scout meeting.

He loved his wife Sandy, their three daughters and five grandchildren. In the 1970s, Karl and Sandy were part of the Cursillo and Marriage Encounter movements and they were among the original 29 members of the Community of Praise, which formed in Muncie in 1978. They continued to be active when that community became a branch of the People of Praise, and made the covenant on April 20, 1986.

A natural teacher, Karl led many Life in the Spirit Seminars, helping people get baptized in the Spirit. He led Pentecost Weekends that brought a large number of people into the community and served as a prayer meeting leader and men’s group head in the Muncie branch.

With a master’s degree in Slavic languages from Indiana University, he often befriended visitors from Slavic countries, introducing them to American life. He used his Russian skills to translate letters that a community family received from Kazakhstan and often helped translate English to Russian for Russian immigrants who needed help at a doctor’s or lawyer’s office.

He taught at Ball State University in Muncie and at nearby Anderson College before his retirement. In a letter to Sandy, one of his public school colleagues said that he and Karl would spend many hours together discussing educational philosophy. He called Karl a tremendous person, educator and colleague.

Karl loved going to breakfast on Saturday mornings with me and Fr. Keane (a priest from our parish). We would try a different restaurant every week and talk about everything: politics, news, sports, Ball State University activities, the latest movies or plays, etc. Since the three of us were each over six feet tall, the “breakfast club” was open to any other man... as long as he met the height requirement!

Thirty-five years ago Karl was seriously ill, and his doctors didn’t know if he would survive. Many people (including many later community members) prayed with and for him then, and he was fully healed.

He died on May 17 after a short bout with cancer. Sandy discovered that his last words in his journal were, “Come, Lord Jesus.”

Now his brothers and sisters in the People of Praise and in the greater Muncie community he served miss him dearly. One of his favorite passages from Scripture was John 15:1-8, which talks about “the vine and the branches.” Karl lived up to those words with a life that bore much good fruit and made all of us better for knowing him.
People of Praise members living in Allendale had reason to rejoice on August 24, when project manager Nathan Barrett signed on the dotted line for eight vacant parcels of land. The purchase was the culmination of five years of effort by Bud Rose (South Bend), who worked with City of Shreveport officials to arrange the purchase. Attorney Dan Brewer (South Bend) helped secure clear title for all the parcels involved.

The deal came as the result of a legal process known as expropriation. When landowners abandon property or fail to pay property taxes, the city government can sell the property to recover the unpaid amounts. Before the city can complete the sale, letters are sent to the owners and a notice is posted in the local newspaper. Those steps and some surprise hurdles—including new laws caused by Hurricane Katrina and a newfound interest in mineral rights that followed skyrocketing oil prices in 2008—made the process last far longer than the one or two years expected.

“It was a wild ride and at times I never thought we’d see the end,” Bud says. “But I’m grateful to God that we made it to this closing.”

Nathan says the new lots will play an important role as our city-building work in the neighborhood expands. “We still have room in our five houses on Yale Avenue for a few more single people, but we’ll need to build more homes to accommodate neighbors and families from other parts of the People of Praise who want to join us in Allendale.”

Property already owned by the community.  Parcels acquired on August 24 or later.  Other neighborhood homes.
Congratulations to Andrew Ride-nour (northern Virginia) and Jenny Aman (Vancouver/Portland), who were married September 12 at Holy Cross Church in Portland.

Marcus and Becca Nayo (South Bend) are spreading the joyful news that their son Marcus Christian was born September 19.

Chris and Mari Dausman (Rockford) are thanking the Lord for the gift of Gianna Clare, who was born September 1.

Dan and Carrie Gonzalez were transferred from the branch in Indianapolis to the branch in northern Virginia August 13.

Louis Grams (Colorado Springs) thanks all the brothers and sisters who have been praying for his health. He had successful surgery on his spine in August, which also eliminated his constant migraine headaches. Praise God! Louis is recovering well. Please continue praying for healing of several other skeletal and nervous system problems.

We join in prayer for the friends and families of Albert Desmarais (Saskatoon), who died at the end of July, of Gail Lee (Servant Branch), who died September 14, and of Paul Korkowski (Servant Branch), who died October 14. Tributes to our brothers and sister will follow in an upcoming issue.

From the Executive Office:
Congratulations to the following members of the community, who recently made the covenant of the People of Praise:

Appleton, October 10, 2009: Marcella Seidl.
Northern Virginia, October 11, 2009: Rebecca Flynn, Rachel Goodling and Therese McNichol.
Rockford, September 20, 2009: Matt Ambrose, Stacy Ambrose and Matt Delaplane.
South Bend, October 4, 2009: Patricia Brewer, Sarah Engles, Laura Ficker and Justin Walters.

Vancouver/Portland, October 18, 2009: Hannah Canef.

Oahu:
Don Busekrua has been appointed to a two-year term as area coordinator, beginning October 1, 2009.

Ron Gouveia has been appointed to a second three-year term as area coordinator, beginning October 1, 2009.

Saskatoon:
Bonnie Roberts was released from the covenant of the People of Praise on September 10, 2009.

Servant Branch:
Barb Cermak was released from the covenant of the People of Praise on September 2, 2009.

South Bend:
Donna Stowe was released from the covenant of the People of Praise on September 17, 2009.
“Refresh my heart in Christ” (Philemon 1:20).

From left, Colleen Murray, Teresa Lynch, Debbie Vaughan, Jackie Louvierre and Natalia Bendele open the Lord’s Day in Shreveport.