

WINTER 2018

CCPPS TODAY

MISSIONARIES OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD



RISE

Faith, family and friends
lift us up when we need
them the most

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Everyday Spirituality

When we were growing up, we had school clothes and everyday clothes, and the two were not the same. As soon as we got off the school bus, my brothers and I would change into everyday clothes and then head outside to whatever adventure we had in mind for that day. We also had church clothes that were set aside for Sundays and special occasions, such as family weddings. They were stiff and usually meant wearing a tie, which I didn't much appreciate. For true comfort, there was nothing like our everyday clothes: worn, soft and familiar.

In this issue of *C.P.P.S. Today*, we explore the lived spirituality of our members, their everyday spirituality. Our Precious Blood spirituality calls us to reach out to others, especially those who need us the most. As Jesus sacrificed everything for us, his brothers and sisters, so too we are to put ourselves out there for people who are crying out for compassion, mercy, peace and justice.

This is how Fr. Rick Nieberding, C.P.P.S., sees his ministry at St. Augustine Church in Minster, Ohio, and St. Joseph Church in nearby Egypt, Ohio. In the cover story, we explore how the parish and the C.P.P.S. priests who have ministered there have lifted up people in times of great trial—times that all of us have experienced or will experience. When we're knocked flat by life, we get back on our feet with the help of others, who are the hands of Christ in our lives. A strong and vibrant Church is alert to the needs of the poor—and that includes those who are poor in spirit, sick or suffering, lonely or heartbroken. That's what happens at St. Augustine, and, I hope, at your parish.

Similarly, you'll read about how Br. Joe Fisher, C.P.P.S., has thrown himself into daily life in the diverse, working-class Old North Dayton neighborhood, not far from our provincial office in downtown Dayton. Br. Joe, who serves as our provincial treasurer, is also part of the neighborhood watch in Old North Dayton and enjoys community events that bring people together. He and other volunteers hope that through their efforts, they're making everyone feel valued and welcomed.

Unlike our Sunday clothes, our spirituality isn't something that we can hang in the closet after Sunday Mass. When we try to live it every day, it enriches the lives of those around us. No one sees the full strength of a parish or a neighborhood until they are in need, and people they barely know come forward to help them out. That's when the light of Christ shines for them and allows them to see faith in action. That's faith with both heart and muscle, and that's the kind of faith we aspire to inspire.

**Between
the Lines**
by Fr. Larry
Hemmelgarn,
C.P.P.S.





RISE

Faith, family and friends
lift us up when we need
them the most

Storms and struggles are part of every life. When it's our turn to go through them, we're not always aware of the powers that are buoying us up: our faith, family and friends, all of which sustain us until God gets us back on the path of light.

Just as people go through struggles and sorrows, thunderbolts that nearly knock them out of the saddle, trials and tribulations—so do parishes, so do towns. And just as people who have been knocked flat can't just stay flat, neither can parishes, neither can towns. They have to stand again, perhaps relearn how to walk. They have to rise up.

Fr. Rick Nieberding, C.P.P.S., knows this. He's seen it at St. Augustine Church in Minster, Ohio, where he is the pastor. Oftentimes, people don't get back on their feet solely through their own power. Their friends and family pull them up. Their faith lifts them up.

"There's no doubt that this is a church that celebrates the cross," said Fr. Nieberding, as he walked the main aisle of St. Augustine. The sanctuary features a mosaic of the crucifixion, the blood that Jesus sacrificed for all of us flowing out of his side, down to the ground, becoming a river from which all

of us can drink.

"Some churches minimize the cross. It's bypassed altogether, or its message is muffled. We don't do that," Fr. Nieberding said. The reason, to him, is clear: through the cross, through the divine sacrifice, people see redemption. They see someone who suffered as they did. They feel Christ's pain. And, in his resurrection, they find hope for their own.

St. Augustine Church itself is a symbol of hope and new life following death and despair. The two-spired church that stands on a high point on Hanover Street was built in 1848, after a cholera epidemic had threatened to wipe out the town.

Minster (population 2,857) was founded as Stallstown in 1832, renamed Minster in 1836. For a while it was home to Fr. Francis de Sales Brunner, C.P.P.S., who first brought the Missionaries of the Precious Blood to the United States in 1844. Early in the town's history, its Catholic citizens—which was



The community’s answer to a deadly cholera epidemic was to build the twin-spired St. Augustine Church.

nearly everybody—worshiped in a log cabin church. But the parish that became St. Augustine wanted something more.

During that construction project, which began in 1848, a cholera epidemic killed 250 people, some of them workers who’d come to the town to help build the Miami-Erie Canal. There were so many victims that they were buried in unmarked graves in the St. Augustine Cemetery.

“And what was the community’s faith response to that tragedy? The people completed their beautiful church, in the middle of nowhere,” Fr. Nieberding said. They had faith that there were better days ahead, that God would fill the church.

Lively Parish Life

God did fill the church. St. Augustine has been a strong parish throughout its long life, with about 1,600 worshippers coming to Mass each weekend, along with another 75 families who worship at nearby St. Joseph Church in Egypt, Ohio, which is part of the Minster cluster. Fr. Nieberding benefits from that commitment to the faith and he nurtures it, paying particular attention to young people to make sure they know they’re welcome in God’s house, which is their house.

In his 17 years at St. Augustine, he has thrown himself into parish life, passing out bubble gum after Mass with

wild abandon; he's among the biggest boosters that the Minster Wildcats have ever had. "I don't fight sports" when scheduling parish events, he said. He keeps close count of the championships won by Minster versus its rival, Marion Local in nearby Maria Stein, where his best friend, Fr. Gene Schnipke, C.P.P.S., is the pastor of a cluster of parishes.

He takes bike rides to the local McDonald's with the younger kids in the summer, treating them to breakfast. He invites high school students to come to Mass before their prom; the church fills up with young people, dressed to the nines, as Fr. Nieberding teases the adults in the congregation: "Don't you ever dress up for Mass?" He tells couples who are falling in love not to dream of a destination wedding—they should plan to tie the knot at St. Augustine, and the parish celebrates their unions and the babies that follow with bulletin boards in the back of church, plastered with photos of happy couples and newly baptized babies.

He reminds the people that God is at the heart of their parish and their lives, that the twin spires of the church don't just point up to thin air, but to the heavens, from where comes their strength. "We have eight clocks on the church towers, and I tell people, 'Let's keep the clocks on

the outside,'" he said. "Let's not let an obsession with our human schedules creep in."

Life is good at St. Augustine and in Minster—except when it isn't.

A Tragic Loss

On March 8, 1976, St. Augustine's parishioners woke up to the news that eight Minster High School students had been killed in a horrific traffic accident along a country road. Everybody in town knew the students, knew their families. Stunned with grief, the town turned toward St. Augustine to help it find a way back to the light.

Brenda Moorman Boeke was one of the people whose life was changed forever by the tragedy. Her sister, Becky, was one of the eight killed.

Becky was one of another group of eight: the eight Moorman girls, daughters of Virgil and Alice Moorman. Their parents had paired the girls off, giving each set of two the same middle name. Brenda was right after Becky in the family line-up and they shared the middle name of Ann.

In that accident, Boeke lost a sister who was not only like a twin, but the one who had led the pair. "I felt very alone. I'd lost my partner," said Boeke, who was in the eighth grade at the time. "For

the next two weeks at school, everybody called me Becky, because it was so fresh on their minds. Probably, they'd called me Becky before that, but it had so much more meaning after the accident."

It's hard to describe, more than 40 years later, the shock and grief that the town experienced. The accident made national news; larger cities around Minster sent reporters and photographers to cover the funerals. Those who had not lost a loved one found that tragedy times eight required an almost superhuman response, as they attempted to comfort those who had. The Missionaries in ministry at the time were Fr. Joseph Pax, C.P.P.S., who called for help from his brother priests in the area, and Fr. Greg Moorman, C.P.P.S., who was the Moorman girls' uncle. The priests and the parish did what they could to channel an outpouring of sympathy and love toward the devastated families.

Some of that took the form of cash donations. In the months that followed the accident, the families gathered once a month to decide how to allocate the donations, Boeke said. Her dad, Virgil, called the meetings and usually led them. Once they had dispensed with business, of course their thoughts turned to their mutual loss, and then the more important business of comforting each other

could begin.

It must have seemed as if they never would heal. But eventually, the families began to climb out of that darkest of all pits.

"There are two founding pillars of our faith that get us through: we wholeheartedly believe that there is a reason why things happen, and we believe that God is in control," Boeke said. "Jesus has provided us with the example that we're supposed to live by, including the suffering. And the Holy Spirit is going to get us there. I think that getting through a tragedy or any kind of failure or setback in life is based on the trinity: God's got a plan, follow Jesus as a role model to help you understand what you're supposed to do, and the Holy Spirit is going to get you there."

Signs and Symbols

As for Brenda Boeke, the Holy Spirit did get her there and is continuing to guide her. Now a mother of two and a grandmother of four, she is also the superintendent of Minster Local Schools, a career toward which she felt Becky pushing her over the years. In her career as an educator, she's seen plenty of kids who have suffered a loss, sometimes at the same age as she was when she lost her sister. She used to try to tell them about



Brenda Boeke at Minster's Memorial Field.

What I see, time and time again, is that it's all about support. There are people in our community who see your needs and take care of them without you even knowing it. — Brenda Boeke

Becky—but then she came to understand that they didn't need to hear her story to sense that she understood something about what they were going through.

It's important for her to be present to people who are suffering. "What I see, time and time again, is that it's all about support. There are people in our community who see your needs and take care of them without you even knowing it," she said. "What that does then is make you feel like you belong. Everybody needs to feel like they belong. And there are always people who

want you to feel like you belong. And they do that by taking care of your needs in a time of tragedy."

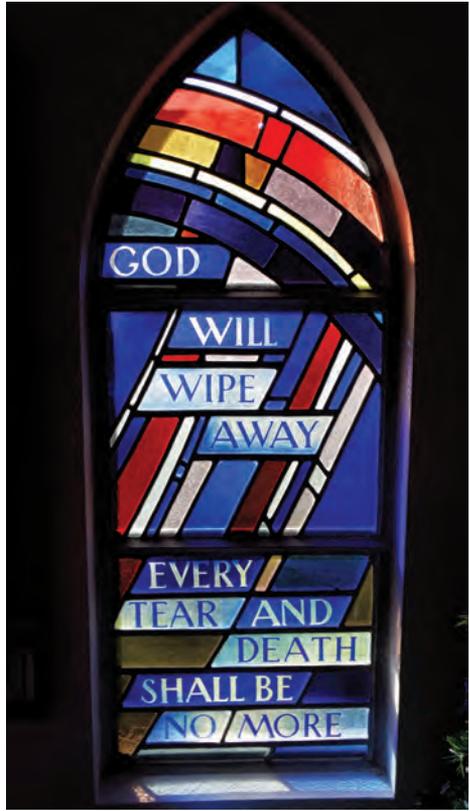
After the cholera epidemic, there was a new church. After the accident, there was another building project. Minster Schools had a fundraising campaign underway for a football field and athletic complex. The families of the eight students donated toward the campaign to finish the project. The University of Dayton donated bleachers it was discarding, and the town pitched in to put them up at the

stadium. In September 1976, six months after the accident, Minster Memorial Stadium was dedicated. The eight teens' names were listed in a monument that remains out front: Joy Brandewie, Michael Kemper, Tony Kemper, Rebecca Moorman, Barbara Olding, Lester Ranly, Kenneth Sommer, Scott Westerheide.

A football stadium may not seem like a fitting memorial until you understand that the whole town gathers there on Friday nights in the fall. They can't get through the gate without seeing the names, without remembering those who are gone but not forgotten. There's also an oak tree there, planted in memory of Virgil Moorman, who died in 1991. The oak represents his strength to his family and to his faith family.

Memorial Stadium stands on the north side of town, and St. Augustine's cemetery on the south side. It's a town that's embraced by those it has lost but still esteems. With the church rising up in the middle, as a focal point and a sanctuary.

All are staunch symbols of the truth of life, and of everlasting truths, said Fr. Nieberding. "People look for signs and symbols as reminders of their faith. Sometimes the things they see are merely coincidental, but they don't see them that way,"



Window at St. Augustine Church.

he said. "Through the eyes of faith, we see new life. The longer we live, the more we see it. We experience it in the seasons; we know that after the death of winter will come the new life of spring. The crucifixion is a symbol of that. We experience it in the Eucharist, in the death and rising of our Lord. Out of death comes new life, and out of the deepest despair comes hope."



The Power of Prayer

It seems like we've been praying for vocations for so long, but to no avail. What's the point?" I've been asked this more than once, and my answer has varied over the years, but it has always been to encourage people to keep praying. The prayers are effective; we have to keep praying.

When I think back on my own story and all the years that I ignored God's call in my life, I am always grateful for all the people who held me and my vocation in prayer. I know that my mother and countless others at St. Barnabas in Alameda, Calif., prayed fervently not only for vocations in general but for my vocation in particular. I know that it is through their prayers that I eventually heard the call and found the courage to say yes.

It can easily seem like our constant intercessions for vocations are falling on deaf ears, but they aren't. God hears them and is using them to work in the hearts of men and women all over the Church. We have to keep interceding and trust that God is at work. It's not our place to question how God is using our prayers.

Having said that, I also think that sometimes we aren't bold enough in our prayers for vocations. Sometimes we pray for vocations in the abstract, hoping that God will call men and women from

somewhere over the rainbow. I encourage parishes to get specific and pray for vocations "from among the young men and women of our parish." I've also encouraged parents and grandparents to pray that God might reach into their family to call out a priest, brother or sister.

As a vocation director, I have a list of men for whom I pray daily because they are actively discerning their vocation. But I also keep a list of young men and women I know who I think

(Continued on page 16)

**Call and Answer
by Fr. Steve Dos
Santos, C.P.P.S.**



Praying for Vocations During Lent

Fr. Steve suggests: Pick one young man or woman in your parish whom you think might make a good priest, brother or sister and pray specifically for their vocation throughout Lent. Perhaps even offer acts of sacrifice or penance for them.

Then sometime during Holy Week or Easter, let them know that you've been praying for them, and why you chose them.

NEW HOPE

in Old North Dayton



Br. Joe Fisher, C.P.P.S., right, with Matt Tepper and Jennifer Evans in Evans Original Bakery, in the heart of Old North Dayton.

When you set a fire, you know where it starts but you never know where it's going to stop.

For instance, a fire set by an arsonist blazed through the U.S. International Foods grocery store on Troy Street in the Old North Dayton neighborhood on October 19. It started in the basement and destroyed the store, rendering the building unusable for the grocer and for the small businesses on the second floor. It could have killed somebody, but it didn't. It roared through the store and was extinguished by firefighters.

The response to that

arson, a crime that remains under investigation, was a strengthening of bonds in the community, where people had already been at work to bring people together, said Br. Joe Fisher, C.P.P.S. He lives in Old North Dayton, which is east of downtown Dayton, and attends St. Adalbert Church there, a former Precious Blood parish where he feels at home.

What leapt up after the flames were put out was bigger than the fire, and better than the fire. It was community spirit, stoked by neighbors and fed by compassion. It encouraged

healing in the neighborhood, and everyone can draw near to be warmed by it.

“Our neighborhood watch group along with the neighborhood business association has really been working hard to cut down on crime in the neighborhood,” said Br. Joe, who is part of the neighborhood watch, in addition to serving as the provincial treasurer of the Cincinnati Province of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. “We need to do this not just for our own safety, but for the safety of our future, the children.”

After the arson, volunteers felt that they had to reach out to start to set things right. They couldn’t prevent the arson, so they sought to help the neighborhood recover from it.

“So we had a prayer vigil. We had over 100 people gather on a Saturday night for the vigil, which took place in the parking lot next to the burned-out building,” Br. Joe said. “The imam from the local mosque was there, and so was the Lutheran pastor, and a Baptist minister, and me—and we all offered prayers for the people who had lost their businesses,” which included the grocer, a seamstress, and a transportation dispatcher who’d both rented space on the building’s second floor.

“We wanted everybody

to see that people of different faiths could come together, to know that we’re all brothers and sisters and we need to live in peace. People of all different backgrounds were there, and I think the people who owned the building were grateful.”

Inspiring a Neighborhood

The prayer vigil was just one of many ways that neighbors are reaching out to each other in Old North Dayton. Such efforts are a priority of Matt Tepper and Jennifer Evans, who operate Evans Original Bakery across the street from U.S. International Foods. Tepper and Evans have taken the lead in the neighborhood watch and in the neighborhood association, of which Tepper is the president. It’s volunteer work that could benefit everybody in Old North Dayton, if they all pitch in.

“You have to inspire a neighborhood to come together. That can result in a lot of positive things,” Tepper said. The grocery store, along with the bakery and the library, which is right across the street, are the heart of Old North Dayton and are places where people like to gather. When Tepper and Evans and some others noticed that they weren’t always gathering for good reasons, they organized the neighborhood watch to keep an



York Street, the main street of the neighborhood.

“In the simplest form, it’s about being a good neighbor.” — Br. Joe Fisher, C.P.P.S.

eye out for criminals and try to keep their neighbors safe.
Br. Joe has become a stalwart at neighborhood activities, Tepper said. “Br. Joe is a natural fit in this neighborhood,” he said. “He’s helped out a lot.”

The neighborhood association has organized major efforts, like the prayer vigil after the fire, and it also helps out at a summer festival with food and entertainment called the Taste of Old North Dayton. The festival has proven popular amongst all the neighborhood’s ethnic groups and gives everyone a chance to mix and mingle. Formerly a neighborhood of Poles, Lithuanians, Germans, Slovaks and other Eastern Europeans, Old North Dayton now includes

Hispanics, African-Americans and immigrants from Turkey and Africa. It’s important that they all feel at home, that they all feel welcomed, Br. Joe said; the more the various groups reach out to each other, the stronger the neighborhood becomes.

Several times a year, volunteers also get together for neighborhood cleanups, working on a Saturday morning to pick up trash and spruce up the streets. Others have volunteered for training to recognize substance abuse and encourage people to consider counseling or rehabilitation.

One-on-One Efforts

There are also smaller efforts

aimed at serving just a few people at a time. In her family's bakery, Jennifer offers a free daily donut and drink—"Water, juice or milk, no soft drinks," she clarifies—to young people who stop in and play a game that increases their word or math power. She got the idea when she noticed that young people couldn't add up the prices of the bakery's products in their head. She wanted to give them a friendly place to sharpen their mental skills.

"There are a lot of people in this neighborhood who are struggling," said Br. Joe. "You can tell they're not wealthy, but they're working hard, trying to make the most of what they've got, trying to live the American dream."

The sincere efforts of Old North Dayton's neighbors are spreading, healing hurts. "It's a quiet little neighborhood, and we want everyone to enjoy it," Tepper said. "In the summer, you see families out walking with their little ones in strollers."

It's a neighborhood where people could choose to be strangers, to look down when they're walking. Instead, with the help of volunteer efforts, they are looking up, building bridges.

"A lot of good things are going on here," Br. Joe said. "But we still have struggles. When you

read about Pope Francis' concern for the poor—you really see that lived out in our neighborhood."

In helping with neighborhood initiatives, he said, he's living out his call as a Missionary of the Precious Blood.

"In Old North Dayton, we're working toward living out basic values: reconciliation, respect for life, reaching out to those in need—and those are also the core values of our religious Community.

"How does that play out? For me, in Old North Dayton, I pray for the people in our neighborhood, and I try to help them however I can. I feel their frustration when things seem bleak. They're doing the best they can, but the neighborhood suffers at times from tension among the ethnic groups. People don't always like newcomers, but we need to try to get over that, to extend our hands to people of different cultures and beliefs, respecting their human dignity. In the simplest form, it's about being a good neighbor.

"If we can help the people to whom we minister see that, if we can encourage that, in my mind that's Precious Blood spirituality in action. It can hold you to a higher standard, which we don't achieve all the time—but it's always there for us as a model of how to live."





A Fond Farewell: People in West Central Ohio bid a fond farewell in December to Sr. Regina Albers, C.PP.S., who for many years ministered to Spanish-speaking people in West Central Ohio. Sr. Regina now lives at Salem Heights in Dayton with other retired sisters.

Sr. Regina, who earlier in life ministered in the C.PP.S. Sisters' mission in Chile, was a regular at the 10 a.m. Sunday Mass in the St. Joseph Chapel of St.

Charles Center, where Fr. Juan Gonzalez, C.PP.S., a native of Puerto Rico, presides in Spanish. Fr. Gonzalez, who lives in retirement at St. Charles, said he plans to continue the Spanish-language Masses.

In recent years, Sr. Regina has helped prepare children and young adults for sacraments; prayed with families; and offered a friendly listening (bilingual) ear to immigrants in the area. "If people were being served by a parish, I never wanted to draw them out of that. That's where their life is," she said. But she served people who were new to the area and hadn't yet found their way to a parish. She helped them integrate, introducing them to parish volunteers.

She has a heart for immigrants and newcomers, she said, partly because she felt like an outsider herself when she returned to the U.S. after her years of mission work in Chile.

"I came back home in 1980, and I had to decide what to do next. In Chile, where I was teaching, we didn't even have textbooks. I returned to the U.S. and saw computers in the classroom, and didn't know what to do with them. I knew I couldn't teach anymore," she said. "I was gone for 12 or 13 years, and when I got back, everything had changed. I pulled into a filling station and darn, nobody filled my tank! There was a real shock in coming back. I thought I'd come home and feel totally



Sr. Regina Albers, C.PP.S., and Fr. Juan Gonzalez, C.PP.S., who worked together ministering to Spanish-speakers in West Central Ohio.

comfortable and fit right in again. But even the drive-through lane at McDonald’s was baffling. There’s no question that experiences like that give you a lot of empathy.”

We pray that Sr. Regina will enjoy this new chapter in her life. And we pray that God grants Fr. Gonzalez the strength to continue his ministry to Spanish-speaking people in West Central Ohio. May God bless them both for their generous hearts!

Historical Marker at St. Charles: Fr. David Hoying, C.P.P.S, was the keynote speaker at the October 22 dedication of an Ohio historical marker at the Carthage (Ohio) Black Cemetery. The cemetery is very near St. Charles Center, the motherhouse of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood.



Fr. David Hoying, C.P.P.S., speaks at the dedication of the historical marker near St. Charles Center.

Fr. Hoying gave a brief historical account of the African-American settlement that once existed in Carthage. The cemetery is all that remains.

The historical marker unveiled in October is one of 1,600 such markers across the state, according to the Ohio History Connection.



The Power of Prayer

(Continued from page 10)

would make a great religious, and I pray for their vocation every day as well. Whether they end up in formation or Pre-Cana is up to them and God. By praying for them, I have done my part.

It’s also helpful to change the way in which we pray for vocations. One month offer a daily rosary for vocations, the next month offer a particular litany or another favorite prayer. Somedays you can pray for vocations in general and other days pray for specific individuals. There is no single way to pray for vocations. What matters is that we pray, and that we keep praying. God is faithful. We simply have to be persistent.



The Clean-Up Crew

We're through the happy season of holiday parties and celebrations, which is a lot of fun but can wear a person out, especially if you're the one in charge, which happily I was not. But I was nearby when our parish Altar-Rosary Society held its Christmas party, though I could not attend due to a scheduling conflict.

The committee went to a great deal of trouble to set up the room, which was absolutely beautiful. Then as soon as the party was over, the committee had to tear it all down because that room in our parish activity center is in great demand at all times. I saw the committee members carrying out boxes of supplies and the extra tables that they'd hauled in just a few days before. I found myself wishing that when there is a big event, there would be not only an organizing committee but also a completely separate tear-down committee to relieve the exhausted organizers.

I have the same fervent wish, only more so, when I'm on the organizing committee of any big event. Where are the fresh troops who will move the tables back, stack the chairs and sweep the floor? But the practicality of that gives me pause. How does the clean-up crew know what must be stored away for the next year and what should be discarded? How does it know where everything goes?

Almost inevitably, the people who prepare for a big event also have to clean up after it. They must see it through to its conclusion. They must finish strong. It seems to me that this is also an imperative for the Christian life. Although we may pass along some of the tasks that have been ours for years and years, and must be looking for the next generation with its fresh ideas, we also have to keep up our strength for the mission we have been given.

The Holy Family is a good example of this. It started out as a core group, as early supporters such as the shepherds and magi returned to their own lives. Later, Joseph dropped out of the narrative, presumably due to extreme old age or death. This little family accepted new people into its inner circle and took on the expanded challenge of telling the truth fearlessly for the whole world to hear. Jesus and Mary stayed true to the message to the end, to the bitter end, and beyond the apparent end to an entirely new reality.

So I guess we shouldn't look around for a clean-up crew when we are the clean-up crew, and also the set-up crew and the crew in the middle. We are the crew.

At Our House
by Jean Giesige



You Belong

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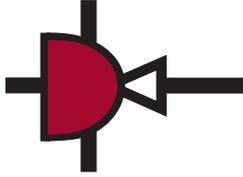
Send address changes,
comments, suggestions
or requests for
more information to:

Jean Giesige, editor,
C.P.P.S. Today, 431 E. Second St.,
Dayton, OH 45402-1764
mission@cpps-preciousblood.org

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