



Epiphany 2009

Views from

# the hermitage

*Creating an environment of attentiveness to God*

## The Power of Here

A friend described his experience at the Hermitage where he lived and worked for an extended time quite a few years ago. He began, "When I was at the Hermitage those 18 months," and then he paused, giving careful thought to his next words, and with hands spread apart he said, "I", another pause with deep consideration, hands moving downward, "was", more waiting and anticipation, "here". With the end of the sentence, his hands stopped as if firmly planting a tree into the ground.

In that instant, God spoke to the depths of my soul and I heard the deeper meaning of my friend's words. "I was here," meant that he gave himself to being present to the moment. He was not in a holding pattern, waiting for the next thing to come along, he was living the next thing. His time here wasn't about processing where he had been or figuring out where he was going, it was about the practice of living in the here and now, moment by moment, day by day. And in this way, all that had gone before and all that was yet to be was attended to.

The idea of being here provides a spatial orientation to living in the moment. Here is not there, and there is not here. "I am here," whether that be in the midst of activity or contemplation, is a call to live in the now, grounded in the moment as a deeply rooted tree. Being here is to practice the presence of God. Being here is to be still and know that God is.

When I am cleaning St. Joseph's Barn, I think about all the other things I could be doing. Then I say, "I am here, there is no place I would

rather be than here." When I sit in Morning Prayer and hear sacred words and say holy things, I think about everything I have to do during the day. Then I say, "I am here, there is nothing else I would rather do than be here." When I sit and listen to someone's story, I wonder, what I will make for lunch. Then I say, "I am here, there is no need to worry about what you will eat right now."

Living in the here is a way of connecting with God where God lives. For when we are here, we are not reliving the past, we are not anticipating the future, we do not desire anything other than being here and we are fully in God. *Here* is where God lives.

-David Wenger

## Summer Directors

We are pleased to announce that three couples will be serving as co-directors while David and Naomi Wenger are on sabbatical June 1 through August 31.

In June, Hermitage founding directors, *Gene and Mary Herr* of Newton, KS will take up their post again and are especially happy to offer evening discussions and a guided retreat day during their term of service (*see* related announcement and calendar of events). In July, *Richard and Rosella Schrock* of Garden City, MO, return for a third term of service. In August, *Kevin and June Mears Driedger* of Lansing, MI will be here, marking over 10 years of faithful service.

The Hermitage and all who come on retreat this summer will be well cared for.

## Fundraising Update

In the two months since announcing the St. Joseph's Barn Sabbatical campaign, we have received \$10,000 in gifts and pledges. We need an additional \$7000 to complete the first phase of the project, which is to re-side St. Joseph's Barn. Jim Schwartz, who renovated the Barn nearly 25 years ago, is prepared to start the re-siding project this summer. We are continuing to pursue grants, donation of materials and further individual donations to make up the needed funds. Thank you to all who have contributed to the project thus far.

Can you help with a charitable donation? Designate your gift to "St. Joseph's Barn" and send to The Hermitage (address on back page).

## Lenten Retreat Days

Our Lent Quiet Days will be held on Wednesday, March 4, Friday, March 13 and Saturday, March 14. The retreat day begins at 9:00 am and concludes by 3:00 pm. Guests are welcome to come for an overnight before or after the retreat, or stay longer on the day of retreat. A suggested donation for the day is \$50. Cost for the retreat with an overnight is \$75.

The theme for this year's retreat, *Rainbow Connection: Lent for Lovers and Dreamers*, recalls the story of Noah and leads us to examine God's covenant and preserving will. Contact Naomi or David at [thehermitage@juno.com](mailto:thehermitage@juno.com) or 269-244-8696 to register for any of these days.

## Phoenix Gallery: Lenten Exhibit

Tom August will present an exhibit of photographs on the theme: the water of the earth. His images invite us to consider ways we experience water and what water might mean for our spiritual journeys. Tom's photographs can be viewed from Friday, February 27 through Saturday, April 11. The Gallery is open from 9:00 am - 5:00 pm, Monday through Saturday.

## Stations of the Cross Walk—Holy Week

During Holy Week, April 5-11, the Hermitage trails are transformed into a meditation walk mirroring Jesus' journey from the place of his trial to the place of his crucifixion. This journey is traditionally broken into fourteen meditative Stations of the Cross. Individual guests or groups may come at anytime for this self-guided, mile-long walk. The chapel is open for meditation for those who do not want to walk the trails.

## "Black Madonna Your Lap Has Become the Holy Table" Icon Retreat

Allow yourself to be a hand for God, meet your growing edge, and commune with the Black Madonna as you write an icon of this enigmatic image based on a 19<sup>th</sup> Century Russian icon of the "Inexhaustible Cup."

Each participant will complete an acrylic gouache and gold leaf image on gessoed wood. No prior experience is needed. We will keep holy silence in an attitude of attentiveness to God and join together in regular periods of corporate prayer. Ample time will be given to explore the Hermitage grounds in all its spring-time glory.

Donna Rathert, retreat facilitator, has studied under Peter Pearson since 2000, and taken classes from the Iconographic Arts Institute and the Prosopon School of Iconography. A certified spiritual director, she brings a contemplative approach to this ancient practice of painting prayers.

The retreat will be held from Sunday, *April 19* to Friday, *April 24*. Fees: *resident guests*, \$425 (includes meals and materials); *commuters*, \$345 (includes meals and materials). Registration and deposit due by March 30, 2009. For registration information contact Donna Rathert: [drathert@hotmail.com](mailto:drathert@hotmail.com).

## Welcome to Cheryl Nakata

Cheryl Nakata is the newest Director on the Hermitage Board. Cheryl comes to us from Chicago where she teaches business at the University of Illinois-Chicago. She is a Spiritual Director with a deep desire for prayer and maintains a regular practice of going on retreat. Welcome, Cheryl.

## Summer Events

Gene and Mary Herr will offer **Evening Reflections** on Wednesdays in June. These short topical or book studies are open to anyone. Reflections begin at 7:00 pm in the Ken Hanby Center. Donations accepted.

- **June 3**—*The Shack* by William Young
- **June 10**—*Crazybusy* by Edward M. Hallowell
- **June 17**—“Prayer and Depression”
- **June 24**—“Our Affirmations Are Our Identity”

“The Call of the Poor and the Paradigm of Mother Teresa” A Silent Retreat, *Saturday, June 20 9:30–3:30*

Jesus’ words, “I was \_\_\_ and you \_\_\_” (Matthew 25:31-46) challenge us to examine our life’s calling. We will use *Mother Teresa: A Simple Path* as a resource. Suggested donation: \$20, includes lunch. Contact the Hermitage, 269-244-8696 or thehermitage@juno.com for more information about these events.

## Hermitage Jam

It’s happening on Friday, August 7 from 8-4. Plan on coming to a berry-picking fest when we pick all the blackberries we can and turn them into jam. Other work projects may also be done. Lunch will be provided.

## Feast of the Transfiguration *Retreat*

The annual retreat on the Feast of the Transfiguration will be led by long-time friend of The Hermitage, Marlene Kropf. Join us from 9-4, Saturday, August 8. Contact us or look online for more information.

## The Hermitage Calendar

- Feb 8 Taizé Evensong, 7:00 pm  
Feb 27-Apr 11 Phoenix Gallery—  
Tom August
- Mar 4 *Lent Quiet Day—Rainbow  
Connection: Lent for Lovers and  
Dreamers, 9-3*
- Mar 6-7 *Spirit of Man—Discovering  
Male Spirituality Retreat*
- Mar 8 Taizé Evensong, 7:00 pm
- Mar 13 *Lent Quiet Day—Rainbow  
Connection: Lent for Lovers and  
Dreamers, 9-3*
- Mar 14 *Lent Quiet Day—Rainbow  
Connection: Lent for Lovers and  
Dreamers, 9-3*
- Apr 5-11 “Stations of the Cross” Walk  
Apr 12 Taizé Evensong, 7:00 pm  
Apr 19-24 *Icon Writing Retreat—  
Donna Rathert, facilitator*  
Apr 27-May 30 Phoenix Gallery—  
Larry-Michael Hackenberg
- May 10 Taizé Evensong, 7:00 pm
- Jun 1-Aug 31 Wenger Sabbatical
- Jun 3 *Evening Reflection—Gene and  
Mary Herr, facilitators*
- Jun 10 *Evening Reflection—Gene and  
Mary Herr, facilitators*
- Jun 14 Taizé Evensong, 7:00 pm
- Jun 17 *Evening Reflection—Gene and  
Mary Herr, facilitators*
- June 20 “*The Call of the Poor and ...  
Mother Teresa,*” 9:30-3:30  
Gene and Mary Herr,  
facilitators
- Jun 24 *Evening Reflection—Gene and  
Mary Herr, facilitators*
- Jul 12 Taizé Evensong, 7:00 pm
- Aug 7 Hermitage JAM—8-4  
Aug 8 *Feast of the Transfiguration—  
Marlene Kropf, facilitator; 9-4*
- Aug 9 Taizé Evensong, 7:00 pm
- Sep 13 Taizé Evensong, 7:00 pm



**the hermitage**

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**Taizé Services: Second Sundays at Seven, Chapel of the Transfiguration**

**The Word Alone**

“God said, ‘This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ... When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.’”

Genesis 9:12-13, 16

**the hermitage Mission**

*As Jesus was revitalized for being about his Father’s business by periodic withdrawal to retreat and prayer, so The Hermitage seeks in its mission:*

- *To be a prayer community, available as a place of spiritual formation where scripture, silence, nature, group experiences, and personal companionship are cultivated elements of retreat.*
- *To provide a guesthouse away from daily tasks where pastors and other pilgrims can deepen their call and relationship with God, be refreshed in their whole person and be revitalized by the presence and promise of Christ.*

*(from The Hermitage Rule)*


**Resident Community:** David & Naomi Wenger, *co-directors*  
**Board of Directors:** Mary Asmonga-Knapp, Allan Martling (chair), Natala Mohl, Cheryl Nakata, Biff Weidman, David Wenger, Naomi Wenger