



*Pentecost 2010*

*Views from*

# *the hermitage*

*Creating an environment of attentiveness to God*

The lead stories in “Views” this year are a series of historical reflections by friends of The Hermitage. Our contributor this issue is Steve Thomas. Steve and his spouse, Linda, are long-time supporters and guests of the Hermitage from Goshen, Indiana.

## **The Hermitage Story: *The Woods Speak***

Since 1990 The Hermitage has extended gifts to Linda and me. A spacious destination for many retreats together. A place for solitude and prayer, rest and reflection. A space for spiritual attentiveness. Christian hospitality and tasty meals. Spiritual guidance from Gene and Mary. Sabbath time. And a woods that speaks.

I recall one time traveling to The Hermitage. I left home in haste and hurried to make the Hermitage Company meeting on time. I not only exceeded the speed limit but a spiritual limit, leaving me harried. As Thich Nhat Hahn said, “As goes the body, so goes the soul.” I was in need of recovery from not only this, but from the pace of ministry back home. The KKK had just left Goshen following a hate rally and the burden and busyness of pastoral work left me feeling depleted.

Arriving at The Hermitage, I came to a full stop and entered Sabbath time. I was received by a silent stillness and the singing of creation—the chorus of tree frogs, crickets and other creatures. The tranquility and harmony refreshed my soul. Surely God was in this place. Christ was calling, “Come to me... and I will give you rest.” And the Spirit breathed peace into my weary body. Here and now I have everything I need.

Time and time again, The Hermitage has sustained me in ministry. I believe that were it not for its gifts, I would have become burned out long ago in congregational work. Space for spiritual attentiveness to God, the guidance of Gene, and wisdom from spiritual mentors in print have helped keep my focus on prayer with God and presence with others in ministry.

What I especially appreciate about The Hermitage is the woods. For it speaks. As God’s first Word, creation has carried natural revelations to me on every visit—the silent speeches referred to in Psalm 19. For ex-

ample, the day after my harried arrival as I was reflecting on pastoral work, a majestic hawk glided past Observation Point where I sat. Its flight was so effortless and graceful. She flew to her post, where she remained poised until she saw what she was looking for. In contrast to this, a butterfly frantically flew here and there with erratic movement. I realized that I am more like this butterfly in pastoral work. My desire is to be more like the hawk’s graceful purposed flight.

The next evening a light storm passed through, refreshing the land. Like Annie Dillard at Tinker Creek, “I went out to see what I could see,” believing the woods had something important to reveal. I crossed the meadow until I spied a deer spying me. There we stood face to face, wondering who was going to move first. She did, moving toward me, step by step. When I moved, she bounded off into the woods. I followed. Although she disappeared, I came upon a family of three—a buck, doe and fawn together. As I stood still, another doe appeared with two fawns. Then another group of three. As long as I remained quiet, I could enjoy these beautiful creatures. Eventually a twitch on my part gave me away to a buck who sounded the alert, sending the rest into the woods. There they remained just within the brush. Hidden, but there.

Not just one but three sets of trinity to get my attention. Hum... something of God here? As with the deer, so it is with God. Hidden, but there.

I thought, “Everywhere I look there is life.” To test my hypothesis, I went further along the path then stood still. After awhile I heard rustling in the leaves. Then a chipmunk stood up on a log and looked at me looking at him. I proceeded to another point on the trail. I paused and surveyed the brush for deer. And there one stood, already watching me. Had I walked in a rush I surely would have missed her. Later along the trail, I stood quiet. This time I noticed several turkeys stealthily moving through the thicket. Truly, where ever we look we can see Life, for God is here. ...Continued...

The Hermitage enables spiritual attentiveness. Like the woods, everything there invites me to “Be still and know God.” And when I leave, a sign reminds me to “Return Slowly.”

-Steve Thomas

## Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Celebration August 6-8, 2010

Celebrate with us this summer! Join us for all three days or a few hours. Here is a schedule to help you plan.

### Friday, August 6 from 9 am–9 pm

#### Feast of the Transfiguration Retreat Day: A Hermitage Community Tradition

- 9:00 Morning prayer
- 9:30 Retreat begins guided by Fr. Eric Haarer, Spiritual Life Institute (Crestone, Colorado and Holy Hill, County Sligo, Ireland)
- 12:30 Lunch
- 1:30 Retreat continues  
Dedication of commissioned Icon
- 4:00 Retreat concludes
  
- 5:30 Supper
- 7:00 Vespers
- Evening Fire circle: reflection with conversation and s'mores

### Saturday, August 7 from 9 am–9 pm

#### Celebrate Hermitage Community Beginnings and God's Faithfulness

- 9:00 Morning prayer
- 9:30 A chapter meeting in the Anniversary Tent to introduce options for the day:
  - Jam making:** Naomi will lead the berry transformation team
  - Bread baking:** David will share his joy of baking bread
  - Storytelling:** Gene and Mary Herr will be on hand to share memories of the early days; you can include your memories and photographs in an oral and visual history project
- 12:30 Lunch
- 2:30 Work and history projects
- 4:00 Gathering in the Anniversary Tent for show-and-tell
- 5:00 Tea with Jam and Bread:  
Light Supper

7:00 Vespers

7:45 Ice Cream Fiesta

### Sunday, August 8 from 10 am–1 pm

#### Worship:

#### Transfiguration...Celebration...Anticipation

- 10:00 Morning Taizé Worship  
with celebrative singing  
and Holy Communion
- 11:30 Prayer Walk of Dedication
- 12:30 Brown bag lunches  
available to take out or eat on site

Please register before July 23 for all of the events you plan to attend by contacting The Hermitage: 269-244-8696 or [www.hermitagecommunity.org](http://www.hermitagecommunity.org)

A few rooms are still available at The Hermitage. Rooms have also been reserved at St. Gregory's Abbey. Donations are received for overnight stay in either of these locations. Reserve for lodging in either place now by contacting us: 269-244-8696 or [www.hermitagecommunity.org](http://www.hermitagecommunity.org). Let us know if you need recommendations for other local lodging.

## Renovation Musings

If the renovations occurring here are any indication of the Hermitage's future, this place of prayer will be around for many years to come.

We are pleased to report that the re-siding of St. Joseph's Barn is complete. An interesting transformation occurred in me when the old boards were being torn away from the barn. What I had been seeing as rotten, cracked and hole-pocked lumber suddenly became beautiful wood with a story to tell and I wanted the boards to stay on for a long time. As nostalgic as I felt, the boards had indeed served their purpose and many of them broke into pieces as they were pried from the timbers. We kept the old barn boards and are storing them for other uses. The barn is now wrapped in new lumber, which will be sealed with a colorfast stain later this summer or early fall. *Thank you* to all who have generously contributed toward the barn restoration project.

Other transformations happening here are: an apartment in the Ken Hanby Center, a kitchen make-over in St. Joseph's Barn, and a new parking lot. These projects along with the painting of St. Joseph's Barn are possible due to recent donations from several benefactors. *Thank you.* May God bless you, as you each bless others.

-David Wenger

## Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteers are invited to stay for personal retreat time before or after volunteering. Or make a day of it, join us for Morning Prayer at 8:00am and have lunch with staff and retreatants at 12:30 pm. Bring a friend and finish in half the time. Contact: David Wenger, 269-244-8696 or [www.hermitagecommunity.org](http://www.hermitagecommunity.org).

- Newsletter Mailings: prepare 500 *Views from The Hermitage* for bulk mailing by attaching mailing seals and sorting by postal code. Time required: 1 day (about 6 hours) four times a year.
- Taizé Musicians: lend your instrumental voice (piano, violin, flute, recorder, guitar, etc.) to Taizé Evensong on the second Sunday of each month. Time required: about 2 hours (one time or as often as you are able). Musicians practice from 5:45-6:45pm prior to the 7pm service that ends by 8pm.
- Painting: revive the picnic tables in the grove with a good scrubbing and fresh coat of paint; paint the doors of The Ken Hanby Center; water seal outdoor swing at The Hut and in the picnic grove. Time required: varies
- Baking/cooking/canning: prepare foods at home or here for The Hermitage pantry and freezer: soups, cookies, fruits, vegetables, jams/jellies, etc. Time required: varies
- Gardening: tend one or several garden beds throughout the summer and early fall. Time required: one or more hours every other week or as often as you are able.
- Mowing: mow and trim lawns and grass trails using riding mower, walk-behind mower and weed trimmer. Time required: 8-10 hours for the entire grounds. Lesser amounts of time are gratefully accepted.
- Laundry: wash, dry (outdoors weather permitting), fold and re-distribute linens. Time required: one day (Mondays are usually the laundry days).
- Cleaning: vacuum and dust rooms, clean bathrooms in St. Joseph's Barn and Hanby Center. Time required: one day (weekdays, Monday-Friday).

## Thank You

- Rich Yeckley for your third year of bookkeeping
- Richard Boyd for spring mowing and trimming
- Larry and Judy Somers, Kevin and June Mears Driedger, Mary Knapp, Natala Mohl, Willard and Alice Roth, Danile Martens, Jo Beachey and Dayna Dollins, for preparing and serving meals.

- Larry Somers for trail marking
- Kevin Driedger for many years of library upkeep
- Tom Abbott and Larry Rohrer for help with clearing the fallen pine tree
- Sheron Kay for cleaning and laundry assistance
- George Wolfe for yard work and clearing construction debris
- Dave, Karen and Saralyn Mast and Lorna Hiebert, SOOP volunteers, Fall 2009, for assistance with all aspects of Hermitage hospitality and friendship in service

## Summer Book Discussions

Naomi Wenger will lead two book discussions this summer.

Wednesday, June 16, 7-9 pm—*The Naked Now* by Richard Rohr

Wednesday, July 14, 7-9 pm—*An Altar in the World* by Barbara Brown Taylor

Read your copy of these books and join a lively discussion. The evening will conclude with Evening Prayer. Register two weeks in advance of each discussion by contacting us: 269-244-8696 or [www.hermitagecommunity.org](http://www.hermitagecommunity.org)

### The Hermitage Calendar

Jun 4-6 Storytelling in Fabric—  
Beth Ann Williams and June Mears Driedger, presenters  
Jun 13 Taizé Evensong, 7 pm  
Jun 16 Book Discussion, 7 pm—  
*The Naked Now* by Richard Rohr

Jul 11 Taizé Evensong, 7 pm  
Jul 14 Book Discussion, 7 pm—  
*An Altar in the World*  
by Barbara Brown Taylor

#### ►Aug 6-8 25th Anniversary◀

Aug 6 Feast of the Transfiguration—Fr. Eric Haarer, 9-4  
Aug 7 Hermitage Community Celebration, Story, Jam and Bread, 9-9  
Aug 8 Taizé Worship 10 am  
Sep 12 Taizé Evensong, 7 pm

## The Word Alone

How lovely is your dwelling place,  
 O Lord of hosts!  
 My soul longs, indeed it faints  
 for the courts of the Lord;  
 My heart and my flesh sing for joy  
 to the living God.

Even the sparrow finds a home,  
 And the swallow a nest for herself,  
 Where she may lay her young,  
 At your altars, O lord of hosts,  
 my King and my God.

Happy are those who live in your house,  
 Ever singing your praise....  
 For a day in your courts is better  
 than a thousand elsewhere.

-Psalm 84:1-4, 10a

## *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)*



**Taizé Services: Second Sundays at Seven**  
**Note: August Taizé will be at 10:00 AM instead of 7:00 pm**



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