



Pentecost II 2008

Views from

the hermitage

Creating an environment of attentiveness to God

Hermitage Happenings

Hermitage Jam 2008

The second annual Hermitage Jam was notable by its contrast with the first one. Last year there were few berries, this year abundance. Last year the day was hot and languid, this year gentle warmth invigorated fifteen eager laborers who turned gallons of luscious jewel-like berries into 46 pints of jam. We froze about three times what we were able to process in the day and plan to turn more into jam as the year progresses. The hills bounced with the laughter of children and sounds of enthusiasm in the thorny canes as trove after trove of deep purple treasure was uncovered.

Feast of the Transfiguration Retreat

The Feast of the Transfiguration Retreat, attended by some of the same hearty souls who bore the scars of picking the previous day was a similarly beautiful day. We began with morning prayer and reflection on the theme “Useless Revelation, Hidden Glory,” noticing that the Transfiguration event was essentially useless because it was not to be “used” for anything. Peter’s request to use it as the reason for a shrine was completely ignored. Rather, the disciples (and we) are to simply adore Christ, a useless but necessary activity. We also noticed that the event was “hidden” on the mountain where only a few saw the glory of God. We wondered where else the glory of God might be hidden and were encouraged to look for it within ourselves.

We continued through the day in prayer and personal reflection spending time in the Phoenix Gallery with Gay Walker’s exhibit “Inside and Outside” drawing our own masks and attempting to reveal what we might be hiding inside.



A big thank you to Willard and Alice Roth who prepared food for both days, the Board for assisting with the Retreat, and all the laborers in the field and kitchen.

Next year’s *Jam* will be held on Friday, August 7, 2009 followed by the *Feast of the Transfiguration Retreat* on Saturday, August 8, 2009. Marlene Kropf, a faculty member from Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary and a long-time friend of The Hermitage, will be our presenter for the retreat. Keep your schedule open for both a day of work and a day of reflection and prayer.

Day of Prayer for Peace

On September 21 we observed the UN International day of Peace with a prayer service and screening of the film, *The Power of Forgiveness*. The deeply meaningful film contained seven vignettes of individuals or groups who had been affected by violence. In each instance, the role forgiveness plays in the aftermath of difficult or violent situations was explored with penetrating insight by filmmaker Martin Doblmeier.

The film began with Thich Nhat Hahn, an exiled Vietnamese Buddhist Monk who had witnessed systematic murder in Vietnam, stating that “Forgiveness is not possible until compassion is born in your heart.” The film then took us to Northern Ireland, to the Nickel Mines School community in Pennsylvania, to the internment camp at Buchenwald and Elie Wiesel’s subsequent experience of asking the German Bundestag to apologize to the Jewish people for the Holocaust. The film examined events as intimate as the senseless murder of Everett Worthington’s mother to the huge scale of disaster in the destruction of the World Trade Center Towers.

The final story was one of youthful street violence and the work of two men—the father of the murder victim and the grandfather of the perpetrator—to end street violence by taking the message of forgiveness into the schools. This story reminded us how difficult forgiveness can be for both the forgiver and the forgiven and that no forgiveness is possible without inner transformation and the willingness to relinquish our hold on grief.

In many instances, those interviewed admitted that it is hardest to forgive oneself, but that all forgiveness begins with a commitment to personal forgiveness. Whether or not the individual is then able to move toward forgiveness of others, the work always begins with one's self.

After quiet time for personal reflection we met to consider the impact the film made on us.

We concluded the day with a Prayer for Peace, lighting five candles to represent our prayer for those affected by human violence, for those affected by the violence of nature, for those affected by domestic violence or personal assault, for those affected by the violence of disease and for our enemies.

We will continue this tradition of prayer for peace. Consider joining us next year on September 20.

-Naomi R. Wenger



Advent Quiet Days

Our Advent Retreat will be given on Wednesday, December 3 and on Saturday, December 6 from 8 am through 3 pm. The theme, “Rend the Heavens and Come Down” will frame our meditation on the power and purpose of the Incarnation.

Join us for a day of rest and reflection at the beginning of the “busy, noisy” season to reclaim it as your time of anticipatory waiting.

Contact Naomi Wenger, 269-244-8696 or thehermitage@juno.com to register. Cost for the day is \$50 and includes lunch. If you wish to stay overnight, the cost is \$80 and includes three meals.

Volunteer Coordinator Needed

A person is needed to locate and invite groups and individuals to fulfill service opportunities at The Hermitage. The Volunteer Coordinator would work with the Directors to organize volunteer support as needs arise. In addition, the Volunteer Coordinator would assist with preparing equipment and supplies for the service dates and assist with organizing the work projects. Contacting potential volunteers can be done from home but service preparation would require availability to be at The Hermitage. Anyone interested in serving as Volunteer Coordinator should contact David Wenger, 269-244-8696 or thehermitage@juno.com.

Sabbatical Announced

David and Naomi Wenger, Co-Directors of The Hermitage, will be taking a Sabbatical from their duties from June 1 through August 31, 2009. During this time of rest and renewal, they will be guided by the theme, “Body and Spirit: Integrating our Experience of God.” We are actively recruiting an individual or couple to serve as interim hosts during that period so that Hermitage services will not be interrupted.



Barn siding to be replaced

Barn Sabbatical

The Board of Directors has made the preservation of St. Joseph's Barn a priority for 2009. Years of weathering and woodpeckers have left many of the original barn boards cracked and pocked with holes. The roof is also well worn and must be replaced before it leaks. We hope by giving the Barn a sabbatical of renewal that it will continue to shelter us on our spiritual journeys. We will keep you posted on how the work may impact your retreat. See *Barn Sabbatical Insert* for additional ways of helping us during this Sabbath time.

Opportunities for Service

We have recently been made aware of a need to change the way we think about tasks at the Hermitage. In the past, when something needed to be done, we asked ourselves, "How will I get that done?" We carried that question from task to task, never quite getting the most pressing task done before another presented itself. But, we are trying to think differently about the tasks asking rather, "Who can help with that job?" Will you consider these needs and see if any fit your willingness to serve:

- Making jam from frozen puree
- Mulching the flower beds
- Cutting and stacking firewood from downed trees
- Reclaiming the garden space, tilling and mulching
- Raking leaves and picking up walnuts
- Washing windows
- "Reading" the library shelves to keep books in order
- Cataloging new books for the library
- Cooking for weekend groups
- Volunteer Coordinator
- Assisting with Barn Sabbatical

-David & Naomi Wenger



Library Books

For those who have made use of our wonderful library throughout the years, we are noticing that the number of books checked out and not returned is growing. Do you have books that belong in our lending library? Please return them so others can benefit. Thanks.

-Naomi Wenger

Change for Anthony

Many of you have been blessed by Anthony Franchina's presence, cooking and helpfulness while you have been at The Hermitage over the last two years. Anthony has recently taken a job with St. Catherine of Siena church in Portage, MI. He is moving out of Nazareth house to Portage in November but is planning to continue serving at The Hermitage as a volunteer. We wish him God's blessing in his continued service in the Kingdom.

Cooking and Wisdom

A notebook has been placed in the kitchen to collect recipes and wise words received at The Hermitage. The collection will be organized and published as a Hermitage Cookbook, capturing not only the simple, satisfying meals but the spirit of the place. If you would like to contribute, or request an inclusion, write a note or an entry in the orange notebook on top of the refrigerator. All entries will be considered for the final project.

The Hermitage Calendar

- Nov 9 Taizé Evensong, 7:00 pm
- Dec 3 Advent Quiet Day—*Rend the Heavens and Come Down*, 8-3
- Dec 6 Advent Quiet Day—*Rend the Heavens and Come Down*, 8-3
- Dec 14 Taizé Evensong, 7:00 pm
- Jan 12 Taizé Evensong, 7:00 pm
- Feb 8 Taizé Evensong, 7:00 pm
- Mar 6-7 *Spirit of Man*—Discovering Male Spirituality Retreat
- Mar 8 Taizé Evensong, 7:00 pm

Electronic News

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

The Word Alone

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence— as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil— to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence! When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him. You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways.

-Isaiah 64:1-5

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, Biff Weidman, David Wenger, Naomi Wenger