



views from the hermitage

It is Good and it is Enough

by David Wenger

Last summer some renovations were made in St. Joseph's Barn to reconfigure three small spaces into two medium-sized rooms. One of these rooms is now the mechanical room for the geothermal heating and cooling system. The other is a massage room.

Our builder told us up front that he would hang the drywall but that he wouldn't tape and spackle the seams. I respect him for knowing his boundaries. I wasn't put off. I figured that someone else would become available to complete the job. I have done taping and spackling once or twice before but certainly do not have much practice at it. My first approach was to find a volunteer who could do the job. And a volunteer did come who wanted to work and was willing to take on the task. He got the drywall tape and first application of joint compound on but then unexpectedly had to leave before completing the job. The room sat waiting for someone else to show up. Weeks passed and no one else came.

I wondered if the job was mine to do. I resisted the work because it is exactly the kind of thing that exposes all my obsessive-compulsive tendencies. Skimming and then sanding drywall repeatedly into a seamless surface is crazy-making for me; there is always one more dimple, crack or crease to make smooth. When is the job ever done?

Nevertheless, I decided to pick up where the previous person left off. The proof of an amateur spackling drywall is in the amount of sanding that is necessary between applications. I did *a lot* of sanding. And I did multiple applications to get it just right (maybe even perfect?). Soon other things were calling for my attention and I needed to be done with the dry walling. But I *wasn't* finished; there was still more smoothness to be attained. I had to stop.

I was tempted to call it "good enough." But

"good enough" felt like a failure. I didn't want it to be "good enough." "Good enough" is anything but good. This was the conversation going on in my head. Then another voice interjected with these words, "It is good. And it is *enough*." What relief; what a welcome invitation to be done. I could immediately affirm that indeed, "it is good and it is enough." I received this as good news from God and declared the job finished.

"It is good and it is enough" has a completely different meaning to me than "good enough." "Good enough" feels like giving up; "it is good and it is enough" feels empowering. When taken each as a whole, good and enough, I can quell the voices of inadequacy and pride that battle within me. And I can hear the Loving Presence whisper in my ear, "You are good, and you are enough." 全

Wengers Going on Sabbatical

From July 2 through October 3, David and Naomi Wenger will be on sabbatical. The Hermitage will be ably cared for by Zac and Kristi Bowman Cooke and a group of dedicated volunteers. The Bowman Cookes will be serving The Hermitage from June 15 through the end of December. Recently part of the Jubilee Partners community in Georgia, they have re-located to the mid-West and will make The Hermitage their home for six months. We are grateful for their willingness to serve. Join us in welcoming them. Please hold the volunteers, the Bowman Cookes, and the Wengers in your prayers over this summer.

Retreats in 2016

Visio Divina, Lectio Divina, Hearing Divina

5 pm, Friday, June 17 –
4 pm, Saturday, June 18

The spiritual practice of “sacred reading” (Lectio Divina) enables us to continually turn our minds to God, paying attention to God’s presence in our daily lives. This retreat will explore, through teaching and practice, how we can turn our hearts and minds to God using our different senses to “read” the world and our selves. We will practice Lectio Divina (Friday evening), Hearing Divina (Saturday morning), and Visio Divina (Saturday afternoon).

This retreat, rescheduled from June 2015, will be led by Kevin Driedger and June Mears Driedger.

Please register by May 20, 2016.

Hermitage Way Retreats 2014

Contemplative Bread Making, April 16
Reconciliation & Transformation, October 8

There is a dedicated group of people currently following The Hermitage Way. If you are interested in finding out more about The Way, consider one of the Way Retreats being held this year.

We will begin taking reservations in August for the Reconciliation retreat.

Find out more about The Hermitage Way on the web site: www.hermitagecommunity.org/the-hermitage-way/.

Hermitage Jam/Transfiguration Feast Retreat

August 5 & 6

Join us for our annual workday, jam making and community retreat. Hermitage Way members will renew their covenant and new Way Keepers will be recognized. Watch for more information.

Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola 19th Annotation Retreat October 9, 2016 – May 31, 2017

Every person in the world is so put together that by praising, revering, and living according to the will of God our Lord he or she can safely reach the Reign of God. This is the original purpose of each human life.

This statement frames the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola. Ignatius’ life-long project, to introduce people to a method of following Jesus that engaged them in looking for God in all things, resulted in what we know as the Spiritual Exercises. While his original design was for a person to complete the exercises in 30 days, he recognized that many people would not be able to leave their work and families for that extended time. So, he also encouraged an adaptation of the exercises that spans 30 weeks rather than 30 days.

We are forming a small cohort of folks (limit 6) who wish to embark on the Exercises together using this expanded format. Participation will involve monthly meetings (2.5 hours) with the group and a monthly one-on-one meeting (1 hour) with the Spiritual Director. Persons wishing to participate should be able to commit to an hour of prayer and meditation each day for the duration of the retreat and to the group and private meetings. Cost for the retreat is \$600. A deposit of \$120 is due (by June 30) to reserve your place in the group.

The initial meeting will be in the second week of October. Subsequent meetings will be scheduled at that time. If you are interested in being part of this group, please contact Naomi Wenger (Naomi@hermitagecommunity.org or 269-244-8696) by June 30.



Listening to Frogs

A Meditation by Kathy Fenton-Miller



It is early March at the Hermitage and I am standing on the edge of a small wetland. My boots are squishing in mud and water is creeping to shoe top as I listen to a chorus of spring frogs. With time I can begin to disentangle the voices and identify three frogs, each with its own distinct voice. I hear the low cluck-like calls of the Wood Frog. Next I hear the calls of the Western Chorus Frog, a short rising squeaky trill, a call which has been likened to strumming a stiff pocket comb. Above and through and surrounding all else is the call of the Northern Spring Peeper, a high-pitched “peep” or chirp, which when emitted in full chorus has been described as “almost deafening to people nearby.” Which it is now.

Michigan is home to 13 species of frogs and toads and all but two species are found in the southwest region of the state. The Wood Frog, Chorus Frog and Peeper are the three earliest species to call here. This is in part because they breed in vernal, or ephemeral pools which are water-filled only temporarily each year. Thus these frogs are in a race to move through their reproductive cycle before the wetlands dry up.

Learning the frog calls of southwest Michigan as

well as their visual identification, distributions, habitat and habits is (at least for me) fun, and one way in which I can more fully inhabit the place in which I live. Robin Wall Kammerer, botanist and member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation writes that “names are the way we humans build relationship, not only with each other but with the living world.” When I name the frogs- or as Kammerer puts it, our neighbors and relatives - I am recovering a relationship to the nonhuman world.

Much of the devastation in our world is a consequence of a fundamental change in our relationship to the earth and to its trees, waters, whales, birds and frogs. We have come to see the world as a collection of objects which we will use rather than as a community of which we are a part. This estrangement deprives us of a relationship with our companions as well as separating us from the Creator. As I learn the frog calls I am beginning to learn the language of another being. A voice of the natural world is becoming audible to me in a new way. I think of frog calls as part of God's creative voice, a language of God.

Listening to frogs involves standing still with attention and waiting. Then standing still some more. For me it is a spiritual practice. It means letting go of my strategic mind and placing myself in the position of receiving. Barbara Hurd writes about this in her book, “Stirring the Mud”:

“It is, perhaps, the single thread running through mysticism—that you must wait patiently; that to go hunting what is mysterious and life changing with a magnifying glass or jabstick, armed with intent and a sense of your own deserving goodness is futile ... The sublime is like poetry: it will not be caught or chased down. It exists at the edge of the vast margins ...”

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An encounter with the sublime moves beyond naming to the unnameable. It may in fact involve standing on the edges and sinking down into the murky mud. This encounter with mystery cannot be found by effort but must be given allowance. These are my thoughts and sometimes beyond-thought experiences as I watch life merging and submerging.



Song is one way in which we encounter mystery, and many cultures have call and response traditions of singing. A phrase sung by one party is followed by a second phrase that is a direct response to the first. It is thought that this call and response reflects basic patterns of human communication. It is not, however a pattern that is limited to homo sapiens. I stand now by the swamp thinking about my response to the calls of *Rana sylvatica* (the Wood Frog), *Pseudacris triseriata* (the Chorus Frog), and *Pseudacris crucifer* (the Spring Peeper). One of my responses is one of wonder. How is it that these tiny beings know exactly when and where to gather each year? How is it that they can produce such interesting, unique and intense sounds? With the recognition of these gifts comes gratitude and with gratitude comes something else, a growing awareness, question, an invitation. With the gift of the frog call comes a call for response to these creatures, my neighbors. I'm not sure I can fully articulate or even know what that response is to be. But I believe it does involve an attitude and way of

inhabiting the world and this specific place in the world, as well as a call to engage in the well-being of my neighbors, human and non-human. It is a response to the Great Energy of the universe.

The spring frog calls last only a few weeks each year, making them as ephemeral as the places from which they sing. I love standing in the darkening day, listening and waiting.

My feet are getting wet. ☯

SOURCES

Berry, Thomas. *Evening Thoughts: Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community*. San Francisco, Sierra Club Books, 2006.

Hardy, James H. and Holman, J. Alan. *Michigan Frogs, Toads, and Salamanders*. Michigan State University: MSU Museum, 1999.

Hurd, Barbara. *Stirring the Mud: On Swamps, Bugs, and Human Imagination*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2001.

Kammerer, Robin Wall. *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and The Teaching of Plants*. Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed Editions, 2013.

Thank You to Past Board Members and Welcome to New Board Member Tim Pisasich

We are grateful to all of the folks who serve on our board of directors. They serve three-year terms with a limit of two terms. As they come and go, we are aware of the huge gift they are to us as we go about our work at The Hermitage. We feel supported and encouraged to keep holding this space for you, our guests. We are grateful for the service of Judith Anne Beattie, C.S.C., who served us for the last three years.

New Board Member Tim Pisasich works in fostering human, communal, and spiritual formation for graduate students who are completing an MA in Theology at Notre Dame University and who have been placed in teaching or parish education apprenticeships. Tim works both one-on-one and in designing retreats for the students. Welcome among us, Tim.

Thank you

We are deeply grateful to Rich Yeckely who has served as our volunteer bookkeeper for over eight years. His able and regular service will be missed as he leaves to be more flexible in his retirement. We have come to rely on his competence and his sensitivity to our work at the Hermitage as he has quietly gone about his tasks. Thank you, Rich, from the whole Hermitage Community.

Opportunities for Service

There is a work day on Saturday, June 25 from 9-3. In addition, we could use help with the following:

- trail maintenance
- wood cutting & splitting
- meal preparation
- housekeeping
- gardening
- machine maintenance
- board service
- spring cleaning of the Hermitage cabins

Volunteer Bookkeeper Needed:

Rich Yeckley, who has faithfully served as our volunteer bookkeeper for eight years, has indicated that he will step out of this role in May. We are looking for someone to serve in the capacity of Volunteer Bookkeeper immediately. The position requires about 10 hours/month and at least bi-weekly attention. The hours are flexible, any weekday from 9:00 - 5:00. There is also flexibility for extended times away.

The bookkeeper:

- Makes regular bank deposits
- Transfers funds from a PayPal account
- Records all transactions using QuickBooks software
- Prepares monthly and quarterly reports
- Liaises with the Board Treasurer and the co-Directors
- Keeps donor contact information current

Come Live the Hermitage Way

Would you like to come for a week to pray with us? We are looking for folks to work and pray through the days, experiencing our rhythm and listening with us for what God is doing in us and in the world. If you are interested, contact David at 269-244-8696 or contact@hermitagecommunity.org. We are also looking for longer-term commitments. Let us know if you would like more information about keeping The Hermitage Way or joining the Resident Community.

Hermitage Calendar

April

10 Taizé Evensong, 7pm
29-30 Board Meeting

May

8 Taizé Evensong, 7pm

June

12 Taizé Evensong, 7pm
17-18 Visio Divina Retreat
25 Land Committee Work Day, 9-3

July

10 Taizé Evensong, 7pm
10 Lent Quiet Day, 9-3
15 Lent Quiet Day, 9-3

August

5 Hermitage Jam Work Day, 9-4
6 Feast of the Transfiguration Retreat. 9-4
19-20 Board Meeting



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Contact us by Email:
contact@hermitagecommunity.org

Creating an environment of attentiveness to God

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.

If you would like to join us for a retreat of any length, contact us by phone: 269-244-8696, email: contact@hermitagecommunity.org or find us on the web: www.hermitagecommunity.org. We provide silence, solitude, Spiritual Direction, guided group retreats, space for groups to meet, community Morning Prayer, simple healthful food, walking trails, and a gentle atmosphere. You provide the willing spirit.

Board of Directors:

Ned Arnold
David Cowles
Kevin Driedger
Patty Hogan
Lynda Hollinger-
Janzen
Margie Pfeil
Tim Pisasich
Deanna Risser

***Resident
Community:***

David and Naomi
Wenger, Co-directors

*Please hold the Board in
your prayers.*