



# views from the hermitage

*Creating an environment of attentiveness to God*

## Advent Retreat Day

### We Are Pregnant and Waiting

*"It is Advent and we are a people, pregnant. Pregnant and waiting. We long for the God/Man to be born, and this waiting is hard. Our whole life is spent, one way or another, in waiting."*

-Gertrud Mueller Nelson,  
To Dance with God

This Advent retreat will consider two questions:

- What is waiting to be born in me?
- What is waiting to be born in the world?

We will have periods of input, of silence for journal-writing, or art-making, or woods-walking, and of group conversations.

Saturday, December 1

Monday, December 3

9am-3pm

Lunch included

\$50.00

To register for this retreat email:

[contact@hermitagecommunity.org](mailto:contact@hermitagecommunity.org)

Or call: 269.244.8696

## On Seeking Anam Cara: Finding Soul Friends

By Steve Wirzylo and Jay Budde

(Hermitage Community Way Keepers)

*Authors Note: We pray this two-part reflection on our Spirit friendship as Way keepers will be a small seed in your journey into deeper experience of community in the Body of Christ. The title of this reflection is inspired by John O' Donohue's (the Irish poet and philosopher) book Anam Cara, Celtic for soul (anam) friend (cara).*



*Steve Wirzylo and Jay Budde, Hermitage Way Keepers in November 2018.*

*Jay Budde reflections:*

Early this year, Steve contacted me inquiring if the "Farmhouse Community" (just an idea I had posted online years before) still existed. It did not, but I remembered Steve from our shared Hermitage community Way Keeper covenant. One of the realities of Way Keeper retreats and community is that, generally, not a lot of conversation passes between folks during retreats or after, which

November 22-25: Hermitage closed

December 1: Advent Retreat:  
“We Are Pregnant and Waiting”  
9am-3pm

December 3: Advent Retreat:  
“We Are Pregnant and Waiting”  
9am-3pm

December 21-January 3, 2019:  
Hermitage closed

makes it hard to start or grow a friendship, to say nothing about a deeper spiritual friendship. Steve’s interest in community came through clearly in our conversation and resonated with my long-standing desire to be a community-creator. We agreed to get together over coffee and explore what might emerge.

That was just about eight months ago. Since we live forty miles apart, we try to meet monthly for coffee, checking-in and, honestly, for friendship-making. Sometimes life gets in the way and we need to reschedule. As we meet over coffee or tea and share about the challenges and joys in our lives and listen in between each other’s words, something grows. John O’Donohue names this as “soul friendship—*anam cara*.”

This deeper, richer form of friendship, I think, grows in the presence of two important elements: vulnerability and accountability. To be vulnerable I need to take the risk of being real and honest in friendship. This is not easy for me. Accountability occurs when either of us asks some variation of the question “So, how is your Spirit, really?” Or when I remember what Steve was struggling with last meeting or what he hoped to accomplish between our meetings.

So, I try to be aware of and risk being a little more intentionally vulnerable and holding/being held a little more accountable each time we meet. I often joke with strangers who has done something kind for

me that he/she “is my newest best friend.” Seriously, Steve is my newest *anam cara*.

*Steve Wirzylo reflections:*

The American philosopher Elbert Hubbard reportedly said: “A friend is someone who knows all about you, and still likes you.” Apt words in terms of my relationship with the staff at the Hermitage, who have been ever-patient and understanding when I’ve had to cancel my planned retreats at the last minute. Between work, church matters, and family health issues, I have not been able to commune and fellowship with David and Naomi or Kevin and June and the other Way Keepers as much as I would like. It is my hope and prayer that circumstances will change in the very near future and will allow me to be physically present there in a much greater capacity than I am now.

Since I live just a little bit further out than the other Way Keepers in Toledo, Ohio, and my responsibilities are scattered throughout the week, getting to the Hermitage can sometimes be a bit of a challenge for me. Wouldn’t it be great if we had more opportunities to meet up with each other and share what is going on in our lives? That is what Jay Budde (Jay pronounces his last name “buddy”, which is exactly how I think of him!) and I have started to do in recent months. Typically, on the first Monday of the month, Jay and I meet at the Cabin Fever coffee shop in Defiance, Ohio. It’s been a wonderful means for both of us to catch up with one another, keep ourselves updated as to what is going on at the Hermitage, and share what is going on in our individual lives—our concerns as well as our hopes and dreams. Jay’s energy, enthusiasm, thoughtfulness, and kindness always go with me when I head back home to tackle my other responsibilities. Jay is a wonderful friend and I wish I knew more people like him!

If any of you are near the Defiance area, please get in touch with Steve (slwirz1111@gmail.com) or Jay (jbudde040749@gmail.com). You are welcome to join us, and we would love to have you join us!

## Love What the World is Becoming By Naomi R. Wenger



A visiting small group listens to Naomi Wenger tell about the 2013 Lament Service.

*“Your job is to find out what the world is trying to be.”* -William Stafford

This line is found at the end of Stafford’s poem “Vocation” in which he expresses the tension a young narrator feels at being caught between the free openness of a father who pauses to listen to the “meadowlarks ... trying to tell / something better about to happen,” and a fearful mother who “called us back to the car” because she needed to move on and get things done. The poem expresses a realization that both are needed. The poem ends with the father intoning that final line, a deep calling to a perpetual vocation; not requiring a particular task nor neglecting the invitation to participate in shaping “what the world is trying to be.”

Like the narrator of the poem, we are caught between being and doing at The Hermitage. On one hand, our clear mission is to provide a place of “attentiveness to the presence of God,” furnishing silence and solitude so that this unaccustomed listening might flourish both here and, by extension, in the practices of daily life for those who retreat here and

catch the vision. At the same time, a reminder that all is not right in the dream of the world bisects this particular place. An oil pipeline runs under the land. We unwittingly host the results of extractive technologies in the Alberta tar sands and participate daily in poisoning our planet and in jeopardizing the future of all the unborn. So we also have a calling to “engage.”

In order to find our particular engagement in the world, I’d like to paraphrase Stafford’s famous line, as “your job is to love what the world is becoming.” Or, to put it another way, we must always be learning to love as God loves. God loves us as we are it is true. But more to the point, God loves us into who we are becoming. Transformation is the way of following Christ. We can no more be disciples by being set in our ways than we can follow a leader by standing still. Our own transformation points to the vast transformation God is already working in the world. First, by coming into the world to demonstrate *how connected the world already is* to God. Second, by dying to show the way we must all go to become fully transformed. And third, by emerging in resurrection to lead

**We had danced hope onto this spit  
of land six years ago.**

the way into a unitive relationship with God outside of our sensory, everyday limitations and into God’s glorious presence/Being.

Recently, as I was leading a small group on a re-enactment of the Lament we held on Holy Saturday 2012, we walked out of the woods into the Prairie (planted over the pipeline mentioned above). We had sung a protest song on the way there, then walked in silence the last 200 yards. As we stepped into the clearing I said simply, “This is the prairie.” The sounds of buzzing insects, singing frogs, bird chirps, and the breeze scraping dry seed

heads of the sedges and grasses against the dried flowers immediately accosted us. We saw autumn asters glowing purple under the brown canopy, set off by a profusion of late-blooming goldenrods. The honeybees were still finding these flowers, adding their particular cacophony to the mix. Finches were dipping and bobbing across the open space. And a red-tailed hawk was soaring overhead, looking for a meal. The air was bursting with a density of life that had not been present in the unplanted meadow or in the sparse woodland barrier between meadow and prairie.



*Visiting small group joins Naomi Wenger in The Hermitage prairie as she shares about the 2013 Lament Service.*

We stood transfixed by what greeted us in this place where just a few years before, it had all been destruction and construction. The dead soil heaps was flattened and became living laboratories. We had danced hope onto this spit of land six years ago. Now, hope was born again and again in the sweep of life before us.

Kim Stafford, William's son, wrote in an essay on patriotism:

*...the end of the easy road is threshold to the future. When I look at ...history ... and then*

*at the political, economic, and environmental challenges that face us, I'm reminded of something I learned from a young Buddhist in Bhutan.... He explained to me that those "who are not yet awake" may view the past as a series of errors, and the future as a series of punishments for these errors. The destiny of such a person is to suffer, inescapably, for past sins, and this person cannot enjoy the present moment, cannot feel any sense of freedom or initiative. One who is awakened, however, who sees things as they truly are, will view the past as destiny (I had to do these things to become who I am), and the future as freedom (knowing who I am, I can choose what I will do). The destiny of such a person is to make courageous decisions based on self-awareness, and on a study of the world as it is. ("Oregon Patriot in Tough Times," Oregon Quarterly, Spring 2012.)*

Yes, we do have to choose how we act, but we are poorer in our action if we do not stand still and quiet enough to see how God continues the work of creation from day-to-day in our ordinary places. As we wake up into our awareness of God's Presence, we find that we are already transformed into people who carry God's love into the world, not by complaining about the past, but by walking forward into God's good work for each of us, knowing our role because we listened for an hour to the hum of the bee and felt the breeze on our cheek, and knew God's goodness in it all.

## Thank You

The Hermitage thrives due to the generous help of our volunteers. If you sense God's nudging to volunteer, please call David (269.244.8696) to offer your time and skills. We are grateful to:

- Larry and Judy Somers**, for weekly mowing the grass; supply filtered water; supply granola; supply homemade laundry soap to wash the plethora of sheets, towels, and napkins; can and process about 100 quarts annually of tomatoes;
- Nancy Boyd and granddaughter Hannah Roberts** for providing baked goods twice a month;
- Many thanks to the Building Workshop participants in June: **Jay Budde, Thomas Hirsch, Patty and Joel Hogan, Mary Asmong-Knapp, Margie Pfeil, Haley Wooton, Troy Bierma, Linda Hollinger-Janzen** (meals), **David and Naomi Wenger**.
- Ben Scott-Brandt** was our summer intern from June to August;
- Becky Haney** provided web support;
- Roger zum Felde** provides weekly library work, including digitizing the library card catalogue;
- Lynda Hollinger-Janzen** was our host July 21 which included preparing and serving meals;
- Ursula Hess** also prepared and served meals on the weekends of July 27-28 and Sept. 28-29;
- Faith and Troy Bierman**, with their son **Yazzie** and their daughter **Priya**, served us with cooking, groundskeeping, maintenance, gardening, and much more, the week of July 29-August 3.
- Kate Falk** and **Ruth Stolfus** were SOOP volunteers for the third year the week of July 29-August 5 doing housekeeping, kitchen and dining room help, gardening, preserving vegetables, and applying the finishing coats to our new outdoor signage;

- Jay Budde** raised the roof on the clay/straw chapel August 20-24;
- Dan Truesdale** helped Jay raise the roof, August 20-24;
- Joyce Hunsberger**, SOOP volunteer, provided assistance in housekeeping, kitchen and dining, guest rooms help; and gardening September 3-October 1.
- Janae Hall** prepared and served meals September 13-14;
- Gloria Showalter and Maeve Smucker** prepared and served meals October 5-6;
- Deanna Risser**, filed The Hermitage annual nonprofit tax report;
- Many thanks to the following persons for assisting on the EDC Garden Work Day, October 5: **Hannah Fernando, Doyle Craker, Patty Hogan, Margie Pfeil, Naomi Wenger**.
- Lastly, we are grateful for **all the board members** who carry many tasks for The Hermitage year-round.

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## Help Us Cultivate Community

We are preparing to build our new resident community house. To keep up-to-date on the activity, to find out how to donate, and to volunteer go to:  
[www.hermitagecommunity.org/cultivatecommunity](http://www.hermitagecommunity.org/cultivatecommunity)

The Hermitage is seeking a housekeeper to work 25 hours/weekly beginning January 2019.

If interested, email:

[contact@hermitagecommunity.org](mailto:contact@hermitagecommunity.org)



*the hermitage*

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## Creating an environment of attentiveness to God

### **Retreating at The Hermitage**

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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 companioning 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](mailto:contact@hermitagecommunity.org) or find us on the web: [www.hermitagecommunity.org](http://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**

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Ned Arnold  
Mary Asmonga Knapp  
Jay Budde  
Joel Hogan  
Patty Hogan  
Lynda Hollinger-Janzen  
Margie Pfeil  
Tim Pisacich  
Deanna Risser

### **Resident Community:**

David Wenger  
Naomi Wenger  
Kevin Driedger  
June Mears Driedger

*Please hold the board and  
community in your prayers.*