

Pentecost 2007

Views from

the hermitage

Creating an environment of attentiveness to God

Give us this day our daily bread

I can't remember consciously deciding to make our daily bread, it just sort of happened. One day I made bread for my family and when it was gone I made some more. When that was gone, I mixed up another batch. Soon, it became part of my morning routine, two or three days a week. By doubling the recipe I could also supply fresh bread for guests at The Hermitage. I am now in the fourth year of providing homemade bread for my family and The Hermitage retreatants.

Granted, I didn't just start making bread out of the blue. I first became intrigued by the bread making process years ago when I watched Naomi making bread. It looked easy enough and I figured I could do it too. So every now and then, when the inspiration came, I would make bread. When the children were younger we had several years of "pizza Fridays" which didn't involve the local pizza franchise. In the afternoon, Naomi or I would make pizza dough and by dinnertime it was ready to stretch into pans and cover with our favorite toppings.

Sometimes the motivation to make bread was so that I didn't have to buy it. I dreaded going down the bread aisle at the grocery store because I had the hardest time choosing which bread to buy. I was attracted to those bright orange "99¢" stickers, but the loaves inside were not worth eating. The loaves that were more tasty and nutritious were more than I could justify spending on bread. I stood in the aisle and debated, finally choosing, but always wanting another way for our daily bread.

So, I began making bread regularly. By the time bread making became a rhythm of life I had plenty of practice. I knew the steps by heart and could go through the motions with ease.

I begin making bread after the children leave for school while I wait to go to Morning Prayer. It's easy to start; I simply measure the yeast into a bread bowl, dissolve it in warm water and let it sit for 5-10 minutes. When the yeast is sufficiently proofed, I stir in the flour, one cup at a time at first and then a smaller amount as the dough stiff-

ens. This is when the work begins. My muscles become sore and I get blisters on my hands from the friction of the wooden spoon while stirring, particularly with a large amount of dough. I even work up a sweat. However, physical strength is not the only effort required now, I must also practice patience. I'm tempted to hurry the process by adding too much flour at a time. Experience has taught me that I can't rush through this stage or I'll end up with tough dough that has stretch marks rather than soft dough with a smooth finish. The discipline of adding flour slowly, stills me and quiets the anxiety I may be feeling about the day.

By the time most of the flour is added, I am well centered. I have singleness of purpose where all distractions are put on hold. Soon the dough begins to pull away from the sides of the bowl, which tells me it is time to begin kneading. Kneading is a rhythmic action: push forward, turn slightly, fold in half backward and repeat continuously for 8-10 minutes. It is like the dance of a whirling dervish who gets lost in his movements until settling into a place of being at peace, a place of being in God.

When the dance is done, I place the dough into a bowl, cover it tightly and wait for it to rise until doubled in bulk. While it's rising, I go to Morning Prayer. This form of prayer includes scripture reading, silence and intercession. Toward the end of the liturgy we pray the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples to pray saying, "Our Father in Heaven, may your name be hallowed..."

As I pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," I am mindful of the swelling bread dough that will be ready for shaping into loaves and baking after Morning Prayer. I hear God's answer to my petition in the provision of flour, yeast, water and salt along with the health, strength and will for making bread. Whenever I put each of these provisions together I become an active participant in God's response to my plea for our daily bread.

-David Wenger

What is *Hermitage Jam* ?

The Board of Directors has initiated a work-filled fun day at the Hermitage. Friday, August 3, the day preceding the Feast of the Transfiguration, (see related article below), has been named the **Hermitage Jam**.

We hope this day will be fun and full of energy. We will be picking the wild blackberries growing in profusion around the grounds. These berries will be sent to a professional canner who will transform them into *Hermitage Jam* which we will use and sell.

Those not wishing to pick berries may join in other work projects which are also scheduled for the day. There will be surprises, perhaps music (can you bring some?), fun and fellowship. Those staying into the evening can be sure of a campfire (weather-permitting, of course). We can talk and relive memories of past Hermitage work days and relish the thought of toast with the jam we helped to make. If you would like to participate in the Hermitage Jam, let us know by calling 269-244-8696, or contacting us through our web site, www.hermitagecommunity.org.

Feast of the Transfiguration

Following the Hermitage Jam, we will be celebrating the Feast of the Transfiguration (traditionally August 6) on Saturday, August 4. A prayer-filled day of rest, we plan to examine the story of the Transfiguration, fellowship over lunch (provided), worship together, take a prayer walk, and renew our commitments to the daily journey of transformation in Christ. If you are planning on participating in this retreat, let us know by calling 269-244-8696, or contacting us through our web site, www.hermitagecommunity.org. Also check the web site for updates on the program.

Phoenix Gallery

Twin brothers, Kenny and Tay Oyedeji, have been invited to exhibit an exciting collection of paintings in the Phoenix Gallery beginning August 1 and continuing through our day of fasting and prayer for World Peace on September 21.

The Hermitage Calendar

- Jul 8 Taizé Evensong, 7:00
- Aug 1 Phoenix Gallery—Kenny and Tay Oyedeji through 9/22 (tentative)
- Aug 3 Hermitage Jam
- Aug 4 Feast of the Transfiguration Retreat
- Aug 12 Taizé Evensong, 7:00
- Aug 27 Book Discussion, 2:00
Cynthia Bergeult, *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening*
(may change, call first)
- Sep 9 Taizé Evensong, 7:00
- Oct 14 Taizé Evensong, 7:00
- Nov 11 Taizé Evensong, 7:00
- Nov 28 Advent Quiet Day , 8—3
- Dec 7 Advent Quiet Day , 8—3
- Dec 8 Advent Quiet Day, 8—3
- Dec 9 Taizé Evensong, 7:00

Annual Report

Our work at The Hermitage is to make God “real” in the everyday, walking-around lives of ordinary believers. We are not “embarrassed by the miracle” of God’s work in Christ in each believer and in each one seeking to know God. The reality of the resurrection is present in each encounter with a guest, in every minute of awareness of God’s definite presence, in each morning of prayer, in the walk that prompts an overflowing heart to give thanks, in stillness and silence, in good food simply prepared and served, in birds, deer, chipmunks and mice that come calling. The time spent away from phones, schedules, dependents, and the electronic sound barrage, gives us a way to practice being aware of God’s presence so that we are more attuned to God in our regular spheres of activity. We call this retreat, but it is really a way to affirm the resurrection, by affirming that the living Christ is accessible to each one of us, now. Practicing disciplines that affirm a vibrant inner life – the life lived with, in and through God – is practicing the resurrection.

In 2006 we served about 600 individuals at The Hermitage. We offered both Advent and Lenten Quiet Day retreats and provided a Stations of the Cross meditative walk for Holy Week. We also held a day of prayer and fasting for world peace on the UN International Day of Peace (September 21). A Taizé-style evensong, held the second Sunday evening of each month, had an average attendance of twenty-five. At our annual Board Retreat, Willard and Alice Roth led us in a discussion about the ways we are and can continue to grow into an intentional Christian community. We also welcomed Anthony Franchina into our resident community.

The Phoenix Gallery is an important part of our presence, inviting guests to view art as another way to peer into the real and see God, the world, or our selves differently. This year we hosted icons by Donna Rathert, paintings by Suzanne Siegel, Megan Schopf, and Suzi Lattner, and sculpture by Karen French Hall.

We rely on charitable giving for about one-third of our annual operating expenses. We are guided by the jubilee principle that everything belongs to God (Lev. 25). This means that we trust that whatever God provides is what we need. By the end of 2006 we have paid nearly \$114,000 toward the property purchase, leaving a balance of \$136,000 in mortgage loans. We continue to solicit and receive funds for the elimination of the mortgage.

We are currently looking for individuals who value and practice retreating and are willing to serve on our board of directors.

Your prayers, presence and shared resources fulfill the Hermitage mission of providing a way and a place to pray.

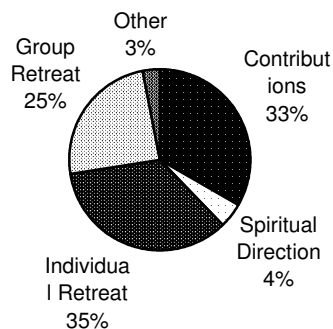
Thank you...

Upon arriving for a weekend of service, two volunteers asked what needed to be done during their stay and added, "we just want to love this place". We are deeply grateful for all the ways you "love this place". Following is a sampling of the love poured out on The Hermitage in the first half of this year.

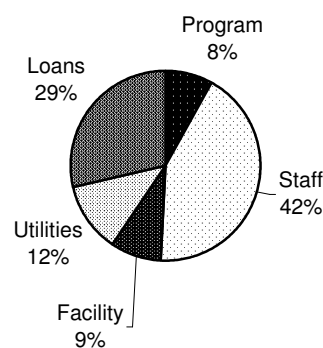
- Mary Knapp, Natala Mohl, Nancy Joy, and Judy Somers, meal preparation
- Kevin Driedger and Rebekah Yoder; week-long volunteers doing cleaning, cooking, yard work and repairs
- Nadine Zook Miller, Judy Somers and Rosemary Barroso; guests who incorporated a work period into their retreat
- Les Keener, Kevin Driedger, Ron & Joanne Geib, Judy Ashburn, Janice & Stephanie Sizemore, Mary Hershey, Judy & Larry Somers, John Howie, Anthony Franchina, Margaret, Emily and John Mark Wenger for helping to re-roof the Nazareth house
- Mary Knapp, Laney Ganey, Judy & Larry Somers for new pillows, bedding and towels
- The Hermitage Board of Directors for helping to carry the mantle of providing a way and a place to pray: Robert Charles, Allan Martling, and Larry Terlouw
- Kevin Dreidger for his tireless efforts in cataloguing 200+ books thus far for Menno Simons Library
- Melody Phelps, bookkeeping and preparing tax reports

David and Naomi Wenger
Co-Directors

2006 Income



2006 Expense





the hermitage

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

In this excerpt from “Seven Stanzas at Easter,”
John Updike writes of the resurrection of Jesus,

*Make no mistake: if He rose at all
it was as His body;
if the cells’ dissolution did not reverse, the molecules
reknit, the amino acids rekindle,
the Church will fall. ...*

*Let us not mock God with metaphor,
analogy, sidestepping transcendence;
making of the event a parable, a sign painted in
the faded credulity of earlier ages:
let us walk through the door. ...*

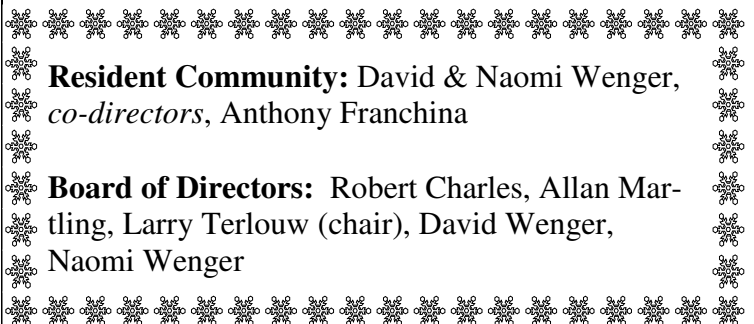
*Let us not seek to make it less monstrous,
for our own convenience, our own sense of beauty,
lest, awakened in one unthinkable hour, we are
embarrassed by the miracle,
and crushed by remonstrance.*

the hermitage Mission

*As Jesus was revitalized for being about his Father’s business
by periodic withdrawal to retreat and prayer, so The Hermit-
age 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.*

(from The Hermitage Rule)


Resident Community: David & Naomi Wenger,
co-directors, Anthony Franchina

Board of Directors: Robert Charles, Allan Mar-
tling, Larry Terlouw (chair), David Wenger,
Naomi Wenger