



Views from

# the hermitage

*Creating an environment of attentiveness to God*

## Sabbatical Digest

*"Sabbatical is a time to change the rhythm of life and reap blessings from God. Based on the Sabbath rhythm established for the Israelites, sabbaticals serve the dual purpose of rest and re-commitment of life toward God."*

-Views from the Hermitage, Pentecost 2009

We asked each of our volunteer directors for the summer to reflect on their time here and give you a sense of their experiences. What follows is a compilation of their responses.



*From Gene & Mary Herr (Hermitage Founding Directors and June Directors)*

When we left in 2001 we chose not to look back or to return much. We needed to be present to family and the place where we were. Returning eight years later, we were surprised by how at home we felt. Of course other than our childhood homes, we never lived seventeen years in one place. The Hermitage was totally different for us than a pastorate or other calls we'd had.

The chain saw, the paths, morning prayers, lemon oil for the dining table, digging an outhouse hole, silent meals, going for berries near-by; it all seemed so natural for us.

We are encouraged by so much: board members and guests we'd never met before and who are on the way with Jesus, the many friends with whom we reconnected, and, key to the joys of June, the team of volunteers including Sarah, Darrin, Rebekah, and Elijah Compagner and all of our children who were able to come and work while we were present.

The Wengers blessed us by a visit to our home in Kansas on their return from California.

We have been invited to return August, 2010, for the Feast of the Transfiguration. We anticipate a return to that sacred spot.



*From Darrin and Sarah Compagner (June Assistants)*

For our part, we enjoyed our month at the Hermitage very much. Elijah and Rebekah are still bringing it up (which is saying something when you're 2 or 3 years

old and it's a couple months ago). It was, in so many ways, a wonderful gift for us to pass the month of June there. Just spending a month with Gene and Mary alone would have been gift enough.

Here are some of the lessons and gifts of the Hermitage for us:

- The regular rhythm of morning prayer is a gift, and one that even an energetic 3 ½ year old can be eager to receive. And, a child's presence at morning prayers, even if fidgety, can be a real gift to the rest of us.

- There is much to be learned in that old phrase - *ora et labora*. Prayer and work. Distinguish without separating these two. They are not the same thing, but they are closely related. Exploring the connections between them addresses much that goes wrong in our lives and world.

- The mysterious absence of mosquitoes made long walks and much time outdoors all the more enjoyable. I wonder again about their place in a redeemed creation.

- Taking something that is worn, cracked, and decrepit, and working to slowly repair, restore, and renew it is deeply satisfying work. God, too, seems to take particular delight in this kind of work."



*From Richard and Rosella Schrock (July Directors)*

Our time at The Hermitage helped us realize how much David and Naomi needed the rest of a sabbatical. We were kept very busy but were grateful for all of the guests that God sent our way during the month, the volunteers, and the support of the board members. Our experiences at The Hermitage have helped us to realize the importance of making time to quiet ourselves and listen for the voice of God. - Rosella

Since our first visit to the Hermitage, Rosella and I have always looked forward to returning. Some of the things I enjoyed were trying to keep the outside surroundings at the Hermitage looking nice. That John Deere mower presented a challenge of it's own though! A greater blessing was the many conversations that we had with guests, usually in the evening hours. We were encouraged by the number of young people who came to the Hermitage for renewal and refreshing. I am becom-

ing more aware of how important it is for us to find time for quietness and an attitude of listening to hear from the Lord. I am also becoming more aware of how often the Scripture points to the importance of the same.

Since we have returned home, Rosella and I spent several days at Life Change Camp (in Missouri) using a cabin that has been set up for experiences similar to what the Hermitage offers. We have encouraged the directors to change the name of the cabin from "pastor's cabin" to a name that would be welcoming to anyone who desired a "hermitage experience". We are grateful for all that we have learned and observed while at the Hermitage. -Richard



*From Kevin and June Mears Driedger (August Directors)*

In 1999, June and I first moved into Nazareth, the well-worn double-wide on the Hermitage land. The Hermitage was new to us and I quickly fell in love. It was that giddy young-love where everything is exploration and each day brings a new delight for the senses. We lived and worked there for three months, and then moved on to Lansing.

On July 28, 2009, almost exactly ten years later, June and I moved back into Nazareth. Once again, I was reminded that I love this place, but like most relationships that have lasted ten years, it has become a more honest and mature love. I know its weaknesses - its leaky roofs and leaky basements, its occasionally precarious financial situations, and its constant demands on those who tend to it, but I also have a much deeper appreciation of its strengths - land that is steeped in prayer, and a rule of life that teaches what things really matter.

Ten years of knowing the Hermitage as a place and a rule of life has shaped me. Because of the Hermitage, I know that I am the bearer of God's infinite life. Because of the Hermitage I know the importance of welcoming others as Christ among us. Because of the Hermitage I know that the most essential task for each day is to pray. -Kevin



*Many thanks to Geme and Mary Herr, Darrin and Sarah Compagner, Richard and Rosella Schrock, Kevin and June Mears Driedger, the Board of Directors and many other summer volunteers. We are grateful for their hard work and sensitive care of the facility and the people who visited The Hermitage this past summer. -David and Naomi Wenger*

## Vantage Point

A vantage point is a place from which to view another place. Our summer sabbatical gave us many new places from which to view The Hermitage. Looking at what we have been given to serve while being away invited gratitude about where we are, the people who make up the Hermitage community and what happens here. It also invited our evaluation of how we go about our tasks, what is being accomplished and who is involved in the work.

*Places:* Our sabbatical wanderings began by David and Naomi being on retreat at two different locations in New York State; David at Mount Savior Monastery in Pine City and Naomi at the Carondelet Hospitality Center in Latham. David's ten-day silent retreat with Benedictine monks and lots of sheep re-taught him the value of doing nothing, letting go and resting in God's provision. Naomi's intensive ten-days of looking for Christophany (the appearance of Christ) through the teaching of Cynthia Bourgeault and Fr. Thomas Keating and the writing of Raimon Panikkar, taught her to keep noticing that appearance in unlikely places. We then traveled west, by way of Michigan and a family reunion, through Kansas and New Mexico to California where we stayed for about four weeks in the spacious home of gracious friends who were on vacation during that time. We enjoyed hiking in the San Gabriel Mountains and relaxing by the pool as well as the delights of Los Angeles (we do enjoy city life). We then wandered to Crestone, Colorado, the home of the Spiritual Life Institute monks, where we trekked through the high peaks of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains before returning home. We are glad for the time spent with friends, old and new, on our journey.

*Gratitude:* We work in a wonderful place where rest and silence are encouraged, slowness is valued and where work that does not get done today is gratefully received tomorrow as the task of a new day. We serve people whose purpose is to take time for God. We are surrounded by people who care for this work and who support it by their presence and gifts. We are amazed by how God works in people, usually without our intervention.

*Evaluation:* We took on the mantle of serving the Hermitage believing that God had called us to be in this place. We still sense the call of God for us to be here. We realize, though, that we may have too fully embraced the tasks and have thrown ourselves at gigantic projects that only frustrate us because they are too immense. This summer we regained the vision that *our*

task is not to serve *The Hermitage* but to serve God in this place. We are working on how to be more inviting to others who are called to serve God here with us. Together we will accomplish much because God has placed us here for a purpose.

-Naomi R. Wenger

## Welcoming Hospitality

One of the ways I experienced Sabbath rest this summer was being the recipient of hospitality rather than being the one to extend it. Of all the people and places we visited between New York and California, I most often noticed the welcome we received. Several unique welcomes caught my attention. In Albuquerque, NM, we stayed with friends whom we had not seen in a dozen years or more. Once we were settled into their home, Bob looked at us with a big grin and with child-like enthusiasm said, "I can't believe the Wengers are in our home." I felt truly welcomed realizing Bob's delight in our visit. In California, friends invited us to stay in their house while they were on an extended vacation. Though the house was grand in every way, the love extended to us was even grander, as seen in the simple sidewalk chalk greeting from a child's hand that read, "Welcome to our home." I did not expect to see sidewalk chalk on the steps leading up to this magnificent house but there it was and I immediately felt at home. Coming back east through Colorado, we stopped at Nada Hermitage in Crestone. At the entryway there is a sign that says, "to all who enter here...no fuss." What a wonderful gift it is to be received without fuss. A few days later above tree line in the Sangre de Cristo mountain range, we stopped our day's hike to set up camp for the night. Glancing to one side of the trail, I saw a huge rock with a singular daisy growing through the center of the rock. The flower seemed to say, "come, rest here for the night, you will need strength for the journey."

In noticing the welcoming hospitality of others, I noticed the welcoming hospitality of God. God delights in welcoming us. God welcomes us with childlike love. There is no fuss in the welcome of God. And God makes a way through hearts of stone to say come, be still and rest here for a while.

-David Wenger

## Buy-A-Board Campaign Continues

We are grateful to have completed the first phase of the St. Joseph's Barn renovation project. Through the generous giving of many benefactors, a new

## The Hermitage Calendar

Oct 11	Taizé Evensong, 7 pm
Nov 8	Taizé Evensong, 7 pm
Dec 5	Advent Quiet Day, 9-3
Dec 9	Advent Quiet Day, 9-3
Dec 13	Taizé Evensong, 7 pm
Jan 10	Taizé Evensong, 7 pm
Feb 14	Taizé Evensong, 7 pm
Mar 13	Lent Quiet Day, 9-3
Mar 14	Taizé Evensong, 7 pm
Mar 22	Lent Quiet Day, 9-3

roof and skylights now grace the 100-year-old building. Thank you.

We are still accepting donations for the re-siding of the barn. **Only thirty-five donations of \$100 each (\$3,500) are needed to complete the project.** Our desire is to complete the re-siding before winter. Your help is greatly appreciated. If you are unable to buy a whole board, consider giving a smaller amount.

## Advent Quiet Days

Do you long for a quiet day during Advent to reflect and renew your spirit? Quiet days are guided retreat days designed to give personal time for silence between guided meditations. This year, Advent Quiet Days will be held Saturday, December 5 and Wednesday, December 9 from 9 am to 3 pm. Reservations are required for this event. Suggested donation: \$50 for the day with lunch. Contact us to reserve your space: [thehermitage@juno.com](mailto:thehermitage@juno.com) or 269-244-8696.

## Feast of the Transfiguration 2010 — 25th Anniversary Celebration

Plan now to be part of the *Hermitage 25th Anniversary Celebration*, August 6-8, 2010. Friends of The Hermitage are invited to come for all or part of the weekend. We are planning a guided retreat day, worship and fellowship times. For those who wish, there will be opportunities for work on the grounds as well. Save the date and join us.

## The Word Alone

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth...From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace...No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

John 1:14, 16, 18

## *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, Cheryl Nakata, Biff Weidman, David Wenger, Naomi Wenger



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**Taizé Services: Second Sundays at Seven**