



views from the hermitage

Creating an environment of attentiveness to God

EDC Work Days

May 5, June 9, October 6,
and November 9

The Ecosystems Discernment Committee of the Board of Directors tends the land - the woods, trails, gardens, flower beds and lawns - of The Hermitage. The EDC takes endeavors to work *with* the land, rather than to control or dominate the plants and animals we share this space with. There are, however, invasive species of plants that, left unchecked, will alter the landscape by changing the soil and limiting what will grow in it. The Committee has set several work days this year to either work on eradicating these invasive species or work in the vegetable garden. Many hands *do* make light work. Will you lend a hand on one of the EDC work days? See the schedule below and give us a call if you want to participate.



Sharing our Earth Home

The okra has perhaps the wasteful beauty of garden blooms. Until last summer I had not seen okra growing so I was mesmerized when these flowers began to unfurl on sturdy bushes in the garden. I returned often just to spy on these beautiful blossoms. They unfurl to catch the breeze so they can self-pollinate. But then an eager ant or honeybee enters to explore their creamy cups and the crimson spots deep within. Then, in just two or three days, the flower is replaced by an edible seed pod. This process is so rapid in the late summer that I checked on them every-other day so that the “ready” pods could be cut and the plant encouraged to use its energy creating more of those gorgeous flowers.

A relative of hibiscus, cotton and cacao (the plant that produces what we process into chocolate), okra thrives in the hottest of summer days, are drought tolerant and extremely productive. When much of the garden is wilting in the heat, the okra stands up tall and spreads its lovely flowers toward the sun.

As much as I have enjoyed watching the okra grow and



Upcoming Events

May 5 EDC Workday,
Invasives Eradication, 9 - 3

June 9 EDC Work Day,
Invasives Eradication, 9-3

June 16 Hermitage Way
Conference, 9-12

July 1-13 Sabbath Time-
HERMITAGE CLOSED

August 4 Feast of the
Transfiguration Retreat, 9-4;
Hermitage Way Covenanting,
3pm

August 18 Hermitage Board
Meeting

October 6 EDC Gardening
Day, 9-3

October 13 Hermitage Way
Retreat, 9-4

November 9 Final EDC
Garden Work Day - Giving
Thanks, 9-3

treasuring its beauty, I also need to know where my food comes from, to treasure the soil that is the source for every kind of food and to nurture good eating habits as a way of respecting our planet home. And I delight not only in particular specimens but I can marvel at a whole field of red potato plants in bloom on our drive to church on a Sunday in summer. Or I can find humor in the seemingly sudden green striping of a newly planted cornfield in spring. And I certainly revel in the voluptuous variety of the wildflower prairie. Even the seemingly useless plants bring delight, food for bees and butterflies, nourish the soil and refresh the air. My work is to see and to give thanks.

Voluntary attention to the large and small ways that we are graced with beauty is a way of praising—a way of saying “yes” to sharing our lives with the creation around, including and sustaining us. It is a way of “not thinking more highly than we ought” about ourselves and giving over (surrendering) to what is so much greater than any of us and even of the whole human race. This universal view not only enlarges our Selves but also makes us aware of our interdependence and ultimately of our absolute dependence on God. As good “sharers” of our home world we also become good “carers” of it. And we give glory to God. -NRW

The Hermitage Way

by Judith Storteboom, *Way Keeper since 2013*

Hermitage Way Keepers are those who covenant to keep ten practices over the course of a year (covenant renewable annually). These ten practices are derived from the Statement of Community Values, developed fifteen years ago, that shape our way of being at The Hermitage. If you would like more information about becoming a Way Keeper, contact: naomi@hermitagecommunity.org.

When David and Naomi first offered The Hermitage Way, “...a set of practices for a contemplative daily life,” it resonated deep within me. I knew immediately that this was who I was and these practices could provide a framework for me to live out my own personal discipleship. So I committed.

My first task was to write my personal Rule of Life, “oriented toward awareness of God in all daily activities and within all persons.” God led me through this process by identifying four areas of commitment in my life. It was simple and has not changed over the years. I began a practice of reading the ten Hermitage Way practices and my Rule

of Life every morning during my devotional time. They serve as reminders and invitations to me in how I will live that day.

I often find that one of the practices stands out from the others, calling me to consider it more deeply. Often there is an issue or aspect of my life that God is calling me to pay attention to: reconciliation with someone; a creative part of myself that wants expression; an area of study to explore; learning to live my life more simply; supporting the body of Christ, contributing to the life of The Hermitage, etc. I love how these practices encourage me to get out of my head and put hands and feet on my discipleship.

I am so grateful for The Hermitage Way. I have found wisdom in the practices. The retreats teach me, help me grow and connect me with other contemplatives. And, it keeps me engaged in the beautiful ministry of The Hermitage by learning to listen to God in my own daily life.

New Hermitage Staff

The Board of Directors of The Hermitage is pleased to welcome Kevin and June Mears Driedger as the newest additions to The Hermitage Staff. Kevin and June began their connection with The Hermitage with a service term in the fall of 1999. Since then, they have been regular retreatants and supporters. Kevin has also served several terms on The Hermitage Board, taking the role of President for some of those years. They will be joining the community in August to begin working with David and Naomi Wenger. Kevin will assume the role of Administrator and June will be working on program. David will move to a focus on groundskeeping and trail maintenance and Naomi will continue her work in programming. Together, they will hold the practices of hospitality, Spiritual Direction, and providing a way and a place to pray at The Hermitage.

The Board is also working diligently on providing adequate housing for Kevin and June. We will be erecting an energy efficient, ecologically friendly house beginning in the Fall. If you are interested in learning about the old-tradition of building with straw and clay and helping to fund or build this house, keep reading.

Building Workshop

Mark your calendars for a workshop to be held at The Hermitage, "Building with Earth and Straw," on June 1-2. We will be joined by *Leichtlembau* (light clay and straw) expert, Thomas Hirsch, who will be teaching us how to mix and stomp our walls into being. We will be building a small meditation chapel to raise awareness about and gain needed experience in shaping this "earthy" material into walls for a home. See the full details on the back side of this page. Register online or by calling: 269-244-8696.

Fundraising

The Board of Directors has been active raising funds for the new Hermitage house. Soon, they will be asking what you might contribute to this project. We are over half-way to our fundraising goal of \$270,000. Please be praying how you might give. We need both givers and workers on this project. We will be holding "mud weekends and weekdays" to create the walls. In additions, framing, roofing, plumbing, wiring, etc. are all open for volunteer help. Will you give in some way toward this project? We gratefully receive whatever you are able to give.

Building with Earth & Straw

A hands-on Two-day Workshop – June 1 – 2, 2018

Instructor: Thomas Hirsch, Bungalow Builders, Benzonia, MI



Location: 11321 Dutch Settlement Road, Three Rivers, MI 49093

Two days of learning-by-doing in a fun, hardworking community experience. You will learn an ancient and updated structural insulation method using natural insulating materials and simple techniques you can use. You will learn how to mix and install clay-straw insulation in walls. This workshop is part of a Hermitage Community larger residential sustainable building project using these techniques.

BONUS - Mini/Green Natural Building Primer - 7-8pm, 6/1/2018

with Thomas Hirsch, Bungalow Builders, Inc. Benzonia, MI
US Green Building Council LEED Accredited Professional

Details:

- Workshop begins promptly each day at 9:00 am and will end by 4:00 PM. Lunch included.
- Over-night lodging\meals: available if needed **Pre-Registration is required.**
- Fee: \$75 per adult

Children welcome

Wear clothes to get dirty & bring change of clothes

Register Online at <http://www.hermitagecommunity.org/earth-straw-workshop-registration/>

For more information on overnight housing or the workshop:

email contact@hermitagecommunity.org or phone 269-244-8696.

Learn more about the Hermitage Community at www.hermitagecommunity.org or Thomas Hirsch and Bungalow Builders at www.bungalowbuilders.org

Building a New House

For many years, Nazareth, a 1970's doublewide mobile home, served as housing for volunteers who came to live the Hermitage rhythms of work and prayer. Nazareth gradually deteriorated beyond repair and it was taken down in 2013.

The Board, together with Co-Directors, David and Naomi Wenger, seek to build a new home on the land. The new home will offer an independent living space away from the retreat house area for persons committed to a long-term presence on the land in service of the Hermitage mission to provide a way and a place to pray.

In 2014, when Enbridge added a new oil pipeline to the pipeline easement across the land, the Board and the Co-Directors, together with the extended Hermitage Community, made a commitment to reduce dependence on oil and oil-derivatives, in the daily operation of The Hermitage.

Thus, the vision for the new house is to continue the movement toward eco-harmony on our site and build with a preference for ecological performance and biological compatibility. This means choosing a home design that augments nature's heating and cooling capacity and uses natural unadulterated building materials. We seek to build the house as a community of skilled and unskilled labor in raising the frame and stuffing a clay-straw mix into 12-inch wall forms. We expect that the house will stand at least as long as St. Joseph's Barn has already existed (nearly 120 years) and when its usefulness is ended, it can simply be returned to the earth without creating a toxic waste area. We have a builder ready to begin in 2018.

Thank You

We are grateful for all who co-labor in providing a way and a place to pray here. Many thanks to:

- Ursula Hess, Mary Knapp, Verna Troyer, Larry and Judy Somers and Biff Weidman for generously serving meals for retreatants and staff throughout this past quarter.
- Thanks to Roger zum Felde and Brett Koehn for their continued work of digitizing the Menno Simons Library card catalogue.
- Roger also spent the winter months creating 30 engraved wood signs offering direction on the grounds and trails.
- Thanks also to Camp Friedenswald for the training on and use of their computer engraver.
- Thanks to Larry and Judy Somers who faithfully keep The Hermitage supplied with filtered water and home-made granola.
- Thanks to June Mears Driedger, Biff Weidman, Mary Knapp and Gloria Showalter for tending multiple aspects of the daily Hermitage rhythms during David and Naomi's times away this spring.
- A huge thanks to the Board of Directors for diligent work during this time of extra effort

New Board Members

We are pleased to welcome Mary Asmonga-Knapp and Joel Hogan to the Board of Directors. Mary has previously served six years and her experience and love for The Hermitage is welcome during this building season. Joel comes with years of team-building experience with the Cristian Reformed Church Mission organization.



the hermitage

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contact@hermitagecommunity.org
269-244-8696

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Retreating at The Hermitage

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

Resident Community:
David Wenger
Naomi Wenger

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