



views from the hermitage

Creating an environment of attentiveness to God

Beauty and the Formation of the Soul

with Dr. Curt Thompson

(author of *The Anatomy of the Soul*
and *The Soul of Shame*)

Using his work on the intersection of spirituality and interpersonal neurobiology, Curt will lead us on the inner journey of finding and being found by the God of Beauty and the beauty of God.

- October 4-6, 2019
- Friday, 4 pm — Sunday, 12 pm
- Suggested donation: \$300 (includes lodging and meals)
- Commuters: \$200 (includes Friday supper, Saturday lunch and supper)
- Scholarships available for those unable to pay the full amount.

Registrations will be confirmed upon receipt of a \$50 nonrefundable deposit.

- To register for this retreat email Kevin Driedger:

contact@hermitagecommunity.org
Or call: 269.244.8696

(Further information on page 2)



David Wenger plunges the shovel into the land for the new residence.

Groundbreaking for new residence at Hermitage

Two dozen people gathered for a groundbreaking service for a new staff residence at The Hermitage Community on Saturday, August 3.

The participants declared that “This house is to be a shelter for all who will live within its walls for years to come.”

The home will be constructed as a “green home” using straw and clay for 12-inch walls, clay flooring with radiant heat, and ultimately, solar energy. After Enbridge added a new pipeline crossing the Hermitage land, the board and the staff committed themselves to reducing dependence on oil and oil-derivatives in the daily operation of The Hermitage.

According to Naomi Wenger, “The vision for the new house is to continue to move toward eco-harmony on The Hermitage land and build with a preference for ecological performance and biological compatibility. We expect that the house will stand approximately 300 years and when its usefulness is ended, it can simply be returned to the earth without creating a toxic waste area.”



Beauty and the Formation of the Soul:

Retreat with Dr. Curt Thompson

It has been said that beauty will save the world. And no wonder: for all of our problems, it appears that our left-brain-dominated solutions—full of the rational and right, but often fraught with violence, intended or not—are proving to be quite unhelpful. Hence it is in our day of fractured relationship and creation that the biblical narrative once again draws our attention to beauty. But beauty not merely as an abstract term of philosophy or one that we apply to our encounters with the material world, living or otherwise.

No, rather, beauty as something that we long to *become*. Not just beautiful, but beauty itself. Beauty that transforms our imaginations, relationships and the things we long to create with others.

But there is more. For beauty is something we *long for*, and as such invites the question that are the first words of Jesus in John's Gospel: "What do you want?" The biblical narrative indicates that specifically because of the work of Jesus, beauty appears in the places we least expect to find it, but that are the places of our greatest desires.

And this is found nowhere to be truer than in the reality and imagery of the crucifixion of our Lord. It is indeed the places of our greatest longings that often reside our greatest griefs—and where we would least expect beauty to emerge. Moreover, what we are learning about the mind supports this notion: that from the detritus of our disintegrated neural networks and relationships, some of the greatest offerings of beauty are to be found. For this indeed the work of God, that we bring our shattered selves—with our longings and griefs, our traumas and skeptical hope—to discover the beauty that we are and that God longs for us to become in the context of deeply healing community. ☞



Cultivating Community Campaign: A \$15,000 Matching Gift Challenge

Cultivating Community is a capital campaign for building a staff house on the Hermitage land. Early this year we were offered a matching gift challenge of \$15,000 which is still underway so that currently your contributions toward Cultivating Community are being matched dollar for dollar up to \$15,000. To date we have received \$7725 toward the matching gift challenge. **Can you help us reach the \$15,000 goal?** Give online at <https://www.aplos.com/aws/give/TheHermitageCommunity/CultivatingCommunity> or send your check to The Hermitage with the designation "Cultivating Community".

The total goal for the Cultivating Community campaign is \$270,000. Through the generosity of many donors over the past two years we have reached \$215,000 toward the campaign goal. Thank you to all who have contributed.

Will you join the donor circle to help us meet the campaign goal? Your gift now will go toward the matching gift challenge.

We are deeply grateful to all who give generously to the well-being of The Hermitage Community. **Thank you.** ☞

The Hermitage Prayer Practice of Supplication: God is Enough

By Naomi R. Wenger



The Hermitage Way is a group of folks who commit to keep ten practices for a year at a time. This article is one of a series of articles on these practices.

Practice 1: Those who choose to keep the *Way* commit to engage in a daily prayer practice. This practice will include silence, meditation on scripture, intercession and affirmation. Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer liturgies from The Hermitage or other sources may be used.

Supplication: “God is Enough”

There are many words used for prayer: adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, intercession, pleading, etc. Some of our prayer, perhaps the greater part, should be simply acknowledging God. These kinds of prayers are adoration and thanksgiving; wonder-filled expressions of our awareness of God at work in the world. But, we often think of prayer as asking. That is understandable since the original meaning of the root of the word “prayer” (*precarius* is Latin meaning to obtain by entreaty or earnest asking) is to beg, to ask. So, it is appropriate that we pray *for* others or ourselves. We ask God to act in some way to benefit those we love and serve. This is called intercession or supplication.

Supplication is a prayer of deep trust and awareness. The stories of Elijah in I Kings help us when we think on this deep kind of prayer.

Elijah the prophet of the Lord, lives during a particularly troubled time in Israel’s history. King Ahab is a bad king, rebelling against God’s rule in his own life and leading the people astray. He is married to an equally bad queen, Jezebel, who opposes the worship of God and promotes the worship of the local god, Baal. God sends a warning to his people in the form of a drought, the ensuing famine and, probably most galling to Jezebel, a prophet who is listening to God.

During the famine, God sends Elijah to live with a widow in Zarephath, and to eat at her table. God supplies her with a never-ending oil jug and a bottomless flour jar so that they will not starve. However, during the famine, the widow’s son falls ill and dies. Elijah, never one to mince words with God says, “O lord my God have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I am staying, by killing her son?” A rather direct question and accusation! Nevertheless, Elijah presents the facts to God, concluding his prayer with, “O Lord my God, let this child’s life come into him again” (17:20-21) thereby acknowledging that only God can change the circumstance of death. This is a humility born of experience. And God restores the boy’s life.

Elijah is aware of God’s action. He recognizes God’s power. He looks to God to do what God is already doing and will continue to do. Elijah is part of the plan because he says, “yes” to whatever God does.

A few weeks later, Elijah is sent back to Ahab with the news that it would rain again after three years of drought. Ahab agrees to a challenge between God and the prophets of the Baal. The prophets fail but God is revealed in a show of firepower. Elijah’s simple prayer of supplication is of interest, here, “O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your bidding. Answer me, O Lord, answer me, so that this people may know that you, O Lord are God,” gives us

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(Continued from page 3)

the clue to Elijah's target. He was not praying that the people would follow him, that they would give him a raise, or that they would make his life easier. No, he wanted them to acknowledge God; be aware of God's powerful presence, worship God. God and God alone was Elijah's target. It is important to not overlook the obvious point that supplicants trust that God will provide for their desires.



But what, you may ask, if God had not restored the boy's life or burned up the sacrifice and the altar? This is a very important question because it brings us to the significant realization that *the outcomes or the "answers" to the prayer are not the measure of God's action*. In our Elijah stories, God is acting through Elijah, through the widow, through fire, through weather formation, and Elijah is listening. Elijah is aware of God's action. He recognizes God's power. He looks to God to do what God is already doing and will continue to do. He is part of the plan because he says, "yes" to whatever God does.

The ancient Chinese poet, Chuang Tzu, wrote:

*When an archer is shooting for nothing
He has all his skill
If he shoots for a brass buckle
He is already nervous.
If he shoots for a prize of gold
He goes blind*

*Or he sees two targets –
He is out of his mind!
His skill has not changed. But the prize
Divides him. He cares.
He thinks more of winning
Than of shooting –
And the need to win
Drains him of power.*

Our aim in prayer is always God. Not knowing about God or getting something from God but God, God's self. We may think our target is what we want, but in all true prayer, what we aim for is God. What we want *is* the motivation for shooting out a prayer, but focusing only on what we want can skew our aim at God dreadfully.

To adapt the words of the poet, the need to receive drains our prayer of power. But to be open and even vulnerable to receive what is being provided, we need to fall for God again and again. If our prayer brings us to God, that is sufficient. God is enough. ☸

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(This essay was published on the Hermitage Community blog. To read weekly blog posts from the Hermitage residential community go to www.hermitagecommunity.org and click on "Blog").

Up Close with Volunteers

1. What is your name and where do you live?

My name is Mary Asmonga-Knapp from Battle Creek, Michigan. I am originally from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

2. How did you learn about the Hermitage?

I learned about the Hermitage from my dear friend Judy Somers. I was a believer yet peace eluded me. I was fraying at the edges. David Wenger asked me why I came to the Hermitage and I told him, "Look, I am just freaked out!" My intentions in living were wonderful however, I needed to STOP and begin to Be. My first night there I cried and cried, fell asleep and had a dream about the pearl of great price! I ate some delicious green soup, great bread, and had spiritual direction. I was ignoring the most important aspect of my life. Practices I was ignoring transformed the way I was living.

3. What do you do as a volunteer?

As a volunteer I have done just about everything! Cooked for 1 and cooked for 20. I have raked leaves, done laundry, baked deserts, cleaned, prayed on trails, made beds, subbed for David and Naomi when they were on sabbatical, served as a spiritual director, a board member, and cleaned out the fridge. My favorite job is the laundry--God always shows up at that clothesline!

4. What draws you to volunteer?

What draws me to volunteer is the call from Jesus to be there for others. Making the staff's life a little easier. The Herr (the Hermitage founders) inspiration, the Mennonite influence, the ancient Christian practice of silence and contemplation. All of it calls to me.

5. What is one thing you want people to know about the Hermitage?

Prayer has many forms. Dusting may be prayer, hanging sheets, raking leaves, making soup, weeding gardens, all brings us closer to the Holy One. Our activities are precious and sacred.☞



Deepest Thanks

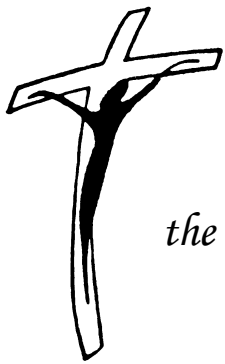
The Hermitage thrives due to the generous help of our volunteers. If you sense God's nudging to volunteer, please contact Kevin, volunteer coordinator, to offer your time and skills: Kevin@hermitagecommunity.org or 269.244.8696. We are grateful to:

- Ned Arnold for bookkeeping;
- Nancy Boyd for providing baked goods twice a month;
- Jay Budde for his continued work on the new house;
- Larry and Judy Somers for making granola, providing water, lawn mowing;
- Roger zum Felde for weekly library work, including digitizing the library card catalogue;
- Biff Weidman and Margie Pfeil for hospitality May 23-29;
- Linda Hollinger-Janzen for hospitality, May 28-29;
- Deanna Risser for tax-reporting, July 6;
- Gordan Buys for truck repair, July 22;
- IN/MI Males for trail work, June 15;
- Alice Harms for housekeeping, hosting, groundskeeping, August 15-24;
- Deb Borst for housekeeping, August 16 and August 26-27;
- Alyson and David Olmstead for groundskeeping, August 20;

Lastly, and continuously, we are grateful for

•all the board members who carry many tasks for the Hermitage year-round.☞





the hermitage

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Creating an environment of attentiveness to God

Retreating at The Hermitage

As Jesus was revitalized for begin 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 the 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 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.

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*Please hold the board and
community in your prayers*