



# *views from the hermitage*

*Creating an environment of attentiveness to God*

## **Holy Week**

April 9-15, 2017

The Stations of the Cross Walk-Meditative Guides will be available during Holy Week.

This walk is an ancient tradition of following Jesus' journey from Pilate's court to Golgotha, stopping fourteen times to meditate on the Passion and a Christian's personal connection to this event. This year, there will also be an alternative meditation guide focused on immigrants, refugees and displaced persons as a lens through which to experience the alienation of the Cross.

Holy Saturday will be set aside for decorating eggs in the Pysanka tradition. See page 2.



## **Seeing is (Not) Believing**

While I was on a recent retreat in the South West, I read about the different kinds of plants that were around me in the desert. One of them was the fish-hook cactus. In the book, it looked just like barrel cactus and immature saguaros. So, as I walked into the Sonoran Desert, I was surprised by how easy it was to spot this plant. It sports barbs that look like they could be used to land a prize-winning bass. These hooks are tough, about 2.5 inches long, and big enough to catch many lake fish.

When Jesus healed the man born blind (John 9:1-41), the neighbors and the religious leaders could not believe their own eyes. "It's never happened before! It surely cannot be true." And yet, there was the man, having been blind from birth, standing in their midst, seeing. And there was Jesus, standing on the sidelines, waiting for them to notice and believe in the "Son of Man." When the formerly blind man finally sees him, he responds by worshiping. In accepting this homage, Jesus shows him and those standing around that seeing is not the same thing as believing. Rather, belief is necessary for true seeing.



## Upcoming Events

**April 9** Taizé Evensong, 7 pm

**April 9-15** Holy Week Events -  
see page 1

**April 15** Pysanky Egg  
Decorating and Easter Vigil, 9-?

**April 28-29** Hermitage Board  
Meeting

**May 13** EDC Work Day, 9-4

**May 14** Taizé Evensong, 7 pm

**June 3** Hermitage Way Retreat -  
Topic: Spiritual Direction, 9-4

**June 10** EDC Workday, 9-4

**June 11** Taizé Evensong, 7 pm

Faith can take us beyond where we are to where we need to go in troubled situations and times. Then, what we can see in faith can become a reality. But if we stubbornly hang on only to what is real to us now, then we limit any wonderful work of God because we say, “what has never happened before is not possible.”

Where I was walking in the desert, more than 100 miles south of the Gila River and the same distance north of the Rio Magdalena, the real issue was where to find any water in which to fish. But, oh the faith of the person who named that cactus! There was real hope and faith in that name, “fish hook.” If I only saw what I expected to see, I might have missed those big hooks that could garner the next catch.

There is so much to fear and so much that we could be in despair about in this season. Jesus’ question to the blind man is applicable to our situation, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” And the man’s response, “Yes, I believe,” gave him more light than his newfound sight. It gave him the courage to face ostracism, prejudice, and a whole new way of living. He could enter into his new life with confident joy because he not only saw, he believed. Seeing is not believing. But believing makes seeing possible. -NRW

## Pysanky Egg Decorating

Join the Hermitage resident community, David & Naomi Wenger and Zac & Kristi Bowman Cooke, on Saturday, April 15 for a contemplative exercise in decorating eggs following the wax relief process that has been used by Ukrainians and other Eastern Europeans for centuries. “Pysanka” is the Ukrainian word meaning “to write.” The designs on the eggs are written with wax and then dyed. This wax relief process is easily introduced so that you will have most of the day to work on the design of your choosing at your own pace. As a break in the intricate work of egg decorating you could choose to walk *The Stations of the Cross: A Meditative Walk* along the Hermitage trails. You are welcome to join the community for Centering Prayer in the chapel at 8am. Instructions for egg decorating will begin at 9am in Gathering Room. We’ll end the day with a closing ritual at 4pm.

Make it a weekend retreat: Arrive on Good Friday afternoon for personal retreat time. Supper will be served at 5:30 as usual. The resident community will conduct Evening Prayer on Friday at 7pm. more...

After egg decorating on Saturday you can choose to stay overnight and accompany the resident community as we join our neighbors, the monks of St. Gregory's Abbey, for the Easter Vigil at the Abbey from 11pm-1am. Easter Sunday will be the usual self-serve day at The Hermitage.

Cost: Saturday only: \$50 (includes all supplies, instruction and midday meal); One night (Friday-Saturday or Saturday-Sunday): \$75 (includes all supplies, instruction and meals) Two nights: \$125 (includes all supplies, instruction and meals).

## EDC Work Days

May 13 & June 10

The Ecosystems Discernment Committee (EDC) has scheduled two Work Days for this Spring.

The May Work Day will focus on the vegetable garden. We are working on expanding the garden, tilling, fencing, planting, laying out the drip watering system and many other projects. Bring gloves, your own lunch and a snack to share.

The June Work day will focus on the eradication of invasive species, so gloves, long pants and sleeves, and a willingness to tromp into the woods are all that's required.

Join us for the day on May 13 from 9-4 or on June 10 from 9-4.

## Hermitage Happenings

During the recent Lent Quiet Days, we focused on the text of John 9, and the theme, "Sight for the Blind." Retreatant, Beth Blackbird shared the following poem she wrote during the meditation time.

### A Lenten Prayer

Light, enlighten me.

You who dance on sine waves  
and scatter immanence across particles;  
You who are opaque, soft, tender  
as freshly fallen snow, quietly  
gathering to wait out this season;  
You who shine in shimmering glory  
upon the waters of lake, stream and sea;  
You who sparkle at twilight  
with multitudes of fireflies  
and travel through eons of space  
from distant starry domains;  
You who breathe brightness  
inside prison cell and refugee camp;  
You who pierced the blindness  
of one man in Jerusalem  
who washed mud from his eyes;  
You who sang with Ruach wind  
bending over the abyss  
of blessed darkness to shape  
night and daylight, even now:

Illuminate me, open my eyes  
to see down dusty physical  
visual tracks and metaphysical corridors  
past my short-sighted distrust  
into Your indwelling radiance.

Beth Joy Blackbird  
3/13/2017

## Hermitage Way Retreats

Hermitage Way Retreats this year focus on the values of Spiritual Direction and supporting the Body of Christ, the local church. The first retreat on Spiritual Direction is scheduled for June 3 from 9-4. In this retreat, we will look at the practice of spiritual

direction, remembering its venerable practice in Christian tradition and noticing how the practice has changed in the contemporary context. We will practice group spiritual direction and active listening as ways of modeling the experience of spiritual direction. We will share our stories of direction with one another emphasizing the value of direction in our own formation.

These retreats are designed for Keepers of the Hermitage Way and for people wanting to find out more about the Way. Each year, we present two of the ten practices of a Way Keeper in a day-long retreat form so we can share our stories and support one another in a particular commitment of the Way. We also delve more deeply into each practice, learning its history and the reason it is part of the Way. We try to broaden both our understanding and deepen our practice of each commitment of the Hermitage Way. Please join us for one or both of these retreats. Information about registration is on the web site ([www.hermitagecommunity.org](http://www.hermitagecommunity.org)).

## **Board Report**

The Board of Directors has been very active visioning and planning. They are, through the work of the Property Development Committee, birthing the possibility of building replacement to the Nazareth house that can be a home for resident community. From choosing a building site to keeping our values central in our decisions as we move forward, the work is both heavy and joyous. As part of our exploration into building sustainably, Jay Budde and David Wenger will be participating in an EcoNest building workshop in Pennsylvania in May. We hope that their involvement will inform and influence our work.

The Board is also continuing the work of discerning the make-up of the residential community. The Way and Rule Committee is shepherding a new model of leadership within the community. Zac and Kristi Bowman Cooke have ably begun sharing the tasks of daily operation with the Wengers.

The Ecosystems Discernment Committee is working on a land management plan using a report prepared for The Hermitage by Certified Forester, Bill Minter. This includes eliminating invasive species of plants, developing a larger garden space, the possible addition of fruit and nut trees to The Hermitage production and looking after the various use zones of the land that we maintain.

Due to the hard work of several people over the last several years, the portion of the yellow trail that had been closed by the tornado is now completely open to walkers. Now, we are making a final push to open the trail through the woods that connects our trail system to the trails of St. Gregory's Abbey. Along with our access to trails at GilChrist, that gives us several miles of woodland and meadow trails to offer to our neighborhood retreat guest population.

The Board is grateful for your continued prayers as we hold The Hermitage vision and community in the work that is done here.

## **Thank You**

The gratitude list keeps growing as we receive what God brings to us in each season. Over the last months, we are grateful to:

- ♦ our Community retreat guides: June Mears Driedger, Joel & Patty Hogan, and David Janzen
- ♦ Judy & Larry Somers for water, granola, laundry soap, and guest-hosting during a community retreat

- ♦ Dee Swartz for weekend hosting
- ♦ Sylvie Gudin Koehn for guiding our board retreat

## Projects in Progress

We always have a project or two we are working to finish. Sometimes we wait on the right season, sometimes we wait on the right helpers and sometimes we wait to raise funds to complete the job. We are currently in process with several projects.

- replacing the worn carpeting in a couple of guest rooms
- replacing the gas heater in Swartz Hall with a direct vent model
- replacing the shades for Caryll House (thanks to the handy help of Helen Bowman)
- replacing the exterior doors of the Barn, and
- replacing the range in the kitchen

If you would like to help fund any of these projects, send us a check and a note and your money will go right to the area of need.

## Lenten Table Reading

A Lenten practice we have kept through the years at The Hermitage is to read aloud during the midday meal. This Lent we have read *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* by Henri Nouwen. The book is as relevant today as it was at publication over 40 years ago because it addresses the timeless nature of life in God.

Nouwen identifies three movements of the spiritual life: a movement from loneliness to solitude (our relationship to ourselves); a movement from hostility to hospitality (our relationship to others); and a movement from illusion to prayer (our relationship to God).

He writes, “The more we come to the painful confession of our loneliness, hostilities and illusions, the more we are able to see solitude, hospitality and prayer as part of the vision of our life.”

In the movement from loneliness to solitude Nouwen says “When our loneliness drives us away from ourselves into the arms of our companions in life, we are, in fact, driving ourselves into excruciating relationships, tiring friendships and suffocating embraces.” (pg. 19). He calls for a persistent nurturing of a “solitude of heart” where we find our truest longing, union with God.

To move from hostility to hospitality Nouwen asks that we concern ourselves with “the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place.” (pg. 51). He goes on to say that poverty of mind and heart makes a good host. Poverty of mind is an articulate *not knowing* that opens us to receive the word from others and the Other with great attention. A poverty of heart guards against “an inflated heart that can make us very intolerant” and calls for a “willing detachment from making our own limited experience the criterion for our approach to others.” (pg. 76).

The final movement, from illusion to prayer, is the primary movement, leading us to the core of the spiritual life. It is prayer that undergirds and makes possible the first two movements. (pg. 80). Nouwen describes the prayer of the heart and the prayer of community as two ways of living prayer.

I heartily recommend this book for any who are eagerly pursuing the inner life of the Spirit. We have several copies in the library for lending or you can find it at a bookstore.

-JDW



*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  
Jay Budde  
David Cowles  
Patty Hogan  
Lynda Hollinger-Janzen  
Margie Pfeil  
Tim Pisacich  
Deanna Risser

#### Resident Community:

David Wenger  
Naomi Wenger  
Kristi Bowman Cooke  
Zac Bowman Cooke

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