



views from the hermitage

Creating an environment of attentiveness to God



Deb Borst led our outdoor celebration of the Feast of the Transfiguration on Saturday, August 1. She focused on “Radical Hospitality: Look to the Table” from Psalm 23 as she shared her own story of offering radical hospitality. Retreatants participated with masks and appropriate social distance in-person and on Zoom. The day included a commitment ceremony for Waykeepers and concluded with communion.

Looking Ahead:

Upcoming Retreats

October 10: Waykeepers

October 31: Ecotheology: God as Presence-” Look at the Fig Tree” In this retreat we will examine the natural cycle of life, paying special attention to harvest. We receive the natural world and each environment in as the Word of God. By exploring our place in the world we also learn to listen deeply to what God is saying.

December 5: Advent

To reserve a place in these retreats, please email Kevin Driedger:
contact@hermitagecommunity.org.

We request a donation of \$75 for in-person retreats which include a room and noon meal. For Zoom participants we request a donation of \$45.



During the Feast of the Transfiguration we bless the land—north, south, east, west—with all of God’s creatures.

“We must lose our fear of rest. There are some of us who keep up our morale by always being busy. We have made a fetish of fevered action. We build up our own sense of security by trying to provide a relentless, advantageous contrast between ourselves and others by the fevered, intense activities in which we are engaged The first step in the discovery of strength and renewal is to develop the art of being still, physical and mental cessation from churning. This is not all, but it is the point at which we begin. “

~Howard Thurman, *Deep is the Hunger*

Retreating at The Hermitage in the age of COVID-19

We resumed receiving guests on retreat in late June and have hosted several individuals and a few groups since then. Things do look a little different coming on retreat in this season, however. We continue to limit our total guest number to six. We do require that all our guests wear masks and maintain social distancing inside the common spaces of our buildings. We still gather for morning prayer, with more dispersed seating, and with no singing or chanting.

Mealtime has seen the most change. Each guest still gets their own cloth napkin for their time of retreat, but the individual napkin is kept socially distanced in its own small canning jar. We ask guests to come to the counter one at a time to get their food, which the cook serves up. We also no longer ask guests to stack their own dishes in the dishwasher.

We have also changed some of our cleaning practices, including asking guests not to make the beds for the next guest.

We strive to provide a safe and hospitable place for retreat and look forward to hosting you sometime soon.

Reframing Our Vision

By Kevin Driedger



I have found photography to be an increasingly enjoyable past time, and an increasingly significant spiritual practice for me since joining The Hermitage staff. As we all know, The Hermitage grounds and buildings offer much to engage and delight the eye. Going for a walk with my camera brings an invitation to attentiveness. What do I see that I haven't noticed before? What scenes bring out emotional responses? Taking pictures demands that I slow down, that I stop and give all my attention to that one scene. Ignatian Walter Burghardt described contemplation is a "long, loving look at the real." This is what photography invites me into: a long, loving look at the Real.

Despite the beauty of my surroundings it can be a challenge, at times, to know where to point my camera. How often can I take a picture of that one tree before I've seen all there is to see of it? Sometimes I go for a walk with my camera and all I see is trees and leaves, and more trees and more leaves, and nothing captures my eye or my heart. In these times I need to find a new perspective on the familiar.

When taking pictures one of the important things to consider is deciding how to frame the image. Is it going to be a close-up of a single flower, or a medium shot with a handful of flowers, or do I pull back and find an expansive image of the field and sky? Framing a picture is as much about what you want in the image, as it is what you want to exclude from the image. A close-up of an insect and a wide-angle shot of a large lake can communicate very different emotions. Sometimes we focus so intensely on the thing in the middle of our image that we don't notice what distractions might be crowding in on the borders of the image. When we try to include too many things within our focus our images can become cluttered and overwhelmed.

We may also notice that we always take pictures from the same perspective. We may always take pictures standing holding the camera at eye level. When we notice this it is good to explore changing our position or orientation to what we are photographing. Bringing the camera low to the ground can give us a whole new way of looking at a scene. There are many different ways to reframe an image and the photographer has to eventually stop and choose one. We need to be attentive to what decisions we are making when we choose a framing for an image. What is this framing telling me about myself? Discernment in photography and life can be a way of looking and listening deeply for where God is present and active in the scene or moment.

"Paying attention to the decisions we make with each photograph can illuminate our own interior process of listening and making space." (*Eyes of the Heart*, Christine Valters Paintner, p. 61) In my photography I've recognize that "I love a vista." I like scenes that look far into the distance. There is something in these scenes that relaxes me. I feel I can breathe in these scenes. *(Continued on page 4)*

(Continued from page 3)



I've connected this appreciation in part to my growing up on the Canadian prairies. That open geography is important for my soul. Solitude within spaciousness is central to my understanding of my relationship with God.

In our day-to-day lives we often get stuck in looking at our worlds, ourselves, and our God from the same perspective. There are those things we focus on, and those things we choose to exclude from our focus. This is not a bad thing. If you try to include everything in the picture you end up seeing nothing. But we also need to humbly recognize that our vision of the world is not the whole story. We recognize that the need for eyes that see never ends. We recognize that we need to discover new perspectives to reframe our vision of the world.

Choosing to come to The Hermitage for retreat is itself an act of reframing. It is a choice to exclude some things from your field of view and focus on others. The Hermitage is a place that provides space for

reframing. It may be that a guest needs to spend their time here focused simply on their state of being beloved of God. (Personally, I think it would be great if all guests spent part of their retreats with nothing but that realization.) Or a retreatant may need to pull way back and focus on the grandness of God's oneness with all creation. You may have no idea what will grab your attention or how God will speak to you as you slowly make your way down the Hermitage driveway. Sometimes, not seeing the familiar can be disorienting but sometimes that disorientation can lead to a new orientation – a new view of God, of self, of the world.

What spiritual practices have you purposefully excluded from your life that perhaps you could experiment with? Perhaps this is the spiritual practice of activism or daily centering prayer. Perhaps, contemplative photography. What does your world look like if you include these new practices?

The alternative is also worth considering. What parts of your daily frame of view have outlived their welcome, or just need to be set aside for a while? How does the world look if you let go of scrolling all the snark and bad news on Twitter? Or maybe giving yourself a chance to let go of your default image of God and see what new images might show up?

Photography invites me into a long, loving look at the Real.

In photography we recognize that there is no one right framing of an image. Each framing reveals something new. When we are attentive to our surroundings and allow God to open our eyes, and sharpen our vision, our image of our world is re-framed. We begin to see an image of the world through the loving eyes of God.

A House in the Sky By Naomi Wenger

When we last wrote of the house building project in these pages, we were just beginning to see the footprint of the house take shape. Over the last several months, we have watched the house soar into the sky. First with the framing and the two wall-stuffing weeks, we saw the main floor of the house become part of the ground. As we are using lumber, straw and clay from Earth, we can sense this house emerging from and merging with the landscape.

With the help of our builder, Karry Hostetler and his team, along with Thomas Hirsch of Bungalow Builders and an intrepid group of 44 volunteer builders for 10 wall-stuffing days, we moved through the lower wall work into the next phase of raising the second floor and the roof. What a difference having that roof makes in the presence of the house in its tucked-away corner.

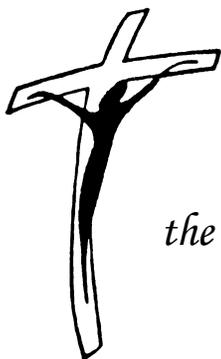


In the next weeks, we will see the windows go in as well as the electrical wiring, insulation, and a myriad of other details for finishing. We should be ready to build up the earthen floor sometime in mid- to late-September. *Let us know if you want to be part of the floor installation process.* We will install the radiant heating grid and then pour and compress soil over the grid to make the finished earthen floor.

Plastering will begin later in the fall and we can use many hands for that task as well. Meanwhile, *we are looking for folks who love to paint.* We are pre-finishing the ceiling boards before they are installed. *This needs to be done over the next four weeks so we can stay on schedule.*

See the progress on the building in the slide show on the June 10 posting on our blog, www.hermitagecommunity.org/news/.

We also love showing folks around the site, just let us know before you come.



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 companionship 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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