



views from the hermitage

Creating an environment of attentiveness to God

Retreat Scheduling Changes for 2022

As the number of retreat request, both for individuals and for groups increases we are making a few changes to our reservation practices for 2022.

Weekend group retreats of 5 or more will be scheduled on the 1st and 3rd full weekend of each month.

The other weekends will be available for individual retreats and very small groups. Because weekends are our most popular times, and we want to ensure availability to both individuals and groups.

The Hermitage will be closed during the day on the Monday, after a group retreat weekend. We will open for guests at 4pm on Mondays.

This closed time gives the staff a bit of a break and makes it much easier for us to do the laundry and cleaning from after the weekend.

A simplified version of our reservation calendar is available on our website at the Reservation pages for individuals and groups.

While we want to hold to this schedule because we feel it is fair to guests and staff alike, there is always room for grace and adjustments where needed.



The Gift of Rest By Kevin Driedger

*“Therefore, my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices;
my body also rests secure,” (Ps 16:9)*

Some years ago, June and I volunteered at The Hermitage while David and Naomi Wenger were on sabbatical. Upon their return I approached David and asked him, “Did you receive in faith the gift of rest?”

This may seem like a curious question, and I’m sure I was attempting to be clever, but the words of this question were familiar to David. The words, adapted from Matthew 11, come from *The Hermitage Affirmation*, the morning prayer liturgy drafted by The Hermitage founder Gene Herr which we pray on Mondays.

(continued on page 2)

Teach us, Jesus,
to hear you,
to come with the heavy loads we feel,
to be yoked with you,
to be taught by you,
To learn what things really matter,
and *to receive in faith the gift of rest.*

Today, as director of The Hermitage, I feel I am beginning to glimpse the powerful reality of the gift of rest. This season of Covid has brought many weary and exhausted people to our doors. Their presence with us and their experience of The Hermitage has taught me about receiving the gift of rest.

I confess that in the past I thought of rest as synonymous with relaxation. Rest was a pleasant, if at times, an irresponsible luxury. Rest could easily become a distraction from responsibility and productivity. Rest was good if you were tired, but too much resting was a sign of laziness.

In my quick orientation with new guests, I always point out the chapel and how we gather for morning prayer at 8am. I then add that guests are welcome to join us and are welcome to sleep as both sleep and rest are deeply important parts of retreat.

Rest is a practice and a gift.

Rest is a product of letting go of the need to shape each moment of our day; letting go of ambitions and anxieties; letting go of finding our value in our productivity; letting go of our sense of how indispensable we are.

In his life of ministry, and his training of the disciples, Jesus emphasized rest. “He said to them, ‘Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.’ For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat,” (Mark 6:31).

Choosing to practice the spiritual discipline of rest can be very difficult for some of us. It certainly is for me. I find it hard to practice rest because it is difficult for me to accept that, some-

how, The Hermitage could survive a day or even a week without my near constant attention. This is foolishness.

Rest can come with feelings of guilt for all the work others have to do for me to rest. Rest can cause us to question our self-worth. “What if I rest from work for a few days and nobody notices?”

Rest is a product of letting go of the need to shape each moment of our day; letting go of ambitions and anxieties; letting go of finding our value in our productivity; letting go of our sense of how indispensable we are.

Rest is intimately related to trust. Without trust rest is elusive. In order to rest we must trust that life will be okay without us being useful. We must trust the emails and texts that go unanswered while on retreat will still be there when we return and that many of their “urgent” problems will have already resolved themselves. Rest also comes when we can trust food will be available when we are hungry, and a warm bed will be available when tired. We rest in the arms of the ones we love, because we trust them.

As we see in Matthew 11, we are to come to God and give God our weariness and business, and in turn, God will give us rest. The goal of our journey is to rest in the heart of God, the most trustworthy One.

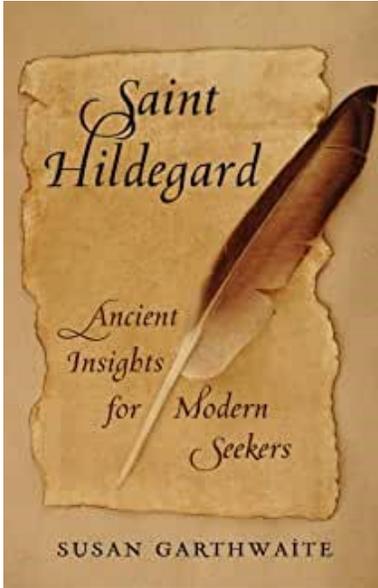
“Did you receive in faith the gift of rest?” I asked of David upon his return from sabbatical. David laughed at my question. “Have I received in faith the gift of rest?” he slowly repeated. After a pause he replied “Why yes! Yes I have.”

Book Review by June Mears Driedger

Saint Hildegard: Ancient Insights for Modern Seekers

By Susan Garthwaite

(She Writes Press, 2021, 374 pages)



In pop culture parlance, Hildegard of Bingen is “having a moment.” This 12th century mystic has garnered popularity in the past few decades including references in popular culture as her musical compositions are introduced around the world through the Hildegard Project and recordings readily

available on YouTube and for download.

Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) was a Benedictine Abbess of Disibodenberg Abbey in Germany, for much of her adult life. She is described as a polymath, accomplished in musical composition, medieval literature, medicine, biology, herbology, theology, philosophy, an administrator, visionary, mystic, and contemplative.

Add to the books about Hildegard of Bingen, *Saint Hildegard: Ancient Insights for Modern Seekers* by Susan Garthwaite. In the introduction Garthwaite states the purpose of this book is distinct from other books of Hildegard or translations of Hildegard. She writes:

In this book [Hildegard’s] spiritual wisdom is brought to bear on spiritual development and the ministry of spiritual direction. Her proposal that we befriend our souls and becomes the friends of God forms the heart of the book. (p. 2)

Garthwaite describes her book as a “true collaboration” between herself and Hildegard. The book is comprised of Garthwaite’s spiritual memoir

folded into the wisdom of Hildegard.

The book is divided into three sections: “Becoming a Seeker”, “Becoming the Faithful Friend of Your Soul” and “Becoming the Faithful Friend of God. Within each chapter of these sections are further subsections separated by questions for reflection. Garthwaite is a spiritual director, and these questions are offered as one might hear them in a spiritual direction setting—gentle and open-ended.

In the first section, “Becoming a Seeker” Garthwaite tells of a childhood accident which caused serious damage to her leg that required amputation as an adult. As Garthwaite lay on the ground waiting for her sibling to run a long-distance to retrieve help, she writes, “I was all alone, helpless in my peril.” When her energy seeped and she could no longer pray, she had a profound experience of God’s presence. Her fear and panic dissipated as she knew herself to not be alone. Eventually Garthwaite was rescued and she emerged a changed person, seeking a deeper relationship with God.

In section two, “Becoming the Faithful Friend of Your Soul,” Garthwaite encourages us to become our faithful friends through spiritual practices such as journaling, Scripture reading, prayer, meeting with a spiritual director, and practicing wise discernment. To practice these disciplines is to befriend our souls which then “changes us and prepares us to be friends of God.”

The third section, “Becoming the Faithful Friend of God” Garthwaite guides readers through chapters focusing on integration, surrender, mysticism, healing, union, and ultimately, the friend of God..

Saint Hildegard: Ancient Insights for Modern Seekers is a rich, dense book to be savored slowly, perhaps many moments during a liturgical season, for all the goodness held within its pages.

(Originally published at *The Englewood Review of Books*, www.inglewoodreview.org, adapted for The Hermitage. The book will be available in The Hermitage library).



Another way of seeing By David Wenger

In October Sam Yoder and Dan Truesdale began siding the house using the rough-sawn lumber that was milled here last spring. I was excited to finally uncover the carefully stacked piles of lumber so that it was accessible for the carpenters. My enthusiasm quickly waned when I saw the weathering and staining of the boards. They were pristine yellow with a wonderful scent of pine when we stacked them 18 months previously. The boards were placed with spacers between each layer and the top of every stack was covered while the sides were left open so that the boards could air dry. Now, when I removed the tarps that covered the stacks, I could see that water seeped through the tarps and made its way down through the layers of boards resulting in irregular stains. Further, the boards on the edges of the stacks that were left uncovered had weathered to a grey color. While the grey weathering on the edge boards was expected, the staining from water leakage was not. Gone was the glorious newness of fresh cut lumber, gone was the monochromatic hue of the boards, even the pine scent was hardly noticeable. I was so discouraged. I immediately began to think about what could be done to clean the boards. Would sanding help? Even if it did, there was no time to sand all those boards

before the carpenters needed them. Next, I thought we'll just have to paint the siding after it's up. But painting would prevent the boards from breathing with the clay straw walls underneath. Even though I knew that the boards would eventually weather to a grey color I was still attached to the look of the boards when they first came off the saw mill. But at this point the only way forward was to use the boards as they were. Ultimately, we did apply a clear water sealer before the boards went up to provide a breathable protective covering to the wood. Of course, that made no difference to their look.

A friend stopped by the house after the siding job was underway and we paused to look at the progress. The boards were hung neatly in rows for the board and batten design. I mentioned my discouragement by the variation in color of the weathered and stained boards. And she said, "They look like trees; just look at all the variety and diversity of a forest." As she spoke it was as if scales had fallen off my eyes and I could see the boards differently. Suddenly I could see them as trees in a forest, each unique and beautiful. The way they looked began to grow on me. In fact, in a few days I was admiring the staining patterns and colors in the wood. My attachment to the solid block of color that covers most of the houses I see began to diminish. I had been invited into another way of seeing.

Fall House Volunteers: We are so grateful to the folks who have given hours to make this "House Built of Sky" a reality. These include: Sam Yoder • Dan Truesdale • Margaret Wenger • Jay Budde • Dennis Gable • Mary Asmonga-Knapp • Jane Stoltzfus Buller • Les Gustafson-Zook • Patty • Tim Lind • Tyler Popa • Scott Townley

As we come to the finishing of the house, we still have need of carpenters, painters and cleaners to help. If you have interest in assisting in these final stages, please contact David@hermitagecommunity.org.

UP CLOSE WITH VOLUNTEERS

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

I am Jay Budde and I like to joke that I live in defiance. In the world, I geographically live now in Defiance, Ohio.

2) How did you learn about The Hermitage?

From my wife Barbara. Barbara was in spiritual direction with Ella Nafziger, who with her husband Paul, were interim co-directors of The Hermitage between the Herrs and the Wengers. Ella recommended that Barbara retreat at The Hermitage around 2000, which she did. I first retreated here about a year later.

3) What do you do as a volunteer?

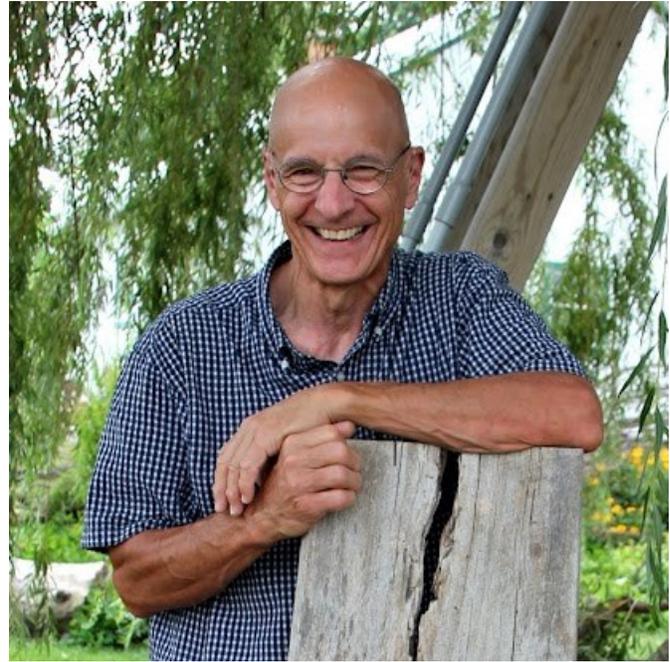
Well, for the moment and the last several years, I have put my energy into the Property Committee of The Hermitage Board, helping David, Larry Sommers and others steward the gift and challenge that our buildings and grounds are. For the last four years, the focus has been helping get the [House Made of Sky](#) out of the ground and into reality. I also have recently volunteered to help The Hermitage grow in racial reconciliation.

4) What draws you to volunteer?

As a Hermitage [Waykeeper](#), my spiritual disciplines include connecting with The Hermitage as a place as well as a faith community. Some of my deepest experiences with the Spirit of God have occurred while on retreat at The Hermitage. It is one of the “[thin places](#)” for me.

5) What is one thing you want people to know about The Hermitage?

My favorite practice in our community is to “Develop your creative gifts, pursue leisure wholeheartedly and practice having fun with others.”



Deepest Thanks

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

We are grateful to:

Ned Arnold – bookkeeping and creating financial reports;

Mike Bright - wood splitting;

Sylvie Gudin – hospitality;

Beth Mühlhausen – housekeeping;

Alyson Olmstead - providing squash;

Tom Peck - grounds work;

Larry and Judy Somers - supplying water, laundry detergent, and granola;

Sophia Zen Center - Walnut removal;

Peter Williams - Walnut removal.

Lastly, and continuously, we are grateful for **all the board members** who carry many tasks for The Hermitage year-round.

Would you like to stop receiving paper Hermitage newsletters in the mail? Complete the form found at www.hermitagecommunity.org/optout/ You can also request to receive the newsletter via email.



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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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