



# views from the hermitage

*Creating an environment of attentiveness to God*



*Naomi and David Wenger with Larry Terlouw, 2002.*

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### *Ongoing: Contemplative Photography*

You are welcome to join our online contemplative photography group. Each month participants share two of their own photos. We gather on a Zoom call on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday and spend time silently gazing at each picture offered and then sharing what we receive or notice in the picture. All are welcome. Contact Kevin for more information.

[kevin@hermitagecommunity.org](mailto:kevin@hermitagecommunity.org)

### *Lent Retreat--Saturday, February 20*

#### *"Our Lives are in Your Hands"*

We will consider what it is to truly trust God: How do we surrender ourselves to God? Can we sincerely believe that "our lives are in Your hands?" This will be a zoom retreat from 9 am-4pm. Cost is \$35.00

Contact@hermitagecommunity.org to register.

Dear Friends,

As the wind sometimes blows leaves and even limbs from the trees and sometimes is a gentle breeze, we have been growing into awareness that our "weather is changing" - our lives and our call is changing. Sometimes it feels like our limbs are being torn away, sometimes the old leaves fly to make room for new buds, sometimes there is a gentle whisper, and sometimes we wonder if anything is moving at all.

Over the past four years of listening to each roar, each whisper, each silence, we are aware of being released from managing The Hermitage. Yet, our call to this land and this place of prayer has not diminished. We have sensed an invitation to stay on the land and be part of the Prayer Community without being part of the management team.

In October we tested this invitation with Kevin and June and The Hermitage Board, seeking counsel, wisdom and mutual discernment. We felt exhilarated, terrified and confounded all at the same time - exhilarated by the possibilities that lie ahead, terrified by releasing what we know, and confounded by relating to The Hermitage and the land in another way. At their November meeting, the Board accepted our resignation from The Hermitage, effective December 31, 2020.

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We have served The Hermitage Community and its guests for over 19 years and have come to cherish so many of you during that time. We remember moving here from Washington, D.C. in July of 2001 with our four children ages 4-13, who were all excited to live in the country. We were warmly welcomed by a phalanx of teddy bears on the front porch of Nazareth, which was to be our home for the first five months. There were folks to help unload the trucks and place our household goods in our small living space and in the basement storage area of The Hanby Center. And Gene and Mary Herr taught us to listen and catch the Spirit as we walked into this new way of life.

Nazareth is gone and we are building a new dwelling for those called to serve the Hermitage. The storage room in Hanby Center is now a beautifully appointed volunteer apartment named for Teresa of Avila. We have lived in the house by the road, that we purchased from the Herrs, since December 2001. Our children are now grown and living in Plouye, France; Three Rivers, Michigan; Ft. Collins, Colorado; and Washington, D.C. Our little dog, Ellie, who kept us company on our daily walks in the woods has gone from this world as have Josie, Momma Kitty and Basta, the cats who kept the rodent populations in check. Change has been kind to us but has also brought trials and loss.

While we are looking forward to finding a new way of being, many things will stay the same. We are committed to finishing the House Built of Sky, so you will still be hearing from us about the building project. We will keep meeting with retreatants and others in Spiritual Direction. David will continue to offer therapeutic massage for retreat guests and folks from the community. Naomi will still offer retreats as part of the Prayer Community. If you join us for Morning Prayer, we will be there, sometimes participating and sometimes leading, keeping a rhythm that has sustained us for the years of our service to The Hermitage.

From the early days to this day—keeping community with Larry Terlouw, working alongside Nancy Joy and Anthony Franchina, co-laboring with Zach and Kristy Bowman-Cooke, working with Kevin and June Mears Driedger and Ursula Hess, and the many dozens of volunteers who have come beside us to cook meals, clean rooms, weed the gardens, cut wood and provide granola—we continue to be grateful for each of you who have kept “community” with us. We are especially grateful to Kevin and June for following their own call to The Hermitage and for leaning ever more fully into that call these past two years and in years to come.

We hope to see you here in the future, when we can gather together again. You will see us in the garden, walking the trails, in the Chapel and maybe, digging in the soil around our house—something we always put off in favor of the work that had to be done “down the hill.” We would love to sit with you, listening in to the call of God on your life, or just to chat.

As we said to the Board, this move is not away, but a sideways step into a new lane in the path.

Thank you for being part of our journey. We carry you in our hearts,

Warmly,

David and Naomi Wenger

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Christmas 2019

*Front row, left to right:*  
Elisabeth, Emily Margaret;

*Back row, left to right:*  
David, John Mark, Brett  
Hallock, Dan Truesdale,  
Naomi

*Not pictured:* Rémi  
Lavergne





**A House Built of Sky  
...and Mud, and Wood, and Nails,  
Lots of Muscle, and even More Time**  
By Naomi Wenger

By now, I had hoped to show you a completed house with happy residents spending this Christmas in a new home. But, as most everyone else knew, building projects, like the course of true love, “never did run smooth” (Shakespeare, *Midsummer Night’s Dream*). In my case, “hope springs eternal” (Alexander Pope, *Essay on Man*).

In the last months since we gave you a report so many things, that shrink into almost invisibility, have been done. We spent 4 weeks painting 2700 sq. ft. of ceiling boards (2 coats), followed by installing 2800 sq. ft. of lath to receive the wall plaster. We dug the trench for the electric cable to the house from the meter along the lane, installed 1600 sq. ft. of insulation in the gable ends and in the floor joist cavities along the walls.



Volunteers have reframed three interior walls (two to receive interior windows to give “sky” light to the bedrooms and one to widen a closet door), helped to paint, and assisted with the installation of the many feet of lath.

The building crews have blown cellulose insulation into the ceiling rafters, installed those 2700 sq. ft. of ceiling boards, installed the doors and the last of the windows, framed in the space for the chimney for the wood stove, finished wiring the house and laying the cable to the meter, installed fascia trim, gutters and downspouts, drilled the well, dug in the septic system and finished several small projects on the interior.

We will soon install the tile for the hearth and hook up the wood stove for heat.

A small setback in the floor system is the Building Code requirement to provide a radon abatement system in the house. This will require that we excavate the floor area several inches and dig an interior perimeter trench for a pipe to allow air to move under the floor. So, we have focused first on wall preparation instead of the floor project. When we have finished with the scaffolding that allows us to reach the ceiling, we can begin the floor excavation project room-by-room.



A week ago, I entered the house after a cold freeze at night, to find that the house had maintained heat from the previous day and was several degrees warmer inside than the air temperature outside—and we have not yet begun to heat the space! We are certainly pleased with the heat retention.

We have also met with a solar installer and hope to meet with a second bidder in the next weeks so we can make a decision on who will install

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## Winter 2021

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the solar system donated to us by Inovateus Solar of South Bend, IN. The design is for 24 solar panels on the south-facing roof.

How can you still be part of the build? When we get the wood stove in and have heat, we will begin plastering the walls and can use many hands - unskilled is fine, we will learn together. Then, later in the winter, we will be digging the floor and could use many hours of shovel-wielding. The more people we have to do this project, the easier it will be for all of us. Come dig for just an hour - or more. "Many hands make light work."



In the spring, we anticipate the need for assistance in applying the finishing trims. There will be work for all skill levels at that time, as well - painting, cutting, applying trim, stripping bark, tiling, installing "doo dads" (such as closet poles, etc.), landscape work, and much more. You are welcome to help us with these items.

**"Many hands make light work."**

We will be keeping a volunteer schedule that allows for whatever level of social distancing contact we are currently advised to keep. David Wenger is the keeper of that schedule and you can reach him:  
david@hermitagecommunity.org  
or by text: 269-718-3693.

Our **Deepest Thanks** to our building volunteers during the last quarter of the year:

- Brian Baughman
- Sally Barber
- Jay Budde
- Jonathon CasselberryScott
- Dennis Gable
- Tim Lind
- John McLean
- Jeff Miller
- Miles Tilmann
- Dan Truesdale
- Margaret Wenger



### Prayer of Abandonment

O Source of All, I abandon myself into Your hands.

Do with me what You will.

Whatever You do, I will thank you,

I am ready for all, I accept all.

Let only Your will be done in me,

as in all Your creatures,

and I'll ask nothing else, my God.

Into Your hands I commend my spirit;

I give it to You with all the love of my heart,

for I love You, O my God,

and so need to give myself,

to surrender myself into Your hands

with a trust beyond all measure,

because You are the Source of my life.

Amen.

—Francis Fenelon

## UP CLOSE WITH VOLUNTEERS

**1) What is your name and where do you live?** Larry and Judy Somers and we live in Climax, Michigan.

**2) How did you learn about The Hermitage?** In 1998, the Holy Spirit was nudging Judy to go on a silent retreat. A Mennonite friend of Judy's provided contact information on The Hermitage. In June 2000 she went on a personal silent retreat and realized The Hermitage was a special place as it reminded her of the home she lived in as a child. A few years later, Larry came to The Hermitage came to help with a project.

**3) What do you do as a volunteer?** We are not comfortable providing a list of what we do—the focus is not on us; it is on our doing what God, our Father, directs us daily to do.

**4) What draws you to volunteer?** When you go home, you pitch in and help as needed. We've been volunteering ever since [we began retreating here].

**5) What is one thing you want people to know about The Hermitage?** It is a place you can come to be still, heal, and get your spirit refreshed.



### 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](mailto:Kevin@hermitagecommunity.org)

We are grateful to:

**Ned Arnold** - bookkeeping and creating financial reports;

**Nancy Boyd** - for keeping our freezer stocked with tasty desserts for our guests;

**Nancy Joy** - garden work;

**Jonathon CasselberryScott** - for repairing our outdoor equipment;

**Larry and Judy Somers** - making sure we are always stocked with water and granola;

**Margaret Wenger** - garden work;

**Roger zum Felde** - for near weekly library work;

All the **Catholic Worker House members** who assisted putting the garden to bed for the winter.

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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269-244-8696

## Creating an environment of attentiveness to God

### Retreating at The Hermitage

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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](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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Mary Asmonga-Knapp  
Deb Borst  
Jay Budde  
Jayna Gallagher  
Robert Gallagher  
Joel Hogan  
Jeff Miller  
Darrell Paulsen  
Jane Stoltzfus Buller

### *Resident Community*

David Wenger  
Naomi Wenger  
Kevin Driedger  
June Mears Driedger