

Sabbatical Report

Dan Schrock

Fall 2019

Context

For decades Berkey has offered its pastors regular sabbaticals (typically once every 4 years). According to the *Pastoral Handbook*, these sabbaticals have 3 purposes:

1. Develop and enrich specific skills.
2. Provide refreshing change and new experiences for the pastor.
3. Provide time and space for reflection and a broader view of the congregation so that the pastor may return with a greater awareness of how his or her gifts may better be used by God in service to the congregation.

This year's sabbatical was longer than others I've received. My previous sabbatical had been in the summer of 2014, which allowed for another one in 2018. But the congregation was in so much transition during 2018, so the SLT agreed that I should delay it one year, which meant I received an additional 3 weeks. It began April 15; and because I added four weeks of vacation and 3 holidays which fell during the summer, it ended August 31. I returned to work the next day.

As a half-time pastor, I was obligated to spend 375 hours on the sabbatical activities approved by the SLT (15 weeks of sabbatical x 25 hours a week, based on a full-time work week of 45-50 hours). However, I actually spent 410 hours.

What I Did

The focus was as follows: *from biblical, theological, historical, and pastoral perspectives, to explore the potential blessings and opportunities of being alone in a Mennonite context that highly values community.* In addition to reading, I took a 25-day solitary retreat in a hermitage at the Cedars of Peace, which is part of the Loretto Retreat Center in Nerinx, Kentucky, May 6-31. This gave me the opportunity to experience solitude in the context of a praying Christian community, the Loretto Sisters.

I read 37 books pertaining to the sabbatical theme.

A Monk. *The Hermitage Within.*

Allchin, A.M., ed. *Solitude and Communion: Papers on the Hermit Life.*

Alfeyev, Hilarion. *The Spiritual World of Isaac the Syrian.*

Aron, Elaine N. *The Highly Sensitive Person: How to Thrive When the World Overwhelms You.* 2nd ed.

Belisle, Peter-Damian. *The Language of Silence: The Changing Face of Monastic Solitude.*

Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection, *The Practice of the Presence of God.*

Damian, Peter. *The Book of "The Lord Be with You" (Treatise #11).*

DePaulo, Bella. *Singled Out: How Singles Are Stereotyped, Stigmatized, and Ignored, and Still Live Happily Ever After.*

Duggan, Daniel R. *Men, Grief, and Solitude: A Different Perspective.*

Fisher, Lionel. *Celebrating Time Alone: Stories of Splendid Solitude*.

Ford, Michael. *Lonely Mystic: A New Portrait of Henri J.M. Nouwen*.

France, Peter. *Hermits: The Insights of Solitude*.

Fredette, Paul A. and Karen Karper Fredette. *Consider the Ravens: On Contemporary Hermit Life*.

Halpern, Sue. *Migrations to Solitude: The Quest for Privacy in a Crowded World*.

Hall, Jeremy. *Silence, Solitude, Simplicity: A Hermit's Love Affair with a Noisy, Crowded, and Complicated World*.

Iyer, Pico. *The Art of Stillness: Adventures in Going Nowhere*.

Kidder, Annemarie S. *The Power of Solitude: Discovering Your True Self in a World of Nonsense and Noise*.

Klinenberg, Eric. *Going Solo: The Extraordinary Rise and Surprising Appeal of Living Alone*.

Lane, Belden. *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes: Desert and Mountain Spirituality*.

LeClaire, Anne D. *Listening Below the Noise: A Meditation on the Practice of Silence*.

Licence, Tom. *Hermits and Recluses in English Society, 950-1200*.

Maitland, Sara. *A Book of Silence*.

_____. *How to Be Alone*.

McGreal, Wilfrid. *At the Fountain of Elijah: The Carmelite Tradition*.

McHugh, Adam S. *Introverts in the Church: Finding Our Place in an Extroverted Culture*.

O'Loughlin, Thomas. *Journeys on the Edges: The Celtic Tradition*.

Ramirez, Janina. *Julian of Norwich: A Very Brief History*.

Regnault, Lucien. *The Day-to-Day Life of the Desert Fathers in Fourth-Century Egypt*.

Riehle, Wolfgang. *The Secret Within: Hermits, Recluses, and Spiritual Outsiders in Medieval England*.

Ross, Maggie. *Seasons of Death and Life: A Wilderness Memoir*.

_____. *Writing the Icon of the Heart: In Silence Beholding*.

Rufus, Anneli. *Party of One: The Loners' Manifesto*.

Schiller, Verena. *A Simplified Life: A Contemporary Hermit's Experience of Solitude and Silence*.

Stewart, Columba. *Prayer and Community: The Benedictine Tradition*.

Taylor, Barbara Erakko. *Silence: Making the Journey to Inner Quiet*.

_____. *Silent Dwellers: Embracing the Solitary Life*.

Weems, Renita J. *Listening for God: A Minister's Journey through Silence and Doubt*.

Outcomes

1. I now have more compassion for people at Berkey who struggle with issues of aloneness and community. These people include singles and singles again, retired persons, and even some married persons.
2. I have better ideas about helping people at Berkey to explore ways of moving from loneliness to solitude.
3. I'm more knowledgeable about some of the biblical, historical, theological, and sociological issues of solitude in the context of community.

Going Forward

On September 22 and October 27, I'm planning to preach on themes related to the sabbatical project, as a way of "reporting" to the whole congregation.

I'm glad to talk more about this with anyone. Thank you for having a sabbatical policy that helps your pastors to learn and grow.

Dan