



Fall 2024

A Week in the Life of a Chaplain at a Shepherd's Canyon Retreat

As the Executive Director of Shepherd's Canyon Retreat, my primary responsibilities involve overseeing the ministry and raising awareness and financial support. My role is NOT to be a counselor. In fact, confidentiality is so well kept, that I usually don't even know the specific reasons of why most pastors, ministry workers & spouses come to our retreats.



Until recently, the only retreat I had personally attended was in February 2021, when my wife and I came during my own two-year battle with burnout and compassion fatigue. However, I was finally able to participate in my second retreat recently—this time as a chaplain—because one of our scheduled chaplains was unable to attend.

I loved every moment of it! It was an incredible experience to witness firsthand the inner workings of our retreats. I was impressed by the skill and dedication of our therapists and counselors, and it was so great to see the work of the Holy Spirit in many ways throughout the week. I especially enjoyed leading the participants in devotions twice a day and sharing some of the songs I had written during and after my own period of burnout.

Monday - The retreat began as participants arrived, including ministry leaders and spouses from five different states. We also had a male and a female therapist from Missouri and California.

Tuesday - Tuesday was "Story Day," a significant time when all seven participants shared the reasons they had come to the retreat. It was heart-wrenching to listen to their stories, filled with pain and struggles, yet it was a powerful reminder of why our ministry is so important.

Wednesday - On Wednesday, the group sessions took place in the morning, while the afternoons were dedicated to private counseling sessions, which do not include the chaplain. However, some participants scheduled time with me in the afternoon, either for spiritual reasons such as confession and absolution or to discuss logistical matters to me in my role as Executive Director, such as financial questions related to the retreat.

Thursday - Thursday followed a similar structure to Wednesday, but it also included a group activity where participants shared their stories through non-verbal methods. I was amazed by the powerful, emotional, effectiveness of this exercise. It revealed the deep emotions behind the facts shared on Tuesday in ways words often couldn't express.

Friday - Friday was a well-deserved day off for everyone. Participants were free to explore nearby Wickenburg or Prescott, or simply relax on campus. Many enjoyed walks, the hot tub, or the pool. (Future participants will enjoy our new high-quality massage chair, that was recently donated.) In the evening, we gathered for a meal on the roof of the Fellowship House, taking in the breathtaking starry Arizona sky.

Saturday & Sunday - Saturday & Sunday – were similar to Wednesday and Thursday except that we had a worship service in the prayer garden on Sunday morning (see photo) and a closing ceremony that evening.

Monday – On Monday, everyone left after breakfast with more joy in their faces than they did on the day they arrived. It was wonderful to see the transformation that had taken place in just one week. I am so glad I got to be a chaplain and I hope I get the opportunity to do it again sometime.

- Rev. Kevin Bueltmann, Executive Director



“I had consistently rebuffed my wife's pleas regarding the hurt the church had caused her... Our week at Shepherd's Canyon re-opened my heart to my wife.”

“Our time at Shepherd's Canyon was nothing short of life-changing. We came to Phoenix looking merely for some time off and spiritual encouragement. We left on a brand-new path toward healing and wholeness. My wife and I have suffered many losses over the course of our fourteen-year ministry. To make matters worse, I had consistently rebuffed my wife's pleas regarding hurt the church had caused her.

I told her the losses were no big deal as long as we were doing the right thing for God. Her hurt became a threat to MY ministry and a nuisance to me. Over time this built-up resentment in me toward her. Our week at Shepherd's canyon re-opened my heart to my wife. The counselors demonstrated a curious compassion toward us that modeled a better way for me to care for my wife. The last night I wrote "resentment" on a rock and left it at the foot of the cross in the Garden. It will remain there forever.

“Hands down, the success of Shepherd's Canyon is the counselors. I can't overstate how incredible it was to have experienced top-notch therapists. Their insight into our experience, their sincere interest in our lives, and the counsel for moving forward have proven invaluable. We are deeply humbled and thankful for your investment in our life and ministry. Thank you.”

“Can we really find the help that we need here? The answer...a huge YES.”

“Our journey to the Shepherd's Canyon Retreat was filled with reservations. How is this going to help us? Do these people really know what they are doing? Can we really find the help that we need here? Do I need the help or is it my husband who needs it more?



“The answer to these questions was a huge YES.

The retreat was a safe place to let us feel like we could open up and share our feelings honestly and share our stories. Everyone there was there for the same reason, to get the help they needed to cope with their lives and ministries to go and do the Lord's work but at the same time learning how to do the work without the burden that comes with doing that work. The counselors we had were so amazing...

“The couples we have met have become life-long friends and we keep in touch regularly. It was hard to say to all these friends, as we felt safe with them, had a great time playing games and socializing with them. It was God's plan for us to be there and it is still God's plan for us to continue our marriage and do his work as a pastor and Lutheran school teacher.

“On behalf of my family we would like to thank all who donated to Shepherd's Canyon Retreat. Without all the support, both spiritually and financially, we would not have been able to attend the retreat because of the financial burden it would have caused. God gave us wonderful donors like you so that his called workers can get the help they needed to continue to do his work. God is so good and thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

We Love Our Volunteers & Generous Donors!

From a Pastor's Wife

Thank you so very much for your generous gift which allowed my husband and I to attend Shepherd's Canyon Retreat! Our time there was truly life changing and such a blessing to us individually and as a couple. I am so very grateful for our time there! I cannot say enough positive things about the retreat staff, counselors, and volunteers! The retreat is so well designed and the beautiful grounds and facilities are amazing! May God continue to bless the work being done at the Retreat. Thank you again for your generosity!



Paul Golke, our Site Director, sometimes takes a turn at cooking breakfast.



We praise God that Brandon and Jeanette Cole volunteered for a week as part of their 3-week 25th wedding anniversary trip to Arizona and Colorado. They, along with Jeanette's parents, Overton and Judy Schmidt, donated enough funds for us to purchase a high-quality massage chair that was on one of our previous wish lists. It now gets LOTS of use by our guests, staff and volunteers! THANK YOU!



You can also see the beautiful smile on Pamela Hanlin's face as she serves God in this place by folding towels.

**Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart,
as working for the Lord, not for human masters.
Colossians 3:23**

Pastors, Ministry Leaders & Spouses Need Your Help

The number of pastors, church workers, & spouses we are serving has increased by 70% over the last 2 years, which is quickly depleting our cash reserves, so if you know of individuals or foundations looking for a way to help church workers, please let them know about what God is doing through Shepherd's Canyon Retreat!"



P.O. BOX 222
WICKENBURG, ARIZONA 85358
ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

If you prefer to read this newsletter on your phone, go to:
www.ShepherdsCanyonRetreat.org/news



Note New Address

Non-Profit
U.S. Postage
PAID
Phoenix, AZ
Permit 1010

Save the Date
Saturday, March 8, 2025
Annual Friends of the Ministry
Day of Celebration and Hope!
Join us for a free lunch & concert
Overnight lodging available
for those coming from far away!
More details coming soon!

Memorials – July-October 2024

Connie Wischnack in Memory of Tamara Weik
Janet Tyler in memory of Don & Ann Tyler
Doug & Joey Whitmore in Memory of John Whitmore
Robert & Dawn Hackerott in Memory of Alice Tritsch
Richard & Kathleen Ann Whitmore in Memory to John Arthur Whitmore
Fred & Dorothy Cowley in Memory of Don Tyler
Sandra Tyler in Memory of Don Tyler
John A Aamot in Memory of brother, Paul Barsness
John A Aamot in Memory of cousin, Mike Aamot
John A Aamot in Memory of dear Friend, Glenyce Zipf
Rosanne Petersen in Memory of Harlan Petersen
Connie Wischnack in Memory of Connie Hilk

In Honor Of... – July-October 2024

Vicki Nicely in Honor of Rev. & Mrs. David Reynolds 50th Anniversary
Russ Hirsch in Honor of Pastor Sailer, District President
Donita Felty in Honor of her brother, a pastor

Wish List

Please consider donating new or used items or money for the items below.

- Wi-Fi Mesh Network System - \$1,500
- Replace Kubota Tractor - \$25,000
- Pool Sand Filter Replacement- \$8,000
- Septic Tank Fill Monitors - \$750
- Thrivent Action Team grants
- Gift cards (hardware, grocery, Amazon, visa...)

Travel to Australia with Dave

Dave Anderson is leading another tour in Australia (sponsored by Fellowship Ministries) October 7-22, 2025.

For information contact:

Dave@TheFellowship.com 480-838-8500



An astonishing 40% of pastors now show a high risk of burnout.
That's an almost 400% increase since 2015 when that number was just 11%.

From a 2022 study by the Barna Group