

SPRING
2025

SAMARITAN
NEWSLETTER



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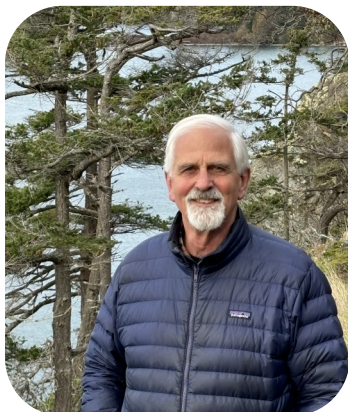
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Interview with Kurt Hoelting



Samaritan Therapist Eric Stroo interviews author, mindfulness mentor, and educator Kurt Hoelting. A Seattle native, Kurt has led an active—and deeply reflective—life as a commercial fisherman and wilderness guide, based out of the Tongass region of Southeast Alaska.

From the opening passages of your recent book, *Apprentice to the Wild*, I was struck by your relationship with risk-taking—not merely the acceptance of risk, but, your active pursuit of it.

What would you say about that relationship and its importance?

Throughout my life, I have been fascinated by the relationship between risk and competence, risk and the scope of what we are capable of experiencing as human beings. While I took some foolish risks as an outdoorsman in my youth, as epitomized by the LeConte Bay story in my book, I do not see myself as having pursued gratuitous risks in my work as a fisherman and wilderness guide. I just loved living near the wild edge of nature, and I took pride in honing the skills required to navigate those edges well. It gave me a kind of membership in a much broader scope of human experience across time.

To subsist on this Earth through the majority of human time was to live constantly with a level of risk that is difficult for us to imagine today. The risks I took were modest in comparison to what hunter-gatherer cultures took for granted, and in some ways we have placed ourselves at risk by losing touch with the kinds of skills and knowledge of place that we will need for survival as global supply chains break down.

On a more spiritual level, our capacity to embrace the truth of our human vulnerability and mortality requires us to accept risk as an intrinsic element in every human life. The transient nature of our lives entails risk: We cannot know in what moment, or by what means, our lives will end. To turn the other cheek is a risky choice. To offer love in the face of hate or intolerance is a risky choice. To stand up for justice when no one else is willing to do so is a hugely risky choice. Yet any life well lived requires just that.

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The Samaritan Community

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Counseling Locations

We offer both in-person and secure virtual therapy options. Our in-person locations are listed below.

Seattle-Main Office

564 NE Ravenna Blvd.
 Seattle, WA 98115
 Phone: (206) 527-2266

Bellevue

Bellevue Presbyterian Church
 St. Andrew's Lutheran Church

Bainbridge Island and Kitsap

Poulsbo First Lutheran Church

Spokane

First Presbyterian Church of Spokane
 Opportunity Presbyterian Church

Seeking therapists

in Spokane, Kitsap, and King counties
 Resumes can be submitted to
 Beverley Shrumm via E-mail:
bshrumm@samaritanps.org

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David Ketola, MA, LMHCA
Professionally Supervised Therapist



David comes to Samaritan Center with a MA in Counseling Psychology from Seattle School of Theology and six years of experience as a therapist in private practice. His primary areas of focus are helping adults and adolescents navigate relational challenges, manage emotional anxiety, and cultivate a deeper awareness of intimacy and sexuality. David accepts fees on a private pay basis, offering a sliding scale when needed, and takes insurance Out-of-Network. He is available in person at our Seattle-Main Office or virtually. We are grateful to have David on our team!

To learn more about David, scan the code.

A Posture of Being

by Deborah Masten, Samaritan Board Secretary

In job interviews, we often hear the question: “Where do you see yourself in five years?” In other words: “What do you plan to do for the rest of your career?” This is clearly about a posture of doing. One of the themes of an event that I recently attended was “the rest of your life.” While the presentation embraced the common use of the phrase to mean the remainder of your life, it also highlighted the typically untapped aspect of the phrase, focusing on the word *rest* as meaning the spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental rest—to restore wellness within your life. This is clearly about a posture of being.



Whenever I speak about the topic of rest, self-care, and work/life rhythms, I admit that I do so from a place of some degree of personal stress and fatigue. As a therapist, listening and attentiveness are foundational and critical. I was once asked, “If being fully present for your client meant showing up feeling rested yourself, would you do that for your client?” In other words, would making sure that you could provide quality care be an incentive for you to be fully rested? Of course I said yes! Caring for others—to include the notion of putting others above ourselves and our own self-care—is all too common for those of us in ministry and counseling. As a missionary in Cambodia once said, “We can see our calling as a license to burn out.” Great! So now, in addition to our fatigue, living in an increasingly volatile world filled with injustice, are we to add on the guilt of our own failure to rest?

Absolutely not! I believe that God has plenty to say about our rest—our posture of being. And it’s no surprise that many of the healthy, wholistic care strategies available to us are found in God’s living word. I particularly appreciate these familiar words of Jesus from the late Eugene Peterson’s *The Message*. “Are you tired? Worn Out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.” And here’s additional, specific wisdom from *The Message*’s version of Philippians: “If you’ve gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care—then do me a favor: Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends. Don’t push your way to the front; don’t sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don’t be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.”

I could continue, of course, as scripture is rich with guidance to restore our souls, so necessary in a world filled with unimaginable stressors and injustices. May we take these passages to heart. And then, each in our own way, may we add doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God. For the rest of our lives and for the **rest** of our lives.

Follow Us On Social Media



Interview with Kurt Hoelting

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Your personal evolution has led you into Christian ministry and then away from or beyond it. And yet your roles as writer, guide, and elder retain strong elements of ministry. How have you come to understand your vocation, the persistent aspects and the ones that have found new direction?

The Dalai Lama has famously said, “My religion is kindness.” I have gravitated in my spiritual orientation away from rigid dogmas and orthodoxies in any form, and toward a religion rooted in kindness, and the cultivation of kindness. All great religions have the practice of kindness at their core, so it is not a matter of one faith over against another, when kindness and compassion are the motivating factors. In that sense, I have never felt far from my calling as a minister.

I have worked a lot with Christian and Jewish faith practitioners, as well as Buddhist practitioners, and have been a teacher in the more secular mindfulness community as well. For me, the path toward the cultivation of compassion and kindness intrinsic to Buddhist meditation practices has been especially helpful in moving from abstract beliefs in the value of kindness, to the hard work of actually manifesting kindness. And yet I have no need to call myself a Buddhist, or renounce my affiliation with the Christian path. For me it is less a matter of “faith” than of “practice.”

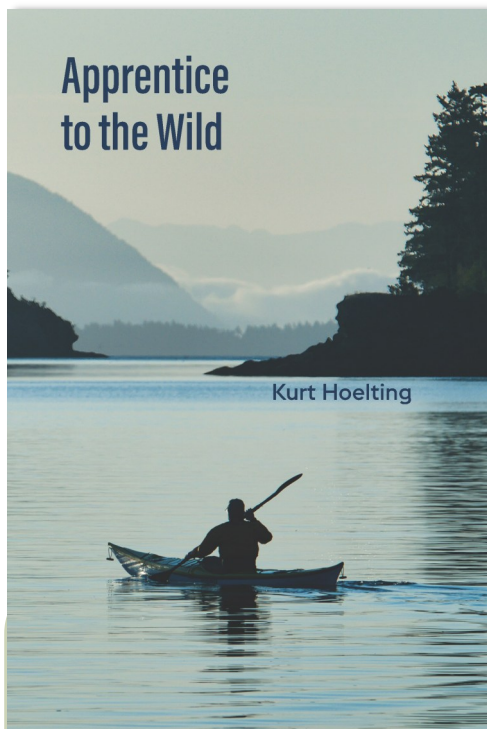
Do you think the encounter with the wild, within and without, has particular relevance to the time we are living?

Absolutely. Especially now. From the standpoint of evolutionary biology, the human species emerged out of the same wild forces as every other species, and we are still learning how to manage and control the inner wildness of our nature. When things seem to be going crazy, and the level of chaos in our lives is high, as it certainly is right now, it is all the more important to stay rooted in present-moment awareness, and to cultivate kind attention in relation to the actual moment we are in.

For me, tending to the “wild within” is code language for skillfully inhabiting our direct experience of the moment at hand, and whatever difficulties and opportunities it presents. Often what that actually means, when the chips are down, is dealing with difficult or catastrophizing thoughts and emotions in real time, using the skills of our spiritual practice to self-regulate and re-engage the better angels of our nature—also in real time. That is easy to say but hard to do.

The negativity bias of our brains is a dominant part of what makes us wild creatures, because it ties us back to earlier, more primitive and reactive parts of our inherited “wild” nature. But it is also a part of our nature to have ready access to compassion and empathy, and to turn our negativity bias back toward connection and healing. I often think that this is the highest and best use of any authentic spiritual practice, or of any authentic practicing community.

Apprentice to the Wild



In *Apprentice To The Wild*, Kurt Hoelting charts his encounters with wilderness and risk as a commercial fisherman and wilderness guide in Alaska, mapping his exploration of the wild within as a Zen practitioner and mindfulness teacher. Inspired by the words and friendship of Gary Snyder, Hoelting founded Inside Passages, leading mindfulness-based kayaking expeditions focused on how the “practice of the wild” informs both our inner and outer landscapes. In the book’s later essays, he shares his path toward healing following the deaths of his two sons and explores what it means to become an elder in these uncertain times.

Paul Wapner writes, “With a poet’s elegance, a meditator’s sensitivity, and a philosopher’s insight, Hoelting helps us celebrate human experience in its fragile yet shining quality.”

Book Cover Photo by Dan Kowalski and cover design by Lauren Grosskopf

Save the Date!

We Are Not Alone

Samaritan Gathering & Fundraising Luncheon

Friends of Samaritan Center, the agency staff, and board of directors invite you to join us for our first face-to-face gathering since 2019! For many of you, it will be a chance to see long-time friends; for others, a chance to become better acquainted with us and our mission.

After a catered lunch, we will hear from Kurt Hoelting, as he shares insights and engages us in discussion. Guests will receive a copy of his new book, *Apprentice to the Wild*, a collection of timely and personal essays that speak to the spiritual, environmental, and cultural challenges of our times.

Learn more & RSVP on our website, accessible via the QR code to the right.

Keep your eye out for an email with further details!

May 3, 2025

from 12-2:30pm

at

Newport Presbyterian Church
4010 120th Ave SE, Bellevue

\$50

REGISTRATION

to cover cost of event



Staff Favorite

Therapist Review of *Perfect Days*

The essence of the latest film by Wim Wenders, *Perfect Days*, might amount to this: We enter briefly into the life of Hirayama, a mature, solitary man who makes his living cleaning the public toilets in an upscale sector of Tokyo. The bustling, modern urban environment is revealed in contrast to Hirayama's profoundly simple yet rich interior of life.

It is, of course, the way that essential message is delivered that makes all the difference. Wenders' direction (and co-writing) is masterful, allowing us to sense in the understated and serenely visual storytelling the quality of Hirayama's quiet way of apprehending the beauty of the everyday. In the unfolding of that story, we come to appreciate the dignity and care he brings to mundane tasks that are typically unvalued. The heart of the film is Hirayama, and I found myself fascinated by the quality of his attention, a quality that reveals the stance we speak about nowadays as mindfulness. This way of attending with humility and curiosity to the routine activities of his life reminded me of the writings and teachings of Thomas Merton from our Christian tradition or the Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh.

Hirayama is portrayed in the film by Koji Yakusho, a prominent figure in modern Japanese cinema and winner of the Best Actor award at Cannes for this role. Through the mature talent of Yakusho, Hirayama is intriguing in his very groundedness: restrained in his interactions and firmly invested in a range of interests that seem to be vestiges of his youth: playing midcentury music on his cassette tapes, spending his evenings reading fiction of Faulkner and Highsmith, and filling boxes with the nature photography he captures with his quaintly analog camera. What most sets him apart, through it all, is his capacity to perceive and cherish how the everyday can be perfect: superbly simple and at the same time suffused with immeasurable beauty.



Film review by Eric Stroo, LMHC

2024 Giving



over 2x as many
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\$159,367
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35% of donors were
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period of absence

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This is a list of everyone who gave to Samaritan Center in 2024. With gifts that were large, small, and everything in-between, we feel so blessed by each person who made the choice to give. If we have forgotten your name on this list, please let us know so that we can make it right.

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Samaritan Center has maintained a strong presence for over 60 years, facing the headwinds that have challenged and grounded many nonprofit agencies in our community. That we continue and grow is a tribute to our clinical and administrative staff, and to the faithful support of our friends: clients, fellow professionals, donors, and volunteers. *Thank you.*

We want to hear from you!

Ask questions or tell us what you think by email:

contact@samaritanps.org

You can also view our website here:

www.samaritanps.org

If you prefer to call, our phone number is:

(206) 527-2266

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Center of Puget Sound

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