

## From the Executive Director – Sean Swift A Short Sabbath with a Banana Slug

My attitude was, I have no time for a banana slug. That first day, I stepped over the seven-inch long, slime-trailing yellow slug, went inside and closed the door. The next day, I saw it again, but had more important things to think about. Another morning, a silvery trail wavered across the glass of my office door, a sticky track that was difficult to clean off. If I thought anything about banana slugs at that point, it was annoyance that this cheeky creature had forced me into cleaning mode.

I've been thinking lately how ideas and issues seem to circulate in and out. Some bad ideas never seem to go away. Some good ideas can't seem to have their day. One Sunday, I hear a scripture reading and my first reaction is, oh no, not that one again; I'd just as soon leave that one covered up in leaves on the forest floor. But thoughts, ideas, and truths have been circulating for thousands of years and keep returning. Some will not be ignored, and make a stately or shambling way across history again and again. We congratulate ourselves much on our cleverness and technological wonders, but we still drink the water and eat the bread that has sustained us always.

Toward the end of the busiest day of my week, when I felt clamoring problems would forever outnumber quiet solutions, I approached my office and there was the banana slug riving its way across my porch in a dapple of sunlight. I sat down on the step with my briefcase across my lap and actually took a look.

As I bent close, the yellow mollusk sensed me; the higher of two pairs of tentacles telescoped in and out as my shadow fell. I remembered reading that this set of antennae are considered eyestalks and sense light. The slug had an air of great concentrated activity, though a tape measure I carried showed it travelled only five inches in a long minute. That's about 0.0047 miles per hour. Pretty slow! It also feels like the speed at which I solve problems sometimes. The slug has no legs — it is really just one continuous foot — but

a muscular ripple moved it along the grainy redwood board, giving the impression of busy coordinated legs like a caterpillar. It reminded me of the way a sailing ship moves, so stately that the movement doesn't seem to occur, yet it is moving with the wind. The slug even seemed to throw up a bow wave. The negligible progress is a matter of perspective, perhaps. The slug was getting where it needed to go.

Banana slugs are more common in the redwood and Douglas fir groves on the western part of the Ranch. It's a bit unusual to see one here in the developed part of the Ranch where open oak and bay groves don't always provide the steady moisture these slugs prefer. As decomposers, their job is to break things down. With many other organisms, they do the vital work of transforming waste products into compost, making nutrients available for other living things. I have no idea why this one took up residence under the oak near my office, but here it was, and here I was having a short Sabbath with a banana slug. Today, which idea have I resisted, have I left under leaves on the forest floor, that is the solution needed? Today, the banana slug represented that change of perspective, that breaking down of resistance to ideas that might nurture solutions. Ideas don't go away. They circulate until the sunlight hits them just right and until they are noticed.

At home or at the Ranch, I hope you will give yourself time to sit on a wooden step with a — well, maybe not with a banana slug — but perhaps to watch the western bluebirds

nesting, a fresh rose or a wild iris blooming, or a child singing. Do it for all of us: we never know which solution is ready to present itself.



### Banana Slug Facts:

- Lives up to seven years
- Is a gastropod - like snails, clams, squid, beautiful cowries and many sea creatures
- Is the mascot of sports teams at UC Santa Cruz
- Contains the reproductive organs of both sexes
- Has two sets of eyestalks: one pair sensing light and one pair sensing chemicals (smelling)
- Kissing a banana slug is a rite of passage in some environmental education programs (but is not recommended by the Ranch for the sake of the kisser as well as the kissee)
- Can travel 6.5 inches per minute
- Second largest slug in the world
- Three species on the west coast of North America

*Sean Swift*

## Pool Area Renovation Project Underway

As we all know, water has the power to bring growth and change. The three-phase project to renovate the Ranch swimming pool has begun. Phase 1 is the construction of two new wheelchair-accessible restrooms with showers near the pool and adjacent to St. John's Meeting House. Excavation led the way for new pipes and foundation work behind the Meeting House rest-room area. Thanks to dry weather, the foundation for the new shower/rest-rooms was poured on February 9th, followed by framing and the plumbing and electrical work. The restrooms will include an area with a washer and dryer for use by guests who are staying at the Ranch for longer periods. These two restrooms will replace the pool house that was built around 1959. At the time it was built, there were just a handful of rest rooms on the Ranch; now, there are over 50.

Phase 2 is the job of removing the old pool house, the concrete deck and pool itself, and regrading and compacting the site. The old pool house served generations of swimmers over the years as was acknowledged at a decommissioning ceremony held during the Board and Acorn Society retreat last fall.

Phase 3, constructing the new pool and deck, will dramatically improve swimming opportunities for people of all ages and abilities. The new pool will provide extraordinary swimming and pool fun for all Ranch guests. The square footage of the swimming area will be increased from 900 to 1,500. The pool will be extended from 45 to 60 feet in length. It will feature a long beach entry on one end that facilitates shallow play and an easy entry for those who prefer not to



*New shower/restrooms framed in*

use steps. The other end will include a wide nine-foot deep area. The design also allows for two lap lanes to be set up if desired.

Additionally, an expanded deck with entry from both the arbor and the north side will connect to new wheelchair accessible pathways. This design reinstates the historic and stately entry from the arbor. A trellis area on the north side will provide shade and will house solar panels to warm the pool water. There will be an outdoor shower for swimmers, a new fence to provide safety, and new drought-tolerant plants will help tie the area beautifully into the landscape.

We anticipate, God willing, that the renovated pool area will be available to campers and guests by this summer. Deep thanks go out to all who have generously donated to the project so far. About \$525,000 of the \$700,000 project cost has been raised and we are confident that the many families, campers and friends who have enjoyed the pool in the past will want to help re-create the pool for the next generations. Please consider making a donation to help complete this special place of refreshment and fun. Use the enclosed envelope and mark "pool" on your gift. Thank you!

## The Bishop's Ranch Board of Directors - by Judy Harris, Vice-President

Occasionally our Ranch guests inquire about the governance of The Bishop's Ranch. Who oversees the current operations of the Ranch? Who sets strategic direction for the Ranch? The answer is, The Bishop's Ranch Board of Directors. The Board members are volunteers, primarily from the churches of the Diocese of California, with a passion for the mission of the Ranch and a desire to be of service. The Board works with Ranch staff and the Bishop (who serves as Chair of the Board) to ensure the Ranch fulfills its mission.

At their January meeting, the Board welcomed four new members and elected the Board's first honorary member. The new members are: Liza Colton, St. James, San Francisco; Dorothy "Dee Dee" Dickey, Trinity, Menlo Park; Janelle Fazackerly, St. John's, Ross; and Michael Helms, St. John's, Oakland.

The newly elected honorary Board member is Lloyd Aubry of St. Paul's, Burlingame. Lloyd recently retired after over 25 years of service as a regular Board member, including serving as Board president from 1994-2008. During his tenure on the Board, Lloyd oversaw planning, construction and remodeling of many of the existing Ranch facilities: construction of Webb Lodge, Harrison House, St. John's Meeting House and the Swing Pavilion; remodeling of the Kay Qvale Ranch House and the Friary (staff housing). The Ranch also grew from 63 acres to the existing 343 acres

during Lloyd's leadership. The thousands and thousands of guests who have enjoyed the Ranch during the last two decades have benefitted from Lloyd's dedication and experience.

In December, the Board also celebrated the service of departing Board members: Sheri Barden Coholan, St. Mary the Virgin, San Francisco; David Forbes, Grace Cathedral; and Christopher Lewis, St. John's, Ross. David and Christopher were also very long-serving Board members, with decades of service between them.

The Ranch Board of Directors meets formally on a monthly basis to review finances and the status of key projects. However, Board member involvement goes far beyond attendance at these regular meetings. Several committees have been established to assist Ranch staff in the day-to-day management of the Ranch. Board members serve on a variety of committees focused on areas such as marketing, advancement, buildings and grounds, finance, and program development. Board members with diverse backgrounds — attorneys, accountants, architects, and executives — bring a wide range of professional skills to their work supporting the Ranch. For more information about the Ranch Board, contact Executive Director Sean Swift at 707-433-2440 ext. 110 or [sean@bishopsranch.org](mailto:sean@bishopsranch.org).

## Chapel Life

At the end of February, we bid a fond farewell to our latest prayer resident, the Rev. Jamie Knutsen, who has led morning and evening prayers since September 2011. We are grateful for his presence at the Ranch, not only in prayers offered faithfully, but in his work as a spiritual director and his part in the life of the residential staff. A variety of other people, some lay, some ordained, will serve as prayer residents for the remainder of this year.

While Chaplain Pat Moore was in India during the month of January, services were led by clergy and laity of the chapel community. Thanks to Dick Ford, Ray Maloney, Rod McAulay, Marv and Nancy Hiles, Kay Wells, and the “church ladies” who kept things going smoothly (and in their own style!).

We began the season of Lent with noonday service on Ash Wednesday, and will conclude with the services offered during the Ranch’s Silent Days in Holy Week retreat. This special week begins the evening of April 1st and includes worship each day, time for silence, Bible study, Taizé worship and labyrinth walks. It will culminate with a procession to the Cristo following the regular Good Friday service. Easter service will be at 9 am on Sunday, April 8th. For more information about these and other programs, please visit [www.bishopsranch.org](http://www.bishopsranch.org).



*Cristo sculpture*



## Diocesan Window Update

The beautiful, new stained glass windows by artist Irmi Steding that grace the Chapel of St. George and recount passages from the Canticle of the Sun are nearly complete. If you have not seen them, please take time to visit the chapel on your next retreat. Did you know there is one window left to install at the chapel? The window on the stairs to the choir loft is designated the Diocesan Window. To date 23 generous individuals have donated a total of \$2,390 toward the \$10,000 cost. The artist’s drawing of the proposed window is included here. Please consider a gift to the Diocesan Window to complete the installation at the chapel. Thank you!

## The Future Flows from Today's Generosity

"The water that I shall give will be an inner spring always welling up for eternal life." John 4:14

In the management of the Ranch, we seek in a number of ways to help the Ranch be a source of flowing renewal and rejuvenation. At the Ranch, that wellspring is hospitality, fundamental for successful retreats and conferences. In this spirit, the theme chosen for the 2012 Ranch Annual Fund drive is "The Future Flows from Today's Generosity."

The Annual Fund supports the Ranch's primary purpose, to be a place where renewal of spirit, mind and body can occur. The Annual Fund has a direct and immediate impact on the quality of a guest's visit by ensuring clean and welcoming buildings and grounds for Ranch guests. Because we strive to keep guest fees as low as possible to make the benefits of a Ranch visit available to a wide range of people, fees do not cover the entire cost of a guest's experience at the Ranch. Yet, it is critical to remain both an affordable and a well-cared-for facility. As a self-supporting institution of the Diocese of California, gifts to the Annual Fund are an indispensable part of the operations budget and to the continued success of the Ranch's ministry.

We successfully exceeded our 2011 Annual Fund goal of \$150,000. 524 generous donors contributed a total of \$172,186, a wonderful support of Ranch hospitality.

For 2012, the Advancement Committee of the Ranch Board has set a goal to inspire 525 donors to give to the Annual Fund Drive, seeking \$200,000 in support of hospitality and facility maintenance needs. The goal is based upon the operations budget requirements, maintenance needs, and factors in

the success of last year's campaign.

In addition to individual donors, the Ranch is also blessed to receive donations from a variety of parishes and groups. St John's Episcopal Church, Ross is one such donor, giving \$5,000 each year for the past three years out of its Outreach Fund. Rector Chris Rankin-Williams explains, "The Bishop's Ranch means a great deal not only in the lives of many St. John's parishioners but in the community life of our church.



*Vestry of St. John's, Ross on retreat at the Ranch, February 2012*

The parish weekend away and the vestry retreat are formational experiences that transform and enrich the life of the church throughout the year. I always look forward to coming to the Ranch for a parish event, and especially enjoy introducing a parishioner or vestry member to the Ranch for the first time."

St John's has had a relationship with the Ranch in many different ways for many years. In recent years St John's has acknowledged the Ranch as one of a number of organizations that is integral to its parish ministry and as such has identified it in its budget with an annual outreach donation. Each year in late summer or early fall members of St. John's visit the Ranch for the annual parish weekend away.

This event brings together the young and the elderly, families and singles, and new and long-standing members, in ways that a couple of hours at church on a Sunday simply does not allow. Very special bonds and experiences unfold when you live in community for a weekend. A weekend retreat underscores the importance of community, and reveals love and support in places where it might otherwise remain hidden. St. John's finds that once someone has attended one retreat they go out of their way in subsequent years to adjust their busy schedules to make sure that they do not miss out on this special weekend of communal renewal and reflection. The whole parish benefits from the renewed faith, love, and hope that those who participate bring back to St. John's, Ross.

Those of us who work daily on the Ranch campus witness the many positive ways that renewal of spirit, mind and body takes place in people's lives here. That experience makes us tremendously grateful to all who support this special place. Please consider making a gift to help "The Future Flow From Today's Generosity." Ask if your company will match your gift to the Annual Fund.

In Ranch operations, all gifts have great impact. Supporting Ranch hospitality is more important than the size of the gift. Just think: after a good night's sleep, a Ranch guest may open their door to hear Keepo Creek flowing this winter, or relax in an Adirondack chair to watch the sunset, or meet a new soul friend. They will be sending you their deep thanks.

## Grace Cathedral and The Bishop's Ranch

To come away on retreat is to break out of the rhythm of your ordinary day, to present yourself less encumbered, to open yourself to the possibility of refreshment and deep listening to the Spirit that dwells within.

On March 1st, The Bishop's Ranch came to a hill in the city, as the Rt. Rev. Marc Handley Andrus and the cathedral staff gathered with Ranch friends for a special Evensong in thanksgiving for the ministry of retreats and



camp. During the service, guests sat in the Great Quire, as Cn. Ben Bachman led the choir of men and boys through music by Felix Mendelssohn, Thomas Tomkins

and Charles V. Stanford — a truly inspiring experience. The service was followed by a packed reception in the Cathedral dining room, catered by the talented Ranch kitchen staff. Bishop Marc gave a heartfelt welcome to the assembled guests, reminding them that The Bishop's Ranch and St.



Dorothy's Rest, because of their closeness to God's creation, are there for us as special places of renewal.

Ten young people who are currently in working residence at the Ranch during their year of national service with AmeriCorps, served warm brie and chutney phyllo

rounds, cucumber sandwiches, and Ranch-made crackers with assorted cheeses. Adding to the atmosphere of the gathering was piano music



by Christopher Putnam of All Souls Parish, Berkeley and especially lovely Sangiovese and Cabernet Franc wine generously provided by Acorn Winery. Guests left with a bag of Ranch-baked goodies and memories of communities from around the Diocese coming together for the evening. Many thanks to all clergy and staff at Grace Cathedral for their incomparable hospitality.

## Pay it Forward

The Yolo Knitters Guild generously donated the hand-knit afghan pictured here to help support The Bishop's Ranch. Raffle ticket sales generated \$450



for the 2011 Annual Fund Drive and Lisa Thorpe, who purchased five tickets, went home with the beautiful piece, after a random drawing on December 18th. Many women contributed squares to the artistic afghan and we are grateful for their support. Resident artist, Lisa Thorpe, has decided to "pay it forward" and is donating an art quilt. The piece is 30"x42". The bird squares were drawn by Lisa on her iPad and then printed on cotton. It comes with a hand forged hanging rod and brackets made by our own Operations Director and sometimes smithy, Jack Dowling. Raffle tickets are \$5 each or five for \$20. Drawing will

take place this summer; sales will benefit the 2012 Annual Fund. To see color photo and purchase tickets go to [www.bishopsranch.org](http://www.bishopsranch.org) or call Sarah McGowan at (707)433-2440 x 105.



## Staff News - by Shannon Reilly

**Staff Travels:** We've had two of our Ranch family adventuring out in the world recently. Our Chaplain, the Rev. Pat Moore, had the opportunity to travel to India during the month of January. Pat shared this about her experience:

*I've just returned from a month-long trip to southern India, the state of Tamil Nadu. I traveled from Chennai (Madras) down along the eastern coast, across to the Nilgiri Highlands, and then down to the southernmost tip of India. 'India is very different,' is something I heard before I left on my trip, and I would have to agree.*

*I could only begin to get a feel for a very complex society and an ancient history. Southern India may be among the earliest populated regions of the country, and its history of trade with other parts of the world goes back long before the time of Christ.*

*I saw magnificent granite temples with carvings that were intricate and beautiful. I saw miles and miles of fertile agricultural land, and beautiful mountains. I saw elephants and encountered monkeys along with the cattle, goats and dogs that were part*

*of the incredible traffic scene. What I cherish the most about my trip are the people I met. I hold in my heart these beautiful people, their graciousness and their openness to life.*

From November through January, Brendan Swift found himself on a few adventures:

*I have had another great opportunity to see other parts of the world. I spent over a month near Bodrum on the Aegean coast of Turkey, taking care of a stone farmhouse, animals, and gardens for a friend of a friend. The woman's neighbors and circle of friends were very welcoming during my stay. Then I took to the road for three weeks, seeing many historic and beautiful places in the western half of Anatolia and having some wonderful encounters.*

**New beginnings:** January 13th, 2012 was a milestone date here at the Ranch. Ivan Thorpe turned 15 1/2 years old and became eligible for his driver's permit. On February 6th, 2012, he and Jack headed down to the local DMV office so Ivan could take the written exam. We are proud to report that he passed with flying

“racing stripes.” Ranch guests should rest assured that Ivan is navigating Westside Road safely.

We are pleased to welcome a new member to our maintenance department. In January, Dan Silverstrich became a part of The Bishop's Ranch family. Welcome, Dan!

**Babies, Babies, Babies:** Residential Caretaker, Jack “Cass” Grimes and his wife Jan welcomed their newest granddaughter, Lola Madeline Hartley, on April 1st, 2011. Jan is proud to say that Lola was named after her (Jan Lola Grimes).

Housekeeping Coordinator, Maria González, and her family have been blessed with a new baby boy. Juan Pablo González Gutiérrez, born August 1st, 2011, is the third son for Maria and her husband Angel.

Housekeeper Susana Gutiérrez gave birth to her daughter, Perla Guadalupe Gutiérrez, on January 27th, 2012. Susana and her family are excited and big brother Christopher is proud to have a little sister.

## Camp Update

We are excited to announce that Andrea Foote has been hired to the new full time, residential position of Camp Director/Volunteer Coordinator. Andrea has staffed summers at St. Dorothy's Rest and The Bishop's Ranch, and has been an intern here since September. Andrea will bring many new gifts to our ongoing programs. Come join her at one of our summer sessions. Forms are available on our website [www.bishopsranch.org](http://www.bishopsranch.org)

### Camps For Youth & Children

Music Camp June 25 - 30

Sr. High B.R.E.A.D. July 15 - 21

Jr. High B.R.E.A.D. July 22 - 28

### Intergenerational Camps

Family Camp July 1 - 7

Generations July 29 - August 4



## Gifts given to The Bishop's Ranch in Honor, Memory or Thanksgiving

Mr. Byron Bader

in memory of Sinclair Knudsen

Tom and Margaret Bowman

to honor Leslie Bowman Marcus

Ms. Nancy J. Calavan

in thanksgiving for the lives of  
Rev. C. Corwin and  
Frances J. Calavan

Janis Wilcox Christiansen

in memory of  
Robert Owen Christiansen

Janet Clark

in honor of the Ranch Hands  
quilt retreat

Liza Colton in memory of

Elizabeth Colton

Heather Cruciano in memory of

our dear sister Rebecca Meshna

Kitty and Don de Brauwere

in memory of brother  
Michael Kolleda

Arlene Finn in memory of

Mary Katz

The Rev. and Mrs. Richard B. Ford

in honor of The Rev. and Mrs.  
Dwight Edwards

John and Jennifer Friend in honor of

Victoria and Owen Friend

Jane L. Holland and Jim Furness

in honor and memory of the life  
of Snow Cummings

Barbara B. Girard

in memory of Jerry Girard

Patrick Heaton in memory of the

Rev. John Beverly Butcher

John Hickson

in honor of Judy Werner-Hall

Dorothy R. Higbie in memory of

the Very Reverend John Weaver

Yolo County Knitters

in memory of Jack Carter

Ellen Jennings

in honor of Kay and Marge

Lisa Kimball

in honor of Sean and Caroline Swift

Idamaria Knights in memory of

Bishop Karl Morgan Block

Chris Markell in memory of

Edward Markell and Anne Markell

Mrs. Edward K. Markell in memory of

Edward Markell and Anne Markell

Jim Miller and Torrie McAllister

in memory of Robert Skeith Miller

Connie and Frank Prim

in loving memory of  
Lori Anne Bond-Keech

M. Jeffrey Qvale

in memory of Kathryn Qvale

The Rev. Chris and Amy

Rankin-Williams in honor of  
Nigel and Jane Heath

Ginny Reed

in memory of Richard W. Reed

Ted and Shirley Ridgway

in memory of Lelia Eastburn

Barbara Seaton in memory of the

Rev. Donald Seaton

Edith Simonson

in memory of Kirstin Paisley

The Rev. Cn. Frances C. Tornquist

and Mr. John Tornquist

in thanksgiving for grandson

Sawyer D. King

Margery A. Ward in memory of

Herb Ward and in thanksgiving  
for family

Kip West in honor of the Community

of the Transfiguration



A sturdy redwood bench has been placed near Harrison House in memory of Frances Calavan, by her family and friends. A person relaxing on the bench will have wonderful views of the Russian River Valley with Mount Saint Helena beyond.



**Leave a lasting legacy  
remember  
The Bishop's Ranch in  
your will or  
estate plan.**

## A Life of Artful Service



We will greatly miss Frances Lana, who passed away on October 10th, 2011 at the age of 95. Frances was an inspiration to many at the Ranch and around the Diocese for her passionate engagement with people. Frances was learning and growing to the very end of her life, as she continued to practice her art and read the latest books that interested her. She was interested in all Asian art and worked out her own Chinese brush painting style based on the simplicity and the recognition of everyday things she saw in Asian art.

Frances worked for nonprofit organizations in San Francisco for many years. She attended St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Belvedere, and loved to come to the Ranch for Silent Days in Advent. She also enjoyed coming just for the day to visit with staff and friends, experience the tranquility and the heavenly views over the woods and the Russian River Valley.

Her friend, Georgene Keeler, thought of Frances as "a Buddhist Jungian Episcopalian." Frances Lana was well-versed on current politics and concerned about this country and the world. The Rev. Zoila Schoenbrun commented, "Frances was a person whose joy, simple delight in life, was contagious. I valued her quick mind, her lithe spirit and our spiritual friendship."

Frances was interested in making sure that the Ranch was available to people who want to visit. She was instrumental in moving the pool area renovation project forward. She had a strong vision of children and families playing at the new pool area. With her generous nature, Frances wanted to see the Ranch available for people in the future, so she left a generous bequest in her will to the Ranch as well as other Diocesan institutions such as St. Dorothy's Rest., St. Stephen's, Belvedere, CDSP, and Episcopal Community Services.

Thank you, Frances, for leaving a legacy gift that makes it possible for the Ranch to better serve those here now and to be ready to serve people in the future.

## EcoPilgrimage - July 8th to 11th, 2012



Join us on a journey, by boat and by foot, through the Russian River watershed to the Sonoma Coast, highlighting the vibrant landscapes of The Bishop's Ranch and St. Dorothy's Rest.

The trip begins at the Ranch, where we leave chaparral forests and vineyards for the Middle Reach of the Russian River. Two days of peaceful paddling leads us to the redwoods at St. Dorothy's. From there we hike through the Willow Creek watershed and canoe the last stretch of the river to the sandy dunes and rocky coastline of the Pacific Ocean.

Related readings and speakers will help us appreciate each new ecosystem we discover on this adventure. Tasty meals will fuel our bodies and an engaging chaplain will offer spiritual nourishment.

Cost for the EcoPilgrimage is \$425 per person, which includes lodging, all meals, boat rental, and transportation during the trip.

Visit [www.bishopsranch.org/programs\\_camps](http://www.bishopsranch.org/programs_camps) for registration materials.



*Do you have a canoe or kayak gathering dust in your garage? That vessel could be part of a floating pilgrimage down the Russian River to the Pacific! Donate your craft to The Bishop's Ranch and we'll put it to good use during EcoPilgrimage 2012; we hope you'll join us as well. Visit the "Programs & Camps" section of our website, or contact Andrea Foote at [andrea@bishopsranch.org](mailto:andrea@bishopsranch.org).*



## Southern Alameda Vestry Retreat - by The Rev. Ron Culmer

“Why on Earth would we do this?” I asked the 100+ people who crowded in the Swing Pavilion for the fifth annual Southern Alameda Deanery Vestry Retreat at the Bishop’s Ranch in Healdsburg. The Rev. Dr. Michael Barlowe, the Diocesan Canon to the Ordinary; Kathleen Piraino, the Executive Director of Episcopal Charities; and The Very Reverend Jane Shaw, Dean of Grace Cathedral, joined us for this year’s retreat, adding additional heft to my question. I continued: “It’s not like other congregations are doing this kind of work together! Nor does it make the work of our own congregations that much easier! It’s hard enough leading our own congregations...so why are we doing this?”

The answers fell like the rays of sunshine just outside the building: “Because this is who God has called us to be!” Or “I love it when I see other people, from different churches whom I know.” And, “Being away from home, in this place, with these people, multiplies the energy we have for ministry. We come away with a deeper sense of the holy than we ever could in our individual parishes.” Such fine answers!

Still, I knew my own reasons for this gathering, and frankly, some of those reasons are selfish: there is nothing quite like a large gathering of Episcopalians.

We Episcopal folk are a mislabeled lot: words like “Frozen Chosen” or “People who like to read to God” fall easily from the lips of those who don’t know us. Mind you, we’ve earned some of that sass, but the name calling really only describes our veneer; scratch beneath the surface, and you’ll find we’re as lively as any of our Christian counterparts.

Case in point: The Southern Alameda Deanery Vestry retreat. There are few places in the Episcopal Church that I know of where so much laughter, appreciation of our diverse gifts, and cooperation take place in one setting! Add the gracious hospitality of the Ranch, the liquid sunshine of the Golden State (the winters in this part of the country

are the envy of the world), the bucolic environs (even with the smell of the cows!), and even a “frozen chosen” would have to thaw.

Indeed, that’s what we do at this retreat.

We thaw from our old traditions of “my church is better than your church.” Instead, we focus on what’s working in the congregations of our deanery and how we might take those ideas back to our individual parishes.

We thaw from self-serving models of ministry, where thoughts such as “my congregation’s resources are mine and not yours” evaporate like a warm January weekend at the Ranch.

No, our congregations: St. Anne’s, Fremont; St. James, Fremont; St. Bart’s, Livermore; All Saints, San Leandro; Holy Cross, Castro Valley; and St. Clare’s, Pleasanton have developed through these retreats shared missions: such as house building in Mexico



*Vestry from St. Clare’s, Pleasanton*

(which we’ve done for the last five years), walking in the San Francisco AIDS Walk (with the largest Episcopal contingency to date) and working with Deacon John Trubina on planting a “church without walls” in Hayward this year. That’s not the work of a frozen people: it’s more like a January thaw!

But that’s just the beginning.

All work and no play makes for a very boring church. So we play at the retreat and in our common ministry. For the past four years we’ve hosted “The Bash.” It’s a gathering at a park for worship, a meal, and playtime. It’s one heck of a witness to the rest of the world to see Episcopalians (our Episcopal flag flying in the breeze) having a good time

together...most especially since some of what the world sees of Christians can be pretty ugly!

And because we like each other so much, we’re taking over St. Dorothy’s Rest in August for a come one, come all retreat. The agenda? Just to have a good time! There’s more, but this newsletter has space limitations!

All this talk about what we’re doing and where we are going may seem counter to talking about a vestry retreat at The Bishop’s Ranch. It may even seem like bragging. You’d be wrong on both counts.

We couldn’t do any of this without the support, leadership, and partnership of clergy and laity. A lot of work and planning go into these gatherings. And mind you, this isn’t “perfect ministry.” Getting six different communities of faith to agree and work together is hard work. What keeps drawing us back together is that we know we have touched on something vital, a form of ministry that is as intoxicating and beautiful as the vineyards that surround the Ranch.

Which leads to my final point: We decided that we’re going to do this again in January, right here at The Bishop’s Ranch. This time, however, it won’t be just Southern Alameda Deanery. According to the president of our deanery, Mr. Fred Hanson, we’re going to invite leadership from across the diocese to come and see what we’re up to. I’ll admit this may not work for every deanery...but heavens, if what we’ve experienced over the past five years excites other parts of the diocese the way we get excited, there’s no telling what God will do!

In conclusion, the retreat is an amazing mix: one part laity, one part clergy, one part The Bishop’s Ranch and whole lot of Holy Spirit. And that is a very good thing, indeed!

Yours for the reign of God,

Ron

## Facilities Super Heroes



*Rick Kaye & AmeriCorps crew*

With the help of two AmeriCorps NCCC crews, the maintenance team, led by Doug Wade, has completed several projects that improve both the functionality and aesthetics of the Ranch facilities and grounds. Their combined efforts have given us "Super Hero" results. Guests can view some of the projects by walking around the grounds. Two major sections of hillside along the driveway were landscaped with native grasses and shrubs to significantly reduce erosion. Another project extended the landscaping from the Pavilion to below the Refectory, replacing water thirsty

grass with low water plants, and creating a safety zone above the new horseshoe pit. A dozen new trees were planted around the site, and a path was extended to the Pavilion. Elsewhere, the blacksmith shop adjacent to the maintenance shop was enclosed.

To see some of the projects, one must walk out into the wilderness property of the Ranch. AmeriCorps Crews built three new footbridges on the Lookout Loop trail. They did some major work on the infrastructure of the Lake Trail, allowing us to access the backcountry by truck in all kinds of weather. This work included replacing worn culverts with armored crossings and spreading gravel in areas where the road gets slippery with mud. Fifty feet of erosion-controlling structures were installed in drainage areas throughout the watershed.

The rest of the projects are more difficult to see. Three thousand pounds of unwanted brush and exotic vegetation was removed from two acres of land. Eight

cords of firewood were split and stacked. An 800- cubic- foot compost pile was built and tended and then used in new landscaping projects. Demolition on the 50-year-old pool house was begun, and our crews carefully removed the redwood



*Americorps crew clearing fallen trees*

siding, salvaging 750 square feet of lumber for future projects.

All of these projects, whether highly visible or not, help us care for this place, and increase the ability of the community to access and enjoy the Ranch. Three cheers for our everyday heroes!

## Juan Pablo - by Maria González



I am proud to introduce my son, Juan Pablo. He was born on August 1st, 2011, at 8:05 a.m. My husband, Angel, and I and our two older boys, Luisangel and Manuel, feel so blessed.

During the fifth month of my pregnancy, we were informed that Juan Pablo would be born with spina bifida cystica, a condition where the spinal cord is exposed on the outside of the body. One day after his birth, he underwent the first of three surgeries to address some of the issues resulting from his condition. He spent the first three months of his life at Kaiser Hospital in Oakland. He was cared for by an amazing medical staff and had many visitors providing loving support, for which we are grateful.

Today, Juan Pablo lives in Saratoga, CA at a special facility designed to care for his needs. He has shown much improvement over the last few months, and we are praying to bring him home as soon as possible. Until we can do that, our family travels every weekend to be with him. Yes, it is tremendously difficult to not have him home with us, but we do our best to stay positive and trust that he will be here when the time is right.

## The Bishop's Ranch Wish List

### Maintenance/ grounds wishes:

- Barn 18' x 28' (or something close to that size)
- Belt grinder, metal working
- Blacksmithing equipment
- Dump trailer
- Kawasaki Mule 4-wheel drive vehicle

- Landscape materials: large boulders, soil, flagstone
- Water Trailer, 500 gallon
- Wood Planer, 12" electric

### Housekeeping/Kitchen wishes:

- Coffee makers
- Electric water kettles
- Toaster ovens
- Pans and casserole dishes
- Sheets, twin or double in

### excellent condition

- Towels, in excellent condition
- Mattress pads, twin or double size
- Vacuum Cleaners
- Carpet shampooer
- Blender

### Other wishes:

- Canoes or kayaks, in good condition
- Adult life vests

*A monetary or in-kind gift for an item on the Wish List helps Ranch guests have a more comfortable and productive stay, and helps the Ranch staff improve services to guests.*



Did you know the Ranch has two electric scooters available? Keep this in mind for your retreat planning. Don't let lack of mobility be a barrier at your retreat. Contact the Ranch office for additional details.

(707) 433-2440 , [info@bishopsranch.org](mailto:info@bishopsranch.org)

From "*the abundant table*" - Recipes from The Bishop's Ranch Kitchen"

## chard TART

MAKES 1 LARGE 10-- INCH TART.

*This filling works well for turnovers and gallettes as well.*

### Tart shell

- 3 T sour cream, yogurt or buttermilk
- 1/3 cup ice water
- 1 cup unbleached flour
- 1/4 cup cornmeal
- 1 t sugar
- 1/2 t salt
- 7 T cold unsalted butter, chopped

In food processor or mixer: Stir sour cream and water together in small bowl, set aside. Put dry ingredients into food processor and pulse a few times. Add half of the butter and pulse a few times. Add the remaining butter and pulse until butter is distributed and size of small peas. Add liquid mixture and blend with short pulses, until dough starts to pull away from the sides of the bowl. Turn pastry out into a bowl or lightly floured surface and press dough together. Wrap in plastic film and chill at least 1 hour.

Place chilled dough on lightly floured surface. Using floured rolling pin, roll dough out with even strokes, turning it over once and sprinkling with more flour as needed, continue rolling until size of tart pan. Lift dough onto the tart pan, tuck down the dough along the side, and roll the pin over the top of the pan edge to cut off excess dough. Prebake tart shell in 400° F oven about 15 minutes or until the shell is starting to puff and turn golden. Prick large bubbles with fork cool and prepare filling.

### Filling

- 2 T olive oil
- 1 red onion finely diced
- 1 lb chard, stems removed and leaves chopped into 1" ribbons
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 2 T chopped fresh basil
- 1/4 t salt
- 1/8 t fresh ground pepper
- pinch cayenne pepper
- 3 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 1/2 cup heavy cream or half-&-half
- 1 cup grated parmesan cheese

Preheat oven to 375° F. In large skillet, heat oil and add onions. Saute over medium-low heat until onion is soft, about 10-12 min. Increase heat to medium and add chard and garlic. Continue cooking, stirring occasionally, until the chard is tender. Add the basil, salt, pepper and cayenne. Remove from heat and let cool.

In a bowl, combine eggs, cream, and cheese. Add the chard mixture and stir all together. Then spoon mixture into the prebaked tart shell. Bake until the filling is golden and firm, about 25-35 minutes.

## Thank you for gifts to the Ranch's annual operations and development! Your generosity nurtures this center of hospitality.

Gifts include the Annual Fund, pool area renovation, tree house repair, Chapel window sponsorships, Gina's Orchard Watershed Education Program, Partnership Fund, the Swing Pavilion project, and more...



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## Coming Home

A bi-annual newsletter about life at The Bishop's Ranch,  
a retreat and conference center  
for all ages.

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