



A Publication of **Rachel's Vineyard Ministries**  
[www.RachelsVineyard.org](http://www.RachelsVineyard.org)

## **Rachel's Vineyard:** *After the Retreat*

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# Perspectives on Aftercare

“Aftercare” refers to resources that you as a retreat team provide to those who attend the retreat that will be of ongoing spiritual and emotional value after the retreat.

The standard meaning of “aftercare” in the health profession refers to the practice of making sure that people you have treated (such as a patient who just had open heart surgery or a man returning home after 28 days in an alcohol rehabilitation center) are made aware of and connected to resources to assist them in their ongoing recovery.

The idea of aftercare includes within it the recognition that some injuries leave permanent scars. As someone once said about the loss of a loved one in a tragic accident, “You don’t ‘get over’ it; you do learn to live with it.” For many wounds, emotional and physical, the purpose of treatment is to identify and clean out the wound, so that as the person moves forward, the wound heals cleanly. “Treatment” doesn’t mean that there won’t be ongoing healing.<sup>1</sup>

Within Rachel’s Vineyard, there are *four basic resources* that are of fundamental importance and should be made available to every participant in every retreat. These four **basic** resources are:

- A reunion, held 4-6 weeks after the retreat/letter after the retreat
- “Oaktrees”
- Companions on the Journey
- Possible resources/referrals handout.

All of those resources are discussed in greater detail below. In addition to these four basic resources, some post-abortion ministries are in a position to be *primary providers* for ongoing primary services after the retreat. Depending on the resources available to you, this might involve one-on-one counseling, sponsoring a Bible study, or hosting an annual re-union for everyone in your area who has ever attended the retreat.

It is important, however, to recognize that the need or wish of participants to “return to the group” by asking the retreat team to provide ongoing primary care of one kind or another is not necessarily a goal that it is therapeutically desirable to meet.

For instance, well-known Christian therapist Dan Allender writes:

“The ending of a group is an integral part of the process and should never be overlooked. If closure is handled well, it can be an important force in promoting change. Closure reveals to group members the meaning of continuing to love in spite of the sadness of separation. For some group members, the thought of ending the group is threatening. Their defense against this transition often is to resurrect former issues in order to legitimize their need to stay in the support group. The Christian support group labors mightily to construct a bridge that is durable enough to bear the weight of sadness. Once the bridge is in place, the members must face the sorrow so that it transports them to the task of boldly loving new people. They have a new calling to give away the surplus that they have harvested from the group.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Allender, Dan, with Karen Lee-Thorp. “The Wounded Heart: Hope for Adult Victims of Childhood Sexual Abuse. A Companion Workbook for Personal or Group Use.” (1992, NavPress). Pp. 187-188.

What Allender is saying is that if a person has had an exceptionally valuable experience in a particular group, they may feel threatened by the fear that never again in their life will they experience the degree of healing, intimacy and emotional safety that they experienced in the group.

As we know, for some retreat participants, the retreat itself is literally the first time that they have experienced an emotionally safe environment. They may experience a deep longing to revisit this environment.

As a result, Allender suggests, sometimes a person in their desire to return to the safety of the group, will “resurrect former issues” such as sexual abuse, abortion trauma, or whatever other issue motivated the person to seek assistance in the first place.

It is counter-productive in a case like this to respond by continuing to offer a person an ongoing menu of services designed to assist with issues they have once successfully addressed.

Another thought to keep in mind is that old saying, “When your only tool is a hammer, everything starts to look like a nail.”

Those of us in post-abortion ministry have a specialized knowledge (that’s our “hammer”) about post-abortion trauma and the emotional/spiritual work necessary to resolve this particular form of complicated and traumatic bereavement. We may not be *as* familiar with additional sources of emotional complication that may be creating turmoil for a particular individual, such as a conflicted marriage, substance abuse, maladaptive anger patterns, food abuse, sexual abuse issues, mood disorders, chronic shame from childhood mistreatment, personality disorders arising from childhood abuse, biologically-based mental illness, unresolved grief from other losses, and so on and so forth.

Let’s take the case of a participant in your retreat who calls you months later and says that for the last week or so, she has really been struggling. You know from the retreat that she was raped by her uncle when she was a child and that there are painful, unresolved issues in her marriage. You are aware that she has never had an opportunity to address the sexual abuse in therapy, has not attended a Retrouvaille weekend to help with her marriage, and does not enjoy strong social connections within her church/parish.

The “aftercare” picture is also complicated by the fact that there are many different post-abortion Bible studies available. Most retreat leaders have encountered people on their retreat who had previously gone through a post-abortion Bible study of one kind or another. It is very common for such a participant to say at the end of the retreat, “I had no idea how much additional healing God had in store for me around my abortion.” Hearing such comments, we as retreat leaders are certainly aware that pursuing multiple post-abortion healing opportunities can indeed be helpful to people.

Since this woman called you, you might interpret this to mean that she desires additional help from you in resolving her abortion pain. Therefore, you may wonder whether your post-abortion ministry ought to start offering a post-abortion Bible study or other resource targeted at post-abortion recovery.

However, it may be wise to consider the possibility that in a case like this, any of the following three suggestions would be of more value to her than continuing to address the abortion: (1) Attending a Retrouvaille weekend retreat or marriage counseling to achieve a higher degree of satisfaction within the daily life of her marriage; (2) Finding a therapist or support group who can help her work through the sexual abuse; (3) Encouraging her to join a small group Bible study on a healing subject (such as shame recovery, forgiveness, etc.) within her parish/church.

This is not to say that she wouldn't benefit from an additional post-abortion Bible study or from attending the retreat again. Most people who attend the retreat report that as the years go by, God has continued to reveal to them aspects of the abortion(s) they had previously forgotten or repressed, and this has led to continued healing for them. One-on-one counseling, additional retreats, and Bible studies can certainly be helpful.

You need, therefore, to use your best judgment and discernment in situations like the one described above. Your reaction is also apt to be complicated by your recognition that while there are many sources in society to help someone recover from the other issues mentioned above, most likely you and the other people from the retreat are the only people she knows who she can talk to about the abortion. Maybe she picked up the phone to call you because it is the anniversary of her abortion and she just needs someone to talk to about that.

These are all good issues to discuss with retreat participants at the re-union. The many other different kinds of help available are also discussed regularly by former retreat participants from around the country in *Companions on the Journey*, which is one reason that it is very important to make sure your participants are signed up to be included in that group.

In the next pages, the four basic aftercare resources of Rachel's Vineyard are discussed in detail.

## The Reunion

Each Rachel's Vineyard team is required to hold a follow-up meeting or reunion after each retreat.

### **Scheduling the Reunion.**

It is normal to have the reunion four to six weeks after the retreat. It is often held at the home of someone on the retreat team on a Sunday afternoon, starting perhaps at 2:00 p.m. and going until 5:00 p.m. Another possibility is to meet on a Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and include lunch.

If you are going to have the reunion at a retreat team member's house, plan for it in advance of the retreat. Then on Sunday when you are talking about the reunion, all you have to do is say, "We are having a reunion at Jane's house on such-and-such a date." You can hand out a map at that time, and also let them know that they'll be receiving a written reminder in the mail.

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*"Given people's busy schedules, we in the San Francisco Bay Area include 'personal calendar for scheduling follow-up' on the list of what participants are asked to bring to the retreat. We then take 5-10 minutes during the closing meeting on Sunday to schedule the re-union." Monika Rodman, Oakland*

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You are encouraged to ask the group on Sunday if someone would volunteer to be the "social secretary" for the group. That person can then be the person in charge of keeping in touch, sending out maps and invitations to this (and other) re-unions, etc. over the years to come. Having a "social secretary" volunteer from the group will take that responsibility off your shoulders, which is good, and it also implies that ongoing contact between participants is something for them to decide about on their own, instead of something that is offered by the retreat team—it reflects your attitude that the participants are capable and competent. This is a way of acknowledging your understanding that the pain and vulnerability and need for care expressed on the retreat is not a permanent state of being.

It's a good idea to take additional steps to encourage participation in the reunion. Two steps you can take include (1) having a former retreat participant who is now on your team speak on Sunday morning about how important it is to go to the reunion and (2) have a former participant write a letter that you can send about a week before the reunion really encouraging people to come and emphasizing how much she got out of the reunion.

Your retreat participants should receive a letter from you within a week of the retreat. This letter should also remind people about the reunion.

Some retreat participants fear that if they come to the reunion, they'll get sucked back into their abortion pain. The only way for them to find out for sure that this isn't true is to come to the reunion and not have it happen. Coming to the reunion gives them a greater sense of strength about this, which is one reason it is important to come. Therefore, it pays to go out of your way to encourage attendance.

### **Post-retreat Letter/Invitation to Reunion: Sample letter/invitation to mail after retreat.**

Dear Friends in Christ,

It was such a privilege to share in your lives on the weekend retreat. We had a wonderful group and you each offered so much support and love to one another. You are a blessing!

It is very important that you allow yourselves time to rest and regenerate. During this brief weekend of facing the past, you have been through deaths and birthings. These are profound experiences and self-care is needed, which we will talk more about at the reunion. Permit yourself to have whatever feelings are there, instead of stuffing them. Allow time to assimilate the vulnerability and the healing you have experienced. Please be gentle with yourselves, and let Christ's peace that surpasses all understanding make its home within you.

You may find yourself pondering in your heart the many ways that you have been transformed. You are indeed a new creation and you might feel a little "out of sync" and even somewhat lost. If you do feel these ways, be patient with yourself while you adjust. You may even find yourself grieving at times. This is normal. You might feel some emptiness from the guilt you have let go of. It is not unnatural for you to notice a weight loss from laying down such a heavy burden (rock) that you've carried. Let your blessings enlighten your understanding and open you to further healing. Your children are surely interceding to God on your behalf for your ongoing healing. Slowly but surely, put into practice the things that were suggested to nurture the new closeness to Jesus that you have experienced. Faith development requires prayer and effort. Faith can then be sustained and strengthened as it is lived out.

Fortunately, you now have more friends in Christ with whom you can share your journey of faith. The confidential retreat participant list is enclosed. Share hope now, in the same way you have opened yourself to share pain! Stay in touch with each other and love one another as Christ has loved you.

Our retreat reunion will be Sunday, December 8 starting at 1:30 p.m. It will be at LOCATION. Directions are enclosed. The reunion is an opportunity for spiritual enrichment to foster a more intimate relationship with Christ. We'll begin with a potluck snack so bring one of your favorite light snacks. Please call (xxx-xxx-xxxx) or email me (xxxxxxx) to let me know if you will or won't be at the reunion.

Love in Christ,  
Your Name

## **What to do at the reunion.**

It really isn't necessary to do more than get together, pray as a group, and simply go around the room and ask everyone to share where they are emotionally and spiritually and what they've been up to since the retreat. This will help people bring out any feelings they have been having since the retreat. The reunion can also be a good time to circulate a sign-up sheet to encourage participants take on responsibilities for your next retreat, such as being a prayer partner, being a Friday night greeter, etc. For those interested in additional ideas for designing a reunion, some suggestions follow.

A program that we have developed for our reunion in Madison, Wisconsin, is based on the book, "Safe People".<sup>3</sup> After everyone has had a chance to check-in and say how they've been doing since the retreat, a teach-in on the ideas in the book is presented. The concepts in this book have been described as follows:

*"Some people are good for us, some are not. Safe people are people who help drive emotional healing and character growth. Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend show how we can find the people who will help us down the path to healing and avoid those who may damage our emotional health. **Safe People: How to Find Relationships that are Good for You** provides practical ground-breaking help which lays a firm foundation for personal growth."*

It is helpful for retreat participants to realize that the emotional safety they experienced at the retreat is something we can learn as individuals to re-create with other people, in other situations.

Another option to pursue at your reunion is a Living Scripture exercise. Below are two Living Scripture exercises – The first is called "Descent of the Holy Spirit" by Dr. Theresa Burke and the second is called "Invitation to Grace" written for use at the reunion by Janet Kormish, who facilitates the Rachel's Vineyard retreats in British Columbia, Canada.

## ***Living Scripture for After Rachel's Vineyard Retreat***

### **Descent of the Holy Spirit Living Scripture**

#### ***Scripture Reading***

*John 20: 19 – 22*

**On the evening of the first day of the week, when the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." And when he said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."**

#### ***Living Scripture***

***Breathe in the reality of new life in Christ,  
Breathe out any feelings of grief and loss,  
Breathe in the promise of hope for your future,***

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<sup>3</sup> "Safe People," Zondervan (1996), by Henry Cloud, John Townsend, and John Sims Townsend. 208 pp.

*Breathe out any despair or disbelief.*

*Breathe in the breath of heaven, the power and strength of the Holy Spirit.*

*Imagine you have just spent the last two years of your life following Jesus as his disciple. You have been present as he performed many miracles: healing the infirmed, expelling out demons, even raising back to life those who had died! You had placed all your faith and trust in him. He had promised glorious things! He promised that you would be fishers of men; he promised salvation and he talked about eternal life! But within a few short days, everything began to unravel.*

*Oh, it was a horrible day! Judas, one of his closest friends, who had traveled with you, next to Jesus, had betrayed him! They took Jesus away and began to question him and put him through public humiliation and shame—beating him, mocking him, crowning him with thorns, before finally nailing him to a cross!*

*You wanted to stay with him, to be there for him, but fear had gripped your soul, questions swirled in your mind and you could not bear to watch! And then there were the guards – they were looking for anyone who had followed him, anyone who had worked with him – and so, you hid. You watched from afar as this man, your beloved friend, was sentenced to death, crucified, and in the end finally gave up his spirit.*

*And now, you are with the other disciples, huddled in the upper room behind locked doors, wondering what to do, where to go. It seems too dangerous to venture out, many are still looking for you, to question you, or maybe even worse...*

*Your heart is heavy. You feel as if you have been cheated during these past years. What happened to your King? To eternal life? Great things were supposed to happen.*

*You would speak and others were supposed to listen. You were one of the elite! And now you are too fearful to even go out in public! It was not supposed to end in death! Your mind swirls in confusion, fear, grief and loneliness. Was Jesus gone forever? What are you and the others to do?*

*And suddenly, you look up, and He is here! Jesus is standing in the room with you! He is right in front of you! This feels like a dream!*

*His eyes look deep into yours, and as His loving gaze holds your eyes he speaks softly and calmly, "Peace be with you."*

*You hear his words, you feel the depth of his genuine love and concern. Peace. Peace be with me. Peace be with me.*

*He knows the questions and doubts in your heart. He shows you the marks on his hands and in his side. You see the nail holes and the spear wound – and you are sure, Yes! This is Jesus! He has come back to you!*

*Fear begins to dissipate and your joy begins to grow – Jesus looks deep into your eyes again. His gaze touches your soul. He repeats again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me so I send you."*

*As Jesus finishes speaking, he breathes upon you saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”*

*Your eyes are closed. Your head is bowed. You feel his breath on your face like a gentle calming breeze.*

*The mysterious and powerful breath of God... the same breath that gave you life when you were created.... His breath... the same breath that kept you going when you felt you did not want to live on.*

*The breath of the Holy Spirit begins to fill your soul with a life giving miracle! A deep peace descends upon your heart. You feel the healing nature of God’s spirit as it revitalizes your body, mind and soul.*

*Jesus says to you, “Receive the Holy Spirit. My spirit to be lived from within you.”*

*As the breath of Heaven touches your memories, you feel something happening inside. You are unsure at first what it is, but the feeling is growing in you.*

*Suddenly you recognize it!! This awakening is strength and courage! Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness! You are being filled with virtue! With each breath your trust and your belief grows! Every breath makes you stronger. Your confidence and self-control is growing! Jesus breathes upon you infusing your entire body with the powerful spirit of the Living God.*

*You understand now that Jesus has not abandoned you, even when you had abandoned him! He has never left you! Now you understand that with the gift of his Holy Spirit, he will never leave you again!*

*“As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”*

*Yes, Yes! You cry out, “I am ready! I can go forth! I can carry on the message! I can be a light to those in darkness!”*

*With this new breath of life, with an undeniable strength, and with the spirit of God alive in your soul, you will follow in the path where he leads.*

#### **Discussion Questions**

- 1) Describe your experience and relationship with God since the retreat.
- 2) Have you ever kept your faith “hidden” for fear of what others would say? (Friends, family, co-workers?)
- 3) Have you ever felt as if Jesus had “died” on you, leaving you all alone since your weekend?
- 4) Jesus wants to give you his peace. Are there any obstacles or present problems in your life that make it difficult to receive and accept His peace?
- 5) Since your retreat, share a moment when you have “felt his breath” or experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit.... (During something you shared about your retreat? Through the voice of a friend? The understanding or acceptance of another?)
- 6) What does it mean to you personally when Jesus says: “As the Father has sent me, so I send you?”
- 7) Each person is invited to express any special needs or particular situations that they would like the group to pray for. In particular, you might want to pray for the fruits of the Holy Spirit to be revealed in these situations.

**Invite prayer for each other, laying on of hands or whatever style of prayer your group is comfortable with.**

**Closing Prayer:**

Oh God, our heavenly Father, help and guide us into becoming what you created us to be. Having been created in your image and likeness, we have been given the ability to create as you create, love as you love and to forgive as you forgive. Thank you, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Thank you for the gift of life and the gift of your spirit to lead us in this journey. Amen.

Close this meeting with a Holy Spirit Song

Spirit of the Living God  
Come Holy Ghost

***Invitation to Grace:***

**A Guided Scripture for the Reunion**

By Janet Kormish

**Materials:**

Small plastic wine glasses and pitcher full of cool water	4-6 chairs on other side of cross for foot massage
Peppermint foot cream	Christ candle
Large wooden cross	One votive candle for each participant
2 chairs on one side of cross for foot washing	Taper to light vigil candles from Christ candle

**Music:**

“Come to the Water”  
“Shadowed by a Heavy Burden”  
“You are Mine”  
“This Little Light of Mine”  
“Our God is an Awesome God”

**A reading from Isaiah 55: 1-3; 6, 8-13**

*All you who are thirsty, come to the water! You who have no money, come, receive grain and eat; come without paying and without cost, drink wine and milk! Why spend your money for what is not bread; your wages for what fails to satisfy? Come to me heedfully, listen that you may have life. I will renew with you the everlasting covenant, the benefits assured to David. Seek the Lord while he may be found, call him while he is near. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts. For just as from the heavens the rain and snow come down and do not return there till they have watered the earth, making it fertile and fruitful, giving seed to him who sows and bread to him who eats, so shall my word go forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it. Yes, in joy you shall depart, in peace you shall be brought back, mountains and hills shall break out in song before you, and all the trees of the countryside shall clap their hands. In place of the thornbush, the cypress shall grow, instead of nettles, the myrtle. This shall be to the Lord's reknown, an everlasting imperishable sign.*

## **Living Scripture Meditation:**

Invite participants to get comfortable and close their eyes. Begin with the breathing exercises.

**Breathe in the holiness of God. Breathe out any anxiety, stress and negativity. (PAUSE). Breathe in the mercy of God. Breathe out any worry or apprehension. (PAUSE). Breathe in the tranquility of God, and breathe out any tension. Breathe in the sanctity of God, and breathe out any doubts or fears.**

**You have been on a long hard journey...It is Rachel's journey. This journey has taken you over a dry desert land, over rough, rocky terrain, over thorny, prickly, snake-infested ground, through ravaging rivers, through scary, dark, dank caves. You even had to break through thick rock walls...walls that were built up each time you believed lies that were told to you about yourself...each time you were criticized or your feelings were invalidated....You may have even suffered physical or sexual abuse...PAUSE...now you are on your way up the mountain...sometimes you have had to crawl on your hands and knees...persevering with one thought in mind...somehow, you knew you must continue up the mountain...you knew you must get to the top...your feet are bruised, cut and covered with dirt, your throat is parched and dry, your whole body aches. ..You ache for the Living Water you have heard is at the top of the mountain...PAUSE...At long last you make it to your destination...You are at the top of the mountain! You are astonished to see the Cross of Christ in front of you. You set the huge garbage bag down that you have been carrying around with you for many years...It is so heavy...filled with hatred, guilt, shame, pain, grief, sorrow, anger, unforgiveness...you just want to be rid of it..rid of the crushing weight...You pick up the bag for the last time and you dump all of its contents at the foot of the cross...PAUSE...You feel so much lighter now...PAUSE...Your thoughts turn to your dry, parched throat. Is that the Lord, the Christ, beside you? He is inviting you to come and drink from a nearby pool that sparkles and ripples in the sunlight. He says, "Come to the Water, the Water that I shall give you is the Water of Life, and if you drink from this Living Water you will never be thirsty again." You take a long, deep drink...this Water quenches your thirst like no other water you have ever drank. ...PAUSE...Your thoughts now turn to your tired, aching, bruised and bleeding feet..It is as if Christ knows what you are thinking...He leads you by the hand to a fountain gushing out of the side of a rock. He seats you on a stone beside the fountain...He takes your tired, aching feet in his hands and holds them under the rushing water...it feels so good, so warm and so healing. This must be the Fountain of Life that you have heard about! And now he dries your feet with a towel that has been wrapped around his waist, and begins to rub them with a cooling balm. You are reminded of Mary Magdalene, a woman you have heard of from the Scriptures. You remember how she washed the feet of Christ, and dried them with her hair. Then she poured balm from an alabaster jar over his feet...Is it possible that Christ would anoint and massage your feet? ...You can't believe it, but here he is pouring balm over your feet and then he begins to massage them. You are overwhelmed with gratitude and thanksgiving.**

**PAUSE**

Facilitator now says to participants:

*He is calling you now. He invites you to take off your sandals and come to the water...drink of the Living Water, the water of life, and come, let us wash your feet and massage*

*them with cooling balm. Then come, light a candle. Let the flame of your candle shine out into the world for Christ...be a beacon of light...let the light of Christ shine through you so that others may know of this living water that you have received this day.*

Participants come forward to take a drink of water that has been blessed by the Priest. A helper pours them a drink. As helper pours the water, the helper says, ***“Drink of this Living Water and you will never thirst again”*** Participants move towards a chair and have their feet washed with warm water. Helpers washing their feet say, ***“This water from the Fountain of Life will wash away all your hurt and pain.”*** Then they move to the next chair, where a helper will massage their feet with peppermint lotion and/or cinnamon oil. Helper says, ***“This cooling balm will heal all your wounds.”*** Next they go to a center table where they light a votive candle off of the Christ candle. This light symbolizes their lives, now transformed by the light of Christ. As they light the candle, the helper says, ***“Be a light to others; shine your light—the light of Christ into the darkness of the world.”***

### CLOSING PRAYER

**Lord, we thank you for giving us Living Water. We thank you for healing our wounds and bringing us out of the darkness into the light. We thank you for calling us to Yourself. Thank you for saving us from the burden of our past. We pledge our very selves and our service to You now. We are Yours forever, your humble servants. Grant us the grace to open our hearts to You so we can serve You always.”**

AMEN

## Oaktrees

It is *strongly recommended* that each Rachel’s Vineyard team utilize the national aftercare resource, **Oaktrees**, for their retreat participants. **Oaktrees** is a series of twelve newsletters that retreat participants can receive in the twelve months after they attend the retreat. Created in 2002 through the Rachel’s Vineyard national office, it is a completely volunteer project, written by and for those who have attended a Rachel’s Vineyard Retreat. The newsletter includes retreatants’ inspirational personal stories and messages as well as recommendations for resources to foster additional healing in the areas of sexual abuse, setting boundaries and healing relationships. Retreatants share experiences in areas such as telling others about abortion, recovery from shame, encouraging husbands or other loved ones to attend the retreat, and many other topics of interest to virtually anyone who has attended the retreat.

Make sure your retreatants have availability to this newsletter, and let them know that, because **Oaktrees** is written by and for them, their own contributions are welcome and encouraged.

To sign up to receive **Oaktrees**, have your retreatants send an e-mail to [oaktrees@rachelvineyard.org](mailto:oaktrees@rachelvineyard.org). Assure them that their e-mail address will be handled by only one member of our **Oaktrees** team, and that she will never share their address with anyone for any reason.

## **“Companions on the Journey”**

In addition to the newsletter, we also have a national egroup “Companions on the Journey” for past Rachel’s Vineyard Alumni who would like to support each other in ongoing e-group discussions. The COTJ group is specifically (and only) for post abortion, post retreat people. It is a place of understanding and help as we travel our respective journeys.

To join go to <http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/CompanionsOnTheJourney/> and click on the “Join this Group” button. It will walk you through how to join. Or, another way is to send an email to one of the group moderators asking to join. These moderators email addresses are: Susan Gliko at: [susanmtrv@msn.com](mailto:susanmtrv@msn.com), Susan Swander at: [sueswander@gmail.com](mailto:sueswander@gmail.com) or Lee Anne Martinez at: [chimakuni@wavecable.com](mailto:chimakuni@wavecable.com). Please make this information available to all retreatants and urge them to sign up to stay connected to others who are walking this healing journey.

## **Other Resources/Referrals Handout**

A handout listing resources/referrals for participants is mandatory. This can be distributed at the end of the retreat (preferred) or mailed within a week of the end of the retreat.

The aftercare handout should include the names and contact information for several local pastors, several local therapists, and local contact information for various 12-step groups, along with contact information for Retrouvaille, NFP, Couple to Couple League and other local support groups. Since it is not uncommon for people to attend retreats who live hours away, it is wise to include national hotline numbers and web addresses for these support groups. It’s also a good idea to include a list of books in areas such as sexual abuse, forgiveness, anger, etc. Include contact information (including websites wherever possible) for nearby retreat houses, Catholic/Christian bookstores, spiritual directors, and information about local Catholic/Christian radio stations. The following section is a list of possible **Resources to Explore...** for inclusion in your handout.

### **Resources to Explore after the Retreat**

#### **One-on-one therapy or pastoral counseling**

Many people benefit from therapy. Therapy is important and helpful for those who were victimized by sexual, emotional or physical abuse. Therapy helps with marriage and parenting issues, substance abuse, setting healthy boundaries, depression, anger, shame, and working through uncomfortable emotions. The following sources are provided in order to assist you in finding a therapist in your community.

**Focus on the Family** at 1-800-A-FAMILY. Ask to be referred to the psychology counseling line. Once transferred, tell them where you are located and they will give you the names of psychologists in your area who have met their stringent guidelines.

**Catholic Charities or Catholic Social Services.** Call your Diocese and ask for the contact number for Catholic Charities or Catholic Social Services.

**The American Association of Christian Counselors** is a large membership organization of Christian counselors. Their web address is [www.aacc.net](http://www.aacc.net). At this website, you can enter your zip code and find a list of Christian counselors near you.

**RAPHA** is the name of an organization for Christian psychiatrists. They have a webpage at [www.raphacare.com](http://www.raphacare.com). Their national phone number is 1-800-383-HOPE, which you can call to ask for referrals to someone in your area.

Catholic therapists in your area can be located through this website: [www.catholictherapists.com](http://www.catholictherapists.com). Check out their book recommendations.

Another website to look into for Christian therapists in your area is CAPS (the Christian Association for Psychological Services) at [www.caps.net](http://www.caps.net).

Rachel's Vineyard Ministries maintains a national toll-free hotline at 1-(877) HOPE-4-ME.

The National Office of Post-Abortion Reconciliation and Healing/Project Rachel maintains a line at 1-800-5WE-CARE for referrals to one-on-one counseling.

### **Online Newsletter and Support Group**

**Oaktrees** is a series of personal stories and inspiring messages created through the Rachel's Vineyard national office for new Rachel's Vineyard participants by former participants. To sign up to receive **Oaktrees** through your email address, send an email to [oaktrees@rachelsvineyard.org](mailto:oaktrees@rachelsvineyard.org). Your email address will be kept confidential.

"Companions on the Journey" – for past Rachel's Vineyard Alumni who would like to support each other in ongoing e-group discussions. To join contact [susanmtrv@msn.com](mailto:susanmtrv@msn.com) or [sueswander@gmail.com](mailto:sueswander@gmail.com)

### **Other Support Groups**

**Retrouvaille:** A Lifeline for Hurting Marriages. See [www.retrouvaille.org](http://www.retrouvaille.org) for further information and local contacts in your area.

**Marriage Encounter:** See <http://www.wvme.org> for more information.

**Alcoholics Anonymous.** Visit webpage at [www.alcoholics-anonymous.org](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org) to find meetings in your area.

**Overeaters Anonymous.** Visit webpage at [www.overeatersanonymous.org](http://www.overeatersanonymous.org) to find meetings.

**Catholic Lightweigh** at [www.lightweigh.com](http://www.lightweigh.com).

**Silent No More Awareness Campaign.** A group of people who speak in public about their personal experience of abortion. Founded in 2003. See [www.silentnomoreawareness.org](http://www.silentnomoreawareness.org).

**Silent No More/Operation Outcry.** <http://www.operationoutcry.org>.

**The Couple-to-Couple League.** Vast amount of information and resources about Natural Family Planning at [www.ccli.org](http://www.ccli.org).

**Theology of the Body:** Contact [www.theologyofthebody.net](http://www.theologyofthebody.net) or [www.christopherwest.com](http://www.christopherwest.com)

### **Helpful Books**

**The Twelve Steps – A Spiritual Journey** by Recovery Publications, 1990

A Working Guide for Adult Children from Addictive and Other Dysfunctional Families – Based on Biblical Teachings [www.rpipublishing.com](http://www.rpipublishing.com)

**In the Garden of the New Creation** is a manual created especially for women who have completed a post-abortion program. It deals with recovery from shame. Created by therapist Debbie Woodhams – McDaniel M.A. LPC, you can order it through <http://www.amazon.com/Garden-New-Creation-Rebirth-Spirit/dp/0972876952>

**Forbidden Grief: The Unspoken Pain of Abortion** by Theresa Burke (founder of Rachel's Vineyard) and David Reardon. Order from Rachel's Vineyard Office – (610-354-0555) or online at: [www.rachelsvineyard.org](http://www.rachelsvineyard.org).

**The Wounded Heart: Hope for Adult Victims of Childhood Sexual Abuse** by Christian psychotherapist Dan Allender. Available with a companion workbook.

**Boundaries: When to Say YES, When to Say NO, To Take Control of Your Life** by Christian therapists Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend.

**What's Good About Anger?** by Christian therapist Lynette Hoy; CounselCare Publications 2002.

**The Anger Trap: Free Yourself from the frustrations that sabotage your life.** (2003), John Wiley & Sons. 199 pages. Written by Les Carter. A companion workbook is also available. (Secular.)

**Forgiveness is a Choice: A Step-by-Step Process for Resolving Anger and Restoring Hope.** (2001, APA Books), by Robert D. Enright. 299 pages.

**On the Threshold of Hope: Opening the Door to Hope and Healing for Survivors of Sexual Abuse.** by Diane Mandt Langberg, Tyndale House Publishers 1999. Christian.

**Deceived by Shame; Desired by God.** (2001, NavPress). Cynthia Humbert

**The Catholic Spiritual Gifts Inventory**, available through the Catherine of Siena Institute at [www.siena.org](http://www.siena.org), or The Catherine of Siena Institute, PO Box 26440, Colorado Springs, CO 80936; (888) 878-6789 (toll free US).

**Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy** by David Burns. Avon Press 1999. (Secular.)

**For Better...Forever! A Catholic Guide to Lifelong Marriage.** Dr. Greg Popcak, OSV Press, 256 pages.

**The Healing Journey for Adult Children of Alcoholics.** Daryl E. Quick, InterVarsity Press 1990.

**The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality** by Fr. Ronald Rolheiser (Doubleday) includes Chapter 9, “A Spirituality of Sexuality”, an excellent foundational reading on the wholeness of human sexuality from a Catholic Christian perspective.

**Safe People.** Zondervan 1996, 208 pages. Cloud, Townsend and Cloud. A guide that helps us learn how to build emotionally safe relationships.

**The Four Steps to Healing.** By Martha Shuping, M.D. and Debbie McDaniel, M.A. LPC, Tabor Garden Press 2007.

**Your Not Alone: Healing Through God’s Grace After Abortion** by Jennifer O’Neill  
Health Communications, Inc [www.bcibooks.com](http://www.bcibooks.com) 2005

**The Betrayal Bond: Breaking Free of Exploitive Relationships** by Patrick J. Carnes, Ph.D.  
Health Communications, Inc 1997

### **Bible Studies and Prayer Groups**

Time and again, people report that being able to participate in small faith sharing communities that come together to study Sacred Scripture or to join in prayer is a vital element of their faith journey. Small faith groups are also very helpful in attaining emotional health.

Some Bible study programs that have been strongly recommended by Rachel’s Vineyard teams are listed below. These programs come in specific ten- or twelve-week formats. You can find any of them online (through Amazon or other online booksellers) or possibly at your local Catholic/Christian bookstore.

Your aftercare resources/referral handout should list a number of these studies, and encourages retreat participants to inquire about the possibility of starting groups that utilize these or other studies through their local parish/church.

- **“Breaking Free”** by Beth Moore. (Order at [www.lproof.org](http://www.lproof.org).)
- **“Lord, Heal My Hurts”**, a Bible study by Kay Arthur
- **“Changes that Heal”** by Henry Cloud and John Townsend, available at [www.cloudtownsend.com](http://www.cloudtownsend.com)
- **Catholic Light Weigh** at [www.lightweigh.com](http://www.lightweigh.com) (Bible study oriented to weight loss.)
- **The Women in Faith Bible Study Series** by Luci Swindoll at <http://store.womenoffaith.com>. Theresa Burke writes, “I just discovered this wonderful resource and I think its perfect for Rachel's Vineyard aftercare. In particular I recommend the women's study called **Embracing Forgiveness.**”
- Starting in January 2004, Johnnette Benkovic’s group **“Women of Grace”** will be offering Catholic study groups throughout the country. Information is available at <http://www.womenofgrace.com/curriculum.htm>.
- Many groups have successfully utilized the **“Discussion Questions” from the 15-week Rachel’s Vineyard Support Group Model** for both pre- and post retreat groups. There are usually two different Living Scriptures to choose from for the close of the meeting. Utilize the Living Scripture options that are not used on the Rachel’s Vineyard Retreat. There are

- also some extra ones in the appendix of the support group book. It was published by Alba House and is available through Rachel's Vineyard Ministries.
- **“Hiding from Love”**, a relational Bible study from Drs. Henry Cloud and John Townsend, available at [www.cloudtownsend.com](http://www.cloudtownsend.com)
  - Cher Scanlon (Chicago team) recommends **“Do You Think I'm Beautiful? The Question Every Woman Asks”** by Angela Thomas. It is accompanied by a bible study and journal based on the book.
  - Jeff Cavins put out a cassette tape series entitled, **“The Mystery of Suffering.”** These are also excellent resources for aftercare. Your group can meet, listen to a tape and open the group for discussion about the material presented. This is an easy meeting design where an excellent speaker does the presentation for you!
  - **“Deceived by Shame/Desired by God”**, a 12-week Bible study by Cynthia Spell Humbert (Navpress, 2001).
  - Theresa Burke also recommends two videotapes that your group can watch and discuss. They are entitled **“Women: God's Masterpiece.”** These are excellent presentations on video by Christopher West. They are exceptionally affirming of women's dignity and the gift of her sexuality. These tapes are available through Our Father's Will Communications at 1-866-333-6392.
  - The Gift Foundation offers an outstanding audio-cassette tape series by Christopher West entitled **“Naked without Shame.”** This presents John Paul II's Theology of the Body. You can reach the Gift Foundation for these and other resources at [www.giftfoundation.org](http://www.giftfoundation.org) or call(847) 844-1167.
  - **Christian Life Community (CLC)**—a worldwide lay organization for those who live out their Christian faith through Ignatian (St. Ignatius of Loyola) spirituality. See [www.clc-usa.org](http://www.clc-usa.org).

To have a good Bible study group, you need a core group of 4-5 people and a time that you can all get together every week, every other week or whatever frequency seems right for your group. If your church doesn't provide a way for such groups to form, try putting in a bulletin announcement or ask your pastor. He'll usually know if there are ongoing groups in your parish or church who would be happy to welcome you.

It's ideal if your former participants can start one of these Bible studies in their own parish/Church—for the kind of bonding and social support in their own backyard that is so very important.

Members of your retreat team might personally benefit from participating in Christian small faith communities, using Bible studies as outlined above or other spiritual resources. Leading small groups like this can, as well, be valuable training for your team members.

Because not all parishes or churches include a small groups ministry, a number of Catholics/Christians sponsor their own Bible studies in their home on an informal basis. Letting your former participants know about any such Bible studies led by members of your RV team or by former RV participants will create an additional level of interest in participating, since they will feel confident that the Bible study group will be a safe environment for them.

### **Regular or occasional get-togethersafter the reunion.**

As your ministry grows, you may find it valuable to schedule specific aftercare meetings throughout the year. As one example, in Madison, our Rachel's Vineyard team sponsors four joint aftercare

sessions a year in conjunction with the local “Forgiven and Set Free” Bible study. Anyone who has attended either group is invited to attend the meetings.

Other aftercare meeting ideas in other places include monthly get-togethers with an open format for anyone in the area who has ever attended Rachel’s Vineyard, or an annual picnic or brunch for anyone who has ever attended the retreat. Your former participants who are your social secretaries are ideal people to plan and implement these events. Your former participants are liable to do a better job than you could have imagined if they are empowered by you.