



Vine & Branches

Rachel's Vineyard
Healing the Pain of Abortion
One Weekend at a Time

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Summer 2024

Rachel's Vineyard Team Updates and Announcements

Our main office is in the process of updating and revamping our Appendix page and documents. We hope to make these updates available by the end of 2024!! In the meantime, we wanted to make sure our teams received our updated "Participants Waiver" so that you could begin to utilize this updated document. We have added this new document, titled "Statement of Understanding-Waiver of Liability" to our appendix page at RachelsVineyard.org/SignIn. The document will also be uploaded to our private RV Leadership group on Facebook.

If you have any questions or need assistance in accessing this page, please email Assistant@RachelsVineyard.org (Katie) or 2Assistant@RachelsVineyard.org (Kelly).

As we work on updating these documents, please know that we are always open to your input and feedback!

"Live in the sunshine.
Swim in the sea.
Drink in the wild air."
~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

New Book by Rachel's Vineyard Priest, Fr. Ben Cameron, Available Now!



Fr. Ben Cameron has served on the Rachel's Vineyard retreat team in Kentucky for many years. He recently shared with us wonderful news about his book, *Healing the Deepest Wounds: A Pastoral Guide to Abortion, Trauma and Grief*, has been published!

Fr. Ben shares:

I wrote this book primarily to be a concise, easy to read guide for priests, ministers, and persons in various lay ministries, so that they could have a better grasp of the spiritual and emotional wounds of abortion, and of the process of healing. The book addresses the following areas:

- Part I: The Wounds of Abortion
- Part II: Spiritual Healing
- Part III: Emotional Healing (and different resources to help people)
- Part IV: Holiness after Abortion

I am especially indebted to Kevin Burke and Martha Shuping for their editorial suggestions for the book. Although I introduce a number of different ministries, pride of place goes to Rachel's Vineyard (and the longest chapter).

My hope is that this book will help MANY people (including those not in full-time ministry) to better understand the damage caused by abortion, and how to accompany their family members, friends and co-workers who are in need of healing.

I hope that this will prove to be a valuable resource for Rachel's Vineyard Ministries, and will help us to bridge the gap with priests and bishops who may not (yet) understand the value and importance of this ministry.

**The book can be found [on Amazon](#).

***[Watch Fr. Ben's homily](#) about being "Grafted into Christ Jesus."

"Keep your face to the sunshine
and you will never see the shadows."

~ Helen Keller

On the Road Again By Kelly Dunne



To promote tourism, employment, and investing on October 24 of 1983, the Governor of Pennsylvania, Dick Thornburg, introduced a new blue and gold license plate with the slogan, "You've Got a Friend in Pennsylvania". By 1990, the slogan reverted back to, "The Keystone State".

When it comes to the Rachel's Vineyard community, I readily embrace the 1980's Pennsylvania license plate slogan. However, you would have to leave the location blank because of the worldwide impact Rachel's Vineyard has had for over 35 years.

Earlier in 2024, my husband and I finalized our plans to visit his home state of Illinois to attend a family wedding. I did not hesitate to reach out to two of our RV leaders that were closest to Bolingbrook, IL. As we got closer to May, I sent reminders letting Colleen and Kay know that I still hoped to connect with each of them.

On Friday of Memorial Day weekend, I hopped into the rental car and headed west to Ottawa. Colleen Harmon, of the Peoria site, and I met at a small breakfast café that is known for their crepes – yummy!! How quickly 2 hrs. passed as we talked about where and how we grew up, our journey to Rachel's Vineyard Ministries, and life, as we currently know it, with our children and husbands.

Because Kay Corcoran, leader for RV Joliet, was unable to join Colleen and I on Friday, she and I decided to meet on Sunday with one or two of the team members joining us for lunch.

Kay, Rose, and I went to a local haunt called Merichka's. They are known for their Po' Boy steak sandwiches on a garlic butter roll – delicious!!! Joliet just had

their first English/Spanish retreat with Rose helping to lead the Spanish team. Time was spent discussing the fruits of that retreat, particularly, the connections made among the Hispanic participants. Like my visit with Colleen, Kay, Rose, and I shared our life paths that led to the ministry.

I hold on to these memory-making moments and readily reflect upon them when the RV office or my own life gets crazy-busy. I am especially touched by Colleen and Kay's open invitation to include them in my plans any time that my husband and I return to Chicagoland. Thank you, thank you to both of you for your warm welcome and hospitality. And know this...should you or any other RV leader venture to the Northeast, you really do "Got a friend in Pennsylvania".



Kelly with Kay Corcoran and Rose (RV Joliet, IL)



Kelly with Colleen Harmon (RV Peoria, IL)

"Smell the sea,
and feel the sky.
Let your soul and spirit fly."
~ Van Morrison

A Mother Shatters the Lies of Reproductive Choice

By Dr. Theresa and Kevin Burke

Soon 7 out of 10 abortions will not take place in abortion centers or hospitals, but in the home, using the abortion pills. Abortion proponents tell us it's a safe and effective way to end an early pregnancy. In this article from Pregnancy Help News, Dora shares her story, a powerful testimony that shatters the lies the public is being told about *medication abortion*.

**[Click here](#) to read the full article.

"But those who hope in the LORD
will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint."



Meet the Leaders

The beautiful branches in our vineyard are filled with ‘grapes’ that have been pressed through difficulty and hardship. Remaining in Jesus, the true Vine, they help turn their adversity into ‘good fruit.’ We’re adding this new feature to our Vine and Branches newsletter to help other members of Rachel’s Vineyard get to know some of our phenomenal team leaders.



In our last issue of *Vine & Branches*, we [included a short article](#) about the award received by our Rachel’s Vineyard team in Central Texas. In this issue, you’ll learn about the remarkable work that God is doing through Carrie Mann and Debra Morrall.

God’s Specialty

Prison.

The word conjures up images of long, steely-cold corridors outlined with barred cell doors. Of anger and despair hanging in the air like dense fog. Of an oppressive silence punctuated by intermittent echoes of profanity.

It’s the last place most people would want to visit.

But for Carrie Mann and Debra Morrall, it’s the first.

These Central Texas Rachel’s Vineyard leaders are “honored to serve the ladies in white.”

Yes, the prison they visit every week for at least two hours is one for women. “They are in a difficult season,” Carrie says with pain in her eyes. “Some of their stories are horrific.” Sexual and physical abuse, sex trafficking, drugs, and prostitution are common denominators in their histories or those of their family members. Unfortunately, these themes have punctuated the lives of many incarcerated women.

According to the Center for American Progress, “A reported 85 to 90 percent of women who are either currently incarcerated or under the control of the justice system in the United States have a history of domestic and sexual abuse.”^[1] The National Institute of Justice confirms this claim, stating “Females follow unique pathways into the criminal justice system compared to males. Researchers have documented differences in family histories of dysfunction, substance use, co-occurring disorders, and victimization, all of which are associated with criminal justice involvement. Histories of sexual abuse and trauma are especially overrepresented in the female incarcerated population.”^[2] The Prison Policy Initiative asserts that more than half of the crimes for which women were incarcerated were drug- and property-offenses - and that violent offenses “occurred *in response to* gendered violence and abuse.”

When looking at the high rates of victimization and abuse that most female prisoners endure prior to their incarceration, many organizations claim that they would be better served in treatment programs than in prison. In fact, prison can

frequently exacerbate their traumas. Seventy percent of the guards in federal women's correctional facilities are male, and female inmates are subject to "rape, other sexual assault, sexual extortion, and groping during body searches."^[3]

These statistics paint a bleak picture for incarcerated women.

But God can reach people no matter where they are – even when they're behind bars or formidable prison walls. And He's working through Rachel's Vineyard in dramatic ways to heal these ladies in white.

Just ask Carrie and Debra.

"It's such an honor and pleasure to be with them," Carrie exclaims. "If you could only be in there with us, you would understand. They're in such a dark place, but God transforms their lives. He provides a way, even in incarceration."

Carrie then talks about a young woman who is serving a life sentence without parole. When Julie^[4] first decided to attend a Rachel's Vineyard retreat, she sat in the room with an air of defiance and her arms crossed. But God softened her heart just enough for her to return for the next session. And then the next. Now, having finished the program, Julie is a changed person. She has even become a facilitator in the Bible Study program.

And she has said on more than one occasion that had she remained on the streets, she wouldn't be alive today. She fully believes that God allowed her to be incarcerated to save her life – **and** her soul. When Carrie first heard Julie say that, she exclaimed, "So what I'm hearing you say is, God set you free, even in the midst of incarceration?" Julie responded with a smile and firmness in her voice, "Yes, He did."

So even behind bars, she is truly free. She is finally healed. And she is helping other women who are hurting from their traumas.

"It's phenomenal," Carrie remarks. "When you're serving a life sentence, what's stopping you from wreaking havoc? But no, she chose to be open to receive what God had for her. And now she can speak to that, pour life and hope into others, and lead them to Him."

Just as He reached **into** prison and touched Julie's heart, she has reached **out**, touched the hearts of her family, and has been reconciled to her parents, siblings, and children.

"This affects generations," Carrie observes. "Rachel's Vineyard doesn't just help with abortion and pregnancy loss. It opens the women up to receive **all** the things God wants to heal. They're receiving what they've needed—some since childhood. And it ripples out. It affects the whole family system."

It also affects the other inmates. They watch as the women who attend Rachel's Vineyard become less angry, stop fighting, and begin encouraging others. Their actions, words, and demeanor begin to change. They become a sign of hope – of possibility – that maybe, just maybe, the hearts and lives of the other inmates can be changed, too.

One young lady came to the program knowing she needed Rachel's Vineyard. "She was desperate," Carrie relates. "Desperate. She was ready and willing to do the work."

And it *is* “work” to be open and vulnerable to one another and to God – especially for someone who has experienced a history of abuse. Carrie and Debra value their vulnerability and foster a respect for one another within the program.

“We don’t know what these women have dealt with.” Carrie says. “So we make sure they know that they’re safe with us and that they’re never judged. We accept them where they are. We’re there to listen.”

During the 10- to 12-week retreat (versus a weekend retreat, which is the typical Rachel’s Vineyard model), the women continually experience that safety, that acceptance, that lack of judgement. And they look forward to seeing Carrie and Debra every week.

“We see their excitement. And they’re so thankful that we took the time out of our day to come and be with them.,” Carrie expresses.

Debra, who is relatively new to the Prison Ministry side of Rachel’s Vineyard, shares what she witnessed on her first week:

I saw the fruits of the labor, of laying the groundwork for relationships, of showing up week after week after week. The ladies don’t take it for granted. When we walked in, there were tears, there were embraces, and people saying, ‘I missed you so much!’ That is what I saw before we even started anything. And I didn’t feel like I was on the outside looking in, I felt accepted. They were so welcoming, even to me, a newcomer.

She then says, smiling, “I’m big on boundaries and being invited. And I’m pretty sure I left that first week with a couple of hugs.”

Debra and Carrie are also very respectful of the ladies’ privacy. “The conversations I’m privileged to have with people is honoring,” Debra articulates. “It’s sacred. When somebody bares everything, that’s a sacred privilege, and we have to make sure that we know how to handle it, protect it, and guard it.”

Carrie nods and adds, “It’s such a blessing. Sometimes we’re filling the role of mothers, or grandmothers, or aunts, or sisters. So many times, someone will come up afterwards and say, ‘I didn’t have a mom growing up, so I look at you kind of like a mom.’ That breaks your heart, but it also makes you feel like, ‘Wow, God, look at how you used me for her. You love them all so much.’ And He *is* helping them, healing them, setting them free, and teaching them how to walk in His forgiveness and freedom. So they take that and run with it.”

Apparently, Governor Greg Abbott of Texas agrees. On April 26, 2024, Rachel’s Vineyard was honored with the Most Innovative Program Award during the 29th Annual Governor’s Criminal Justice Volunteer Service Awards. The program was praised as “an innovative eight-week course designed to help female inmates heal from past experiences with abortion, stillbirth, SIDS, child protective services (CPS) involvement, or personal injury to a child.”

Both Carrie and Debra describe themselves as “*beyond* blessed and honored to receive the Governor’s award for our Prison Ministry,” while quickly pointing to Lovette Vassar as the person who deserves all the credit. She brought Rachel’s Vineyard Retreats to the Hope Pregnancy Centers back in 2009, and in 2017, she worked with Dr. Theresa Burke, the founder of Rachel’s Vineyard, to help bring the retreat into prison.^[5] They modified facets of the retreat, like using battery-operated candles instead of wick-burning ones and scheduling the Living

Scripture Exercises into a weekly format, to ensure the program would remain powerfully Spirit-led.

Given the light, healing, and transformation imprisoned women are receiving through Rachel's Vineyard, it's clear that neither cell bars, prison walls, nor steel doors can separate them from the love of God. They can even become more united to Him than the rest of the population. As Carrie points out, "Some of the women on the inside of prison are actually more free than the ones outside. It's just miraculous."

That shouldn't surprise us. Miracles are God's specialty.



Most Innovative Program Volunteer Service Award



Texas Board of Criminal Justice Chairman, Eric Nichols;
Amy Vester-Thomison, a faithful volunteer for 11 years who helped get the prison ministry started with Lovette and serves on the team;
Carrie Mann; Texas First Lady, Cecilia Abbott; Texas Dept. of Criminal Justice Executive Director, Bryan Collier



- [1] www.americanprogress.org/article/the-top-5-facts-about-women-in-our-criminal-justice-system
- [2] <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/five-things-know-about-women-and-reentry>
- [3] www.prisonpolicy.org/scans/women_prison.pdf (Amnesty International USA)
- [4] We do not know this young woman's name. In respecting her privacy, neither Carrie nor Debra mentioned it. For clarity in reading the story, we're referring to her as "Julie."
- [5] One of the first Rachel's Vineyard team leaders to start a retreat in prison is Donna Gardner, who brought the Ministry to post-abortive male inmates. At our 2018 Conference, she offered a session on discernment and how to implement and facilitate a Prison Ministry program. We highlighted Donna's story in December of 2023; you can [read it here](#).

**"Our greatest weakness lies in giving up.
The most certain way to succeed
is always to try just one more time."
~ Thomas Edison**

Latin America Leadership Conference

By Emily Babilonia



3^{er} Congreso
Latinoamericano del
Viñedo de Raquel

“Del Dolor a la Sanación”

7 al 11
DE NOVIEMBRE
DE 2024

 Bogotá - Colombia

Inscripciones Abiertas
a partir de Enero 2024

Reserva tu Agenda

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 El Viñedo
de Raquel

I received several calls and texts at different times from Spanish leaders from El Viñedo de Raquel (VDR), asking me if I knew of a conference for our ministry anytime soon. They asked because they know how much I help the international office of Rachel's Vineyard with everything in Spanish. I then started to pray to our Lord to guide me and show me the path he wanted me to go. In Proverbs 16:1 He says, “The preparation of the heart belongs to men, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord.”

After much prayer, I felt God wanted me to lead a Spanish conference in Bogotá, Colombia. I thought for a moment... “How am I going to do this, I'm not even Colombian?” But immediately I heard the Lord asking me to call my friend Blanca Yaneth Uribe, who is a therapist and the coordinator for El Viñedo de Raquel in “El Minuto de Dios” in Bogota. She also travels with my team and me every time we open a new VDR in Central America, South America, or the Caribbean.

El Minuto de Dios was founded by Fr. Gustavo Garcia (now deceased) in the Diocese of Engativá. The Gus Foundation is a Catholic Charismatic ministry now

led by Deacon Freddy Vargas Santana for 13 years. They have healing Masses, Adoration, retreats, talks, and much more that helps minister to people who want to grow in our Catholic Faith. There are currently 62 volunteers, and they sponsor several ministries, including El Viñedo de Raquel.

After I talked to Yaneth about the possibility of the conference being done in Bogotá, she replied immediately, "Yes, Emily, we can do this!" She then talked to Deacon Freddy, who also agreed - along with 50 of their team members - to serve and help in any way needed. When she called to tell me, I was blown away to see how God worked so quickly!

So, our 3rd Latin American conference will be held in Bogotá, Colombia, November 7-12, 2024. We have a beautiful team of people that the Lord has put into this project: some members of my team here in Palm Beach, as well as members of Yaneth's team, people from El Minuto de Dios ministry, and Deacon Freddy.

At the beginning of this year, we kicked off the promotion, texting VDR leaders as well as international headquarters, and publishing it on their website and in *Vine & Branches*. Registrations came in, but very slowly. I remember telling Kelly (from headquarters) that the registrations were going very slow, and she kept saying, "Wait until summer, it will pick up." Boy, was she right. A few months after summer started, we not only had more than 110 people registered, we had to close registration because the retreat center can only hold 110 people. But this isn't the end; Yaneth had to find another retreat center close by because we had leaders and team members calling us saying they wanted to attend this conference.

We have already guest speakers booked, like Blanca Yaneth Uribe and Diana Vela, who are therapists and will teach classes on the anger work we do in our retreats; Kelly, from the international office; and, of course, Dr. Theresa Burke, who will teach some classes via Zoom (everything will be translated). Fr. Matias from Argentina, Fr. Alvaro from Bogotá, Josefina Matos from Grief to Grace, Yesica González from VDR Medjugorje, Claudia DeFreitas, Luz Peña, Marisol Rodriguez, and I will teach various topics to help our teams serve the people who attend our retreats with confidence. We are blessed to have about ten priests and several religious sisters attending. We're also going to have Adoration, Living Scripture meditations, Masses, and a cultural event. Deacon Freddy is waiting for the confirmation of the Bishop of the Engativá Diocese to attend.

All of us working on this conference are preparing ourselves with much prayer and love, and the people who are attending are very excited. They are thankful that we're leading this conference and helping them grow in their calling to serve in El Viñedo de Raquel. If you would like more information, please call me at (561) 254-1728 or email me at babiloniaemily3@gmail.com



Deacon Freddy (left) at mass



Deacon Freddy during Adoration



Congregation of El Minuto de Dios (who supports the local RV team in Bogota)

"The secret of getting ahead
is getting started."
~ Mark Twain

When it Comes to Abortion, Men Suffer Too

By Vicky Franchino

Kevin Burke was recently interviewed by The Catholic Herald. He shares:

"We describe this as "forbidden grief". Men are often given the message to stuff their grief down, to repress it, to lie about how they're feeling. There are serious repercussions in people's lives, emotionally, psychologically, spiritually, and physically — we can actually become physically sick when we don't have the chance to grieve and express those painful and deep experiences."

**Please [click here](#) to read the full interview!!

"Heal me, Lord, and I will be healed;
save me and I will be saved,
for you are the one I praise."
~ Jeremiah 17:14

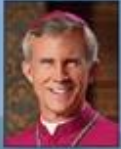


Save the Date ...

... for the Divine Mercy Pro-Life Pilgrimage to Poland! Includes Krakow, Czestochowa, Divine Mercy Shrine, and Prague with Bishop Joseph E. Strickland, Janet Morana, and Dr. Theresa Burke!!


Divine Mercy Pro-Life Pilgrimage to
Poland and Prague



Including Krakow, Czestochowa, Divine Mercy Sanctuary, and Prague


with **Bishop Joseph E. Strickland,**
Janet Morana, Executive Director, Priests for Life
and **Theresa Burke, Ph.D, Founder Rachel's Vineyard**

12 Days August 30-September 10, 2025










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“As long as the earth endures,
seedtime and harvest,
cold and heat, summer and winter,
day and night will never cease.”
~ *Genesis 8:22*

Oregon Right to Life Short Film Contest Winner Touches the Hearts of Pro-Life and Pro-Choice Alike

Oregon Right to Life recently shared with us a beautiful, moving short-film created by 10-13 year olds for a short video competition. The feedback has been positive and encouraging. They write that "The majority of responses have talked about how this video impacted them in an emotional and effective way. We have even received this response from individuals who we believe may lean towards pro-choice."

To watch the 3 minute film titled "Here I am", [click here!!](#)

"In early June
the world of leaf and blade

and flowers explode,
and every sunset is different."

~ John Steinbeck



United in Prayer

We're saddened to share that our wonderful site leader of 20+ years from the Fresno, CA team, **Patti Lometti**, has passed away. Our prayers go out to her friends, family, and to her team. We were so blessed to have Patti as a part of our RV family.

To read Patricia's full obituary, [click here](#).

Please keep **Nilda** and **Roselyn** from our Palm Beach Spanish retreat team in your prayers.

- Nilda has been suffering from allergies and severe respiratory issues. We pray for healing as her doctors determine a new course of action to help resolve her respiratory issues.
- Roselyn is fighting breast cancer. We pray for strength and healing as she will undergo a double mastectomy, followed by radiation and chemotherapy.

Please continue to keep **Haiti** in your prayers. Anne Arthur informed the Rachel's Vineyard office, through a recent email, that her grandson Matthias was able to attend his senior graduation with his classmates at the Haitian-American school in June. This was no small feat given that international airlines cannot fly into Port-au-Prince. However, a Haitian airline was able to offer flights between Miami and Port-au-Prince.

Anne's son, daughter and son-in-law and their family still remain in Haiti but for how much longer, we do not know. Therefore, Anne and all of her family members are grateful for the ongoing prayers that we, as a Rachel's Vineyard community, are able to provide for them.

Please keep our summer ***Duty to Heal: Finding Peace for a Soldiers Heart*** retreat in your prayers. Especially pray for the efforts of those traveling from the Ukraine to be trained to facilitate this retreat in their home country.

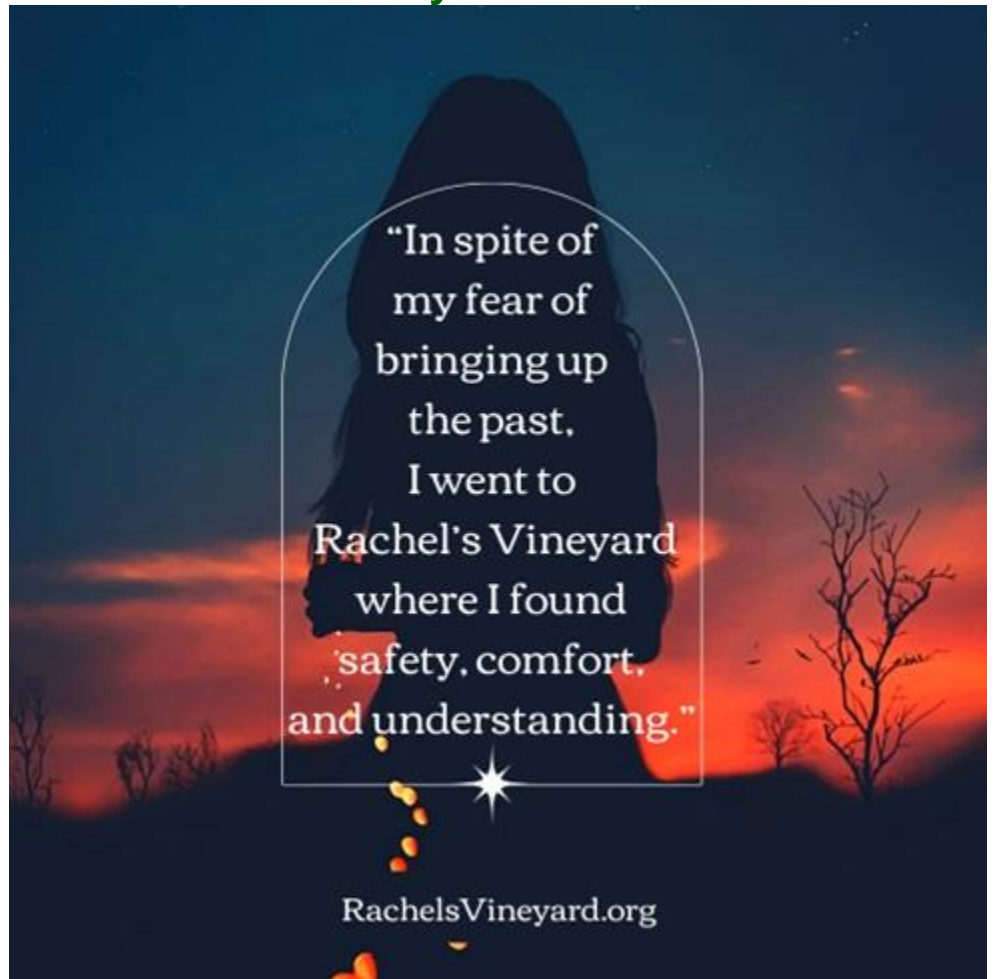


"Rejoice in hope,
be patient in tribulation,
be constant in prayer."

~ Romans 12:12



Connect with us!! Rachel's Vineyard in Social Media



Social Media provides a wonderful opportunity for us to connect with our teams, retreatants, and ministry supporters from around the world!

Please follow us to stay up-to-date with the latest from RV:

[Facebook.com/RachelsVineyard](https://www.facebook.com/RachelsVineyard)

Instagram [@RVHealing](https://www.instagram.com/RVHealing)

Twitter/X [@RVHealing](https://twitter.com/RVHealing)

[Youtube.com/RachelsVineyard](https://www.youtube.com/RachelsVineyard)

"And so with the sunshine and the great bursts
of leaves growing on the trees,
just as things grow in fast movies,
I had that familiar conviction that
life was beginning over again with the summer."

~ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*

Additional Healing Retreats from Dr. Theresa Burke

The founder of Rachel's Vineyard, Dr. Theresa Burke, has developed two additional healing retreats: Grief to Grace: Healing the Wounds of Abuse, Reclaiming the Gift of Human Dignity, and Duty to Heal: Finding Peace for a Soldiers Heart.

To see the retreat schedule for Grief to Grace, [click here!](#)
For more information about Duty to Heal, [click here!](#)



"Summer's lease hath all too short a date."
~ William Shakespeare



Upcoming Rachel's Vineyard Retreat Weekends

We have over 52 retreats happening around the world this summer!!

To see our full retreat schedule by date, [click here!](#) If you need help connecting with the retreat site closest to you, please reach out to Kate at Assistant@RachelsVineyard.org

