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### JOIN US

### CALL FOR SUMMER SERVANTS

Ready to take your Farm experience to the next level? **APPLY** to be a Summer Servant! The priority deadline is **February 17th.**



### REGISTER FOR ADULT AND FAMILY WEEKS

Adult Week: July 27- Aug 2  
Family Week: Aug 3 - 9

Send us your **paperwork** and \$50/person deposit to reserve your spots today! The priority deadline is **February 1st.**

## Caretaker Residence Update

*By Eric, Director*

**Donate Now** to help bring the Caretaker Residence to completion!



In between winding down the home repair projects of 2013 and executing the planning and groundwork of 2014's ramps, roofs, floors, garden plans, and so on...we have been working diligently through the winter on bringing the Caretaker Residence project to completion. Since the fall

newsletter went out, walls have been insulated, soffit installed, a chimney erected, drywall hung, 15,000 gallons of rainwater containment excavated (to make 20,000 total gallons), siding hung, solar hot water panels (mostly) installed, tile laid, deck footers poured, interior painting (nearly) completed, doors hung, trim sanded, sealed and hung, and roofing begun. If you have not gotten the chance, you should view the latest video update on the website: (<http://www.bethlehemfarm.net/campaign/category/the-latest>)

Still to come are the deck between the two buildings (square dance!), completion of the electrical, plumbing, trim, heating, greenhouse, passive solar lighting, final grade and move-in. We are getting closer each day! The benefit helped quite a bit by netting almost \$14,000 toward the completion of the Caretaker Residence, but we still have \$196,000 to raise to reach our goal. Many of you have come out to swing a hammer and many of you have helped by donating funds to the effort. We are grateful for all of your help in building this "House Where Love Can Dwell" and ask that you consider renewing your support of the effort at this time, as we run the home stretch.

**Donate Now** to bring this essential project home!

## The Power is in the Circle

*By Moira, Caretaker*

We are pleased to introduce Bethlehem Farm's newest community member Tim Peregoy, who joined us as our first Farmer-in-Residence this fall. Tim brings a passion for health and education to his organic farming and work with Bethlehem Farm. Several years ago, Tim's desire to serve the local community brought him out of a teaching career to organic farming, providing the residents of Greenbrier County with high quality, healthy food at an affordable price. "I lived [out in nature] like John Muir, the first conservationist, who realized the interdependence and



## CAN'T MAKE IT TO ADULT OR FAMILY WEEK? 18 OR OLDER?

Join us for our  
March College Weeks  
(March 2-8 & March 23-29)

Questions? Contact Laura at:  
[volunteer@bethlehemfarm.net](mailto:volunteer@bethlehemfarm.net)

## Farm Recipe

### Mexican Quinoa

*From Claire Watson*

- 2 tsp. olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic
- 3-4 jalapenos, seeded and minced
- 1 C uncooked quinoa, rinsed
- 1-1/4 C vegetable broth
- 1-1/2 C cooked black beans
- 1 (14.5 oz) can diced tomatoes
- 1 C corn (or kernels from 2 ears)
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/3 C fresh cilantro, chopped
- 1 quarter of a lime, juiced

Heat olive oil in a medium-sized saucepan over medium heat. Add garlic and jalapenos to the pan and saute for 1 minute. Stir in quinoa, vegetable broth, beans, tomatoes (and juices), corn and salt. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to medium-low and cover. Simmer for 25 minutes, or until the liquid is completely absorbed. Remove from heat and stir in cilantro and lime juice. Serve warm or cold with cheese, salsa, avocado and sour cream.

universal harmony of ecosystems...that's where I feel the most spiritual. "

But something was missing. Tim still desired to educate the next generation, but now on food, health, and farming. Reflecting on his involvement with the Lewisburg Farmer's Market, Tim said, "I realized I'm a people person, and in order to fulfill my goals of being open-hearted and reaching out, I would need to surround myself with people with common goals...here at Bethlehem Farm I'm able to educate people about agriculture and experience the spirituality, the love, the open-heartedness, and follow in God's light. And that's very powerful. The Lakota medicine man, Black Elk, said 'In our hoop of the nation, the power is in the circle.' I always feel the power of the circle when we hold hands, when we open up to each other, and when we pray." Tim has been a shining example of generosity and open-heartedness to all of us, and is continuing his faith journey by taking part in the RCIA program. Thank you Tim! We love you.



## An A-MUHS-ing Friendship

*By Jenna, Caretaker*

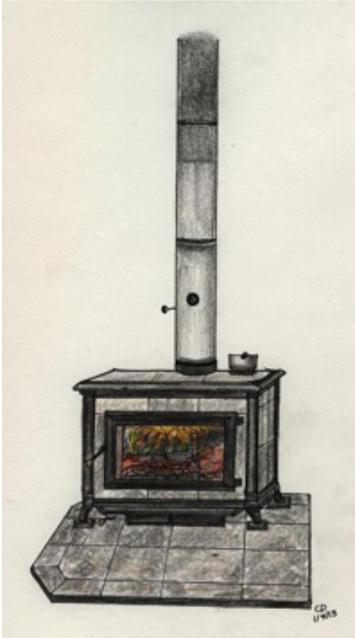
Bethlehem Farm was introduced to Ralph and Kay Muhs on an autumn day a few years ago when a group of parishioners from St. Catherine's Catholic Church in Ronceverte were cutting down a tree on the church's property. A Bethlehem Farm car pulled up, a window rolled down, and Joe called out, "What are you planning on doing with that firewood?" (Of course you did, Joe.) Ralph said we were welcome to the firewood, and there began a great friendship.



Ralph and Kay came to West Virginia from Illinois about 6 years ago, and have been building houses and friendships here ever since. They have two sons and five grandchildren. Their elder son is a surgeon at Yale University and the younger is a social worker here in Alderson. Kay is a retired dietician, and Ralph is a retired elementary school teacher and contractor. That may seem like a full life already but the Muhses also ran an Illinois bed and breakfast together for eight years in a building Ralph constructed. "We never made a lot of money, but we did make a lot of great friends," Ralph reminisces.

In the time since Joe's initial forwardness about the firewood, Ralph and Kay have become regulars at Community Night Dinners at the Farm. "We just made a bunch of friends, and we like friends." Ralph says that the idealism, sincerity, and mission of the Farm resonate with them and the high value they place on helping those around them. And fortunately for us, Bethlehem Farm has often been the recipient of this generosity.

Most recently, Ralph and Kay are providing us with natural wood for the Caretaker residence and teaching us how to plane, sand, and rip it down into wood paneling. "Hurry up, you're burning daylight!" Ralph greets me one morning as I hop out of the truck



"Wood Stove"  
By Colleen Doyle

for a day of wood working at his property. Evidently an early riser, Ralph is already knee-deep in a pile of boards twice-planed. What ensues is a day of hauling lumber, adventures with a table saw, and a budding dream of turning pro as a carpenter. It also includes a tour of Ralph's most recent construction projects, a feast on Kay's homemade soup, and an afternoon of great conversation. However, if you look more closely, perhaps the most important skills taught that day are the value of hard work and the importance of leveraging it to help others, the importance of reshaping the world around you - either tangibly by building a structure or intangibly by building the confidence of those around you, and a deep respect for traditional handcrafting trades like carpentry, which connect our minds, bodies, and selves to the natural world around us through the dignity of the work done with our hands. "My hobbies grow all around me on the mountain top. I built these houses out of materials cut and milled locally. I like doing that, I like being creative," Ralph says. And we at the Farm can appreciate that.

Do the Muhses have any final words of advice for aspiring carpenters? "Be open to all possibilities...but then I don't have to tell people at Bethlehem Farm that, do I?"

## The Return of the Joe-di

By Joe, Caretaker

In March I will have been at Bethlehem Farm for five years. When I moved away from the Farm to be with Julie as she finished graduate school, we talked about coming back to WV, but we had no idea if it would be a possibility or not. When she began searching for a job, she contacted the therapeutic boarding school in Pence Springs (4 miles from the Farm), but they said there were not any openings. We both figured that was the end of it and that we would not be coming back to WV, but a few months later, they called and told her they wanted to interview her for the job, which she ended up getting. So it seemed that God intended for us to return to the Farm after all.

All of this occasions me to ask what it is about the Farm that makes me want to keep being part of this mission. The hours are long, the work can be challenging (even exhausting), and living in community seems at times as if I have nine spouses to navigate instead of just one. So why do I want to keep doing it? I think the answer lies quite simply in the words peace and joy. To be sure, on any given day I often wish my outward countenance were a lot more peaceful and joyful than it may be, but underneath everything, I find deep joy, peace, and satisfaction in my work at the Farm. I think the way that we integrate so many different aspects of Gospel living into one package is fairly unique, and it is one that I find deeply moving and challenging. I love the work that we do, the joy of community and friendship, and the natural beauty of this place. At the end of the day, I go to bed feeling that I am where God wants me to be, and that is a blessed feeling.



## The Discomfort of Comfort

By Matt, Caretaker

"The dignity of the human person and the common good ranks higher than the comfort of those who refuse to renounce their privileges. When these values are threatened, a prophetic voice must be raised." -Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation  
*Evangelii Gaudium*

I feel unsafe. Society tells me that I should feel very safe: I am a brilliant (and apparently humble), college-educated, middle class, 6' 5" male human being from the United States of America. I am Caucasian, so statistically even though I have the same percent chance of being a drug user or dealer as every other race I have an unimaginably lower chance of being searched, arrested and imprisoned than people of other skin colors. I should feel safe. And yet, I do not. Catholic Social Teaching states that our human dignity is not fully realized until the dignity of the entire community is upheld. The dignity of my brothers and sisters is constantly being undercut (often with my thoughtless complicity), and therefore my dignity too is undercut.



Renouncing "privilege" and "rights" is something that Pope Francis calls for twice in his Apostolic Exhortation. He calls for those with societal rights and privileges to willingly renounce them as part of building the kingdom of heaven on Earth. Let's review the past year of the life of the man now known as Pope Francis: he was appointed to one of the highest spiritual positions on the planet and immediately renounced the golden palace, the limo, the fancy clothes and the servants that came along with the position. He instead picked up a sponge and basin and washed the feet of prisoners in Rome. Not particularly a physically comfortable position for an old man, I imagine.

In season one of the FX show *Sons of Anarchy* John Teller's voice-over says "Most human beings only think they want freedom. In truth they yearn for the bondage of social order, rigid laws, and materialism. The only freedom man really wants, is the freedom to become comfortable." Being comfortable is achieved in the kingdom of heaven when we have met the needs of human dignity for everyone. Currently, comfort is acquired in excess by some while others starve and die. This excessive comfort is a right that Francis calls us to renounce in the pursuit of the beautiful community, the kingdom of heaven on Earth.

As a Caretaker I see this ideal take place in a special way 16 weeks of the year. Society tells us that middle to upper-class college students have the right and privilege to go to Florida for Spring Break to get drunk. Bethlehem Farm gets to meet 400 students per year who renounce their right to relax or party on their breaks in pursuit of a transformative experience which may hopefully bring them closer to that kingdom. They renounce even their societal right to feel freshly showered in the name of conserving water and electricity.

We are told that we have the right to as much electricity as we can afford. We forget those harmed by the production of that electricity. 300,000 people in the state of West Virginia recently could not even touch their water because of the toxic chemical that was spilled into the Elk River. The chemical is used by coal companies to process coal that will be burned for generating electricity. Only when coal mining processes go wrong does it get media attention. Only when miners are killed by a collapse or mass amounts of toxins are poured into the drinking water of the state's capitol do we take interest. What about when everything goes according to plan? When mountains are blown up on schedule there is no notice. When a person is able to light their tap water on fire because of natural gas extraction there is no call to action. The dignity of the people, the mountains, the streams, the animals, and the plants of Appalachia are threatened currently and constantly.

Our privilege and right to be comfortable is destroying the lives of our brothers and sisters. Christianity calls us to follow the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Unless he was a much worse carpenter than he was an orator he probably could have led a relatively comfortable life. An example to us all, Jesus renounced that comfort, finding rather his joy in the pursuit of making whole a broken society. He explicitly calls us in the Eucharist to give of our body and blood (our entire self and entire life) to our brothers and sisters just as he exemplified.

So as Christians do we answer that call? Not just the call of Jesus and Pope Francis, but also answering the constant call of all oppressed voices of the world. They cry at the top of their voice for justice and we answer, "Shhh, *Mad Men* is starting." (I only use that example because I do love *Mad Men*.)

Pope Francis has passed us the ball on this one. Are we going to have the courage to raise a prophetic voice when the rights and privilege of society threatens and directly attacks the dignity of humans and the common good? Will we succumb to the poisonous disease of comfort? Will we have the courage to find that perfect freedom that comes with community; the gritty, natural, joyful reality of the interconnectedness of all beings?

We cannot realize our full dignity until the entire community realizes its dignity together.

You can read the full text of Evangelii Gaudium at [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/francesco/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium_en.html)

*This article is made possible by a grant from the Our Sunday Visitor Institute*

Check out our newest videos on our [Campaign Site!](#)

If you have questions about this newsletter, or would like to submit an article for a future publication, please contact Katherine or Matt at [caretakers@bethlehemfarm.net](mailto:caretakers@bethlehemfarm.net)

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