



FEBRUARY 2025

# Christian Encounter NEWSLETTER

DIRECTOR'S VIEW

## Q&A with Marion Parker

By Nate Boyd, Executive Director



This month I sat down with Marion Parker for a Q&A. Marion is a weekly volunteer and part of the Ranch Church, and she's a legacy figure through the

decades of the Ranch story. Her late husband, Jim, was the second Executive Director of Christian Encounter, and served in various roles for four decades. The following has been edited for clarity.

**N: When did you first get involved with the Ranch?**

M: Jim and I first visited around 1972, when Jim was on the Board of Directors.

We had a house ministry in Livermore, CA, called the Christian Encounter House. Then in September of 1976 we moved here.

**N: What initially attracted you to Christian Encounter?**

M: The times. There was such an obvious need for ministry to young seekers in the 70s all over the country, especially in CA. Livermore hosted the Altamont Rock festival, and the needs of the many young attendees were so obvious. They were hurting so terribly. A lot of them were honest questioners, honestly seeking and questioning the values of people and institutions around them.

**N: And the Ranch was meeting that need?**

M: Yes. The Ranch was an escape out in the country, where people were isolated



from dangerous influences but able to live in a community together. The vision of the founder resonated with our own. We had hosted struggling people in our house for years, living and eating together, trying to help people heal and connect with the Gospel. The Ranch was looking for a campus director and planning to expand the ministry, and Jim applied.  
*(cont. on pg. 3)*

GRAD HIGHLIGHTS

## Addy and Joseph J. (JJ)

*Addy and JJ both completed the program and graduated high school in January. Below are excerpts from their speeches they shared at graduation.*



Addy:

When I first came to the Ranch, I felt resistant to do anything that had to do with the Lord. I went through the motions, said all the stuff I

needed to say, and did everything I was supposed to do. I thought I was only here to graduate. I didn't care about the person I would become and didn't feel like I needed to work on myself.

It wasn't until I went to the Lauren Daigle concert that I fully understood why I was here. Yes, I was here to graduate high school, but I was also here to deal

with all my hurt and pain. Most importantly, I was here to build my relationship with the Lord. I was here to receive healing that only He could give me.

Giving my life to the Lord has been the best and most rewarding decision I have ever made. I honestly don't know where I would be without Jesus and everyone that He has put in my life. I am forever grateful for the Ranch and everyone in it.



JJ:

Losing my father in the 5th grade was the biggest wound I have ever been dealt. Despite the fact I hardly knew him out-

side of one visit along with some letters and phone calls. It cut so deep - deeper than any knife could. This wound was left unattended; it became infected with grief, anger and resentment. It burned with sorrow. I tried treating it with anything I could. Weed, pills, alcohol, antidepressants. Nothing helped. In fact, I felt worse



each time I would slip into the oblivion of drugs or the numbing of pills. As I started to die, my relationships did as well. I started losing everything. I held on with the tightest grip I could, but it all slipped away. *(cont. on pg. 2)*



## Events Calendar

### Agony Kickoff Training Ride

Saturday, May 3rd, 9:30am

### Spring Serve Day

Saturday, May 17th, 9am - 1pm

### Year-end Celebration & Graduation

Saturday, May 31st, 10:30am

### Family Camp

Friday, June 27th - 30th

### 43rd annual Agony Ride

July 25th - 26th

Sign up today: [agonyride.org](http://agonyride.org)



## Guys' Transition House to reopen April 1



In December we shared the news of the opportunity to reopen the Guys' Transition House. Our goal was to raise the \$45K down payment to make this possible. However, due to the outpouring of generosity from Ranch friends and supporters, we are excited to announce that we are able to pay cash for the house, mortgage-free.

We have hired former intern Angel Sanchez (pictured) as the Guys' House Leader. Angel had been working some odd jobs and volunteering at his church in Merced, CA before he arrived at the Ranch in January 2023. "Even before I came to the Ranch, I felt like ministry was going to be a part of my life as a whole." When Angel first caught wind of the possibility of the Guys' House over a year ago, he began to pray, the Lord continually impressing the ministry upon his heart. Now, having just completed his two-year internship this month, Angel reflects on his new role: "I see all the ways I need to continue to grow, but I'm confident the Lord's called me."

We are looking at an April 1st launch date for residents to move in.

*"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us..." Ephesians 3:20*

## Joseph J. (cont. from pg. 1)

I hid everything from my family, instead deciding to self-medicate. When the mask cracked and the secrets came to light, my mother found out everything - all my shame, self hatred and baggage. So the wound was opened even further. I resented her for that, acting out in anger. When my mother couldn't handle it anymore, she sent me away. The wound hurt even more; abandonment festered within it.

Arriving at Christian Encounter, I didn't believe or want what it offered. The promise of acceptance. The unconditional love. The path to healing. After all, why would I believe that God of all people could save me? The one person who could have prevented everything but still allowed it to happen, the perpetrator of my sorrow. He didn't deserve my heart... This was my mindset for 16 years and changing it wasn't a task that could be accomplished easily.

I would need someone who showed

me that I was loved. Someone who wouldn't quit. Someone who got nothing out of mentoring me. Someone who loved the Lord with all their heart. Someone who would give everything to advance the Kingdom. Someone who could help heal my wounds.

God didn't decide to send one person. He sent an entire team. Interns. They

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**I went from depressed, suicidal, hopeless, angry, and believing I was unloveable, to someone I can say I'm proud to be.**

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showed me love when I did not deserve it. They stayed committed when it was incredibly difficult. They persevered until they had nothing left to give and even then they gave more.

So when I found Christ over Christmas break last year and started to accept His love and embrace His healing, I was met with love and an abundance of joy



from the interns. I went from depressed, suicidal, hopeless, angry, and believing I was unloveable, to someone I can say I'm proud to be. Someone who's decided to do something about all my pain and sorrow. And who will continue to walk with the one true God who offers everything I could ever need.



**N: What were your roles over the years?**

**M:** I had various official and non-official roles. I helped with ministry to the young couples and families on staff, mentored interns, and hosted students and interns in our house those early years before there were dorms. At different times I led the food service department, was an administrative assistant, and was involved with donor services. I also did the newsletter for years and years.

**N: What about the Ranch today would have surprised you back in 1970?**

**M:** There's certainly been wonderful development of the ministry. I'm so happy the Meadow is being developed and used

benefit the organization or other people. That's not Christian. It's not Christlike. Also dependence on God, knowing that in the snap of a finger, God could close the place down. We know we are dependent on Him and need Him constantly. So it's okay that we go through hard times periodically, when we don't know where the money will come from, because it's a good reminder. The growth of the staff and interns is another constant thing through the decades.

People are always growing at the Ranch.



working. And all the love these interns have poured into the kids. I hope there's a video playback of some sort in heaven, so everyone gets the whole picture of the love being poured into the kids.

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**No one's needs are discounted in order to benefit the organization or other people. That's not Christian. It's not Christlike.**

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**N: What are some of the biggest changes?**

**M:** The Ranch has a very good reputation in the community. It's important. It wasn't that way in the beginning. People didn't know who we

Also, unity is so important. Staff come from different backgrounds. Important: we learn from each, we grow. None of us has a perfect understanding of everything.

to help churches and groups. I see fresh ideas come to bear, and of course there's so much technology we wouldn't have been able to comprehend back then.

were and were very leery of hippies. Counseling was a brand new field at the time. Mike Petrillo was the first licensed counselor that came. And now the Ranch has prominent

counselor influence throughout.

Counselors on the Board have helped shape the ministry.

**N: Anything else you want to talk about?**

**M:** I always come back to the changes in the lives of students and interns. God has done things that are...oh, just

unbelievable. They're miraculous. Even though no one is perfect. And most of our students have gone through some struggles after they finish. But from where they come from, it's...mind-boggling! They got their start here, and God wasn't finished with them when they left. He keeps

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**Jim told me repeatedly that the Gospel must stay central. Everything else is secondary.**

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**N: Jim told me repeatedly that the Gospel must stay central. Everything else is secondary. So far all these years, we've come together around the unifying point of the Gospel.**

**M:** We have had good, qualified Board members over the decades that have steered and protected the ministry. The Board members are so key. They bring such different perspectives and gifts.

**N: What word of caution or advice would you give us today?**

**M:** We need to be careful to pray regularly, personally, about our own motives. It's so easy to put motives in the back seat when things are busy, hectic, and really really important. When we don't know what's going on, or can't understand, we need to ask God to make it clear and right, and we need to check our motives. We always need to be growing and remembering the words of Jesus.



**N: What has endured through the 54 years?**

**M:** The centrality of the concern for students. A genuine love for the students and interns. It's never been lost. Each individual's needs are always in focus. No one's needs are discounted in order to

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***Christian Encounter is a non-profit, non-denominational, residential community helping 16- to 24-year-olds by providing love, spiritual guidance, high school education, counseling, and 24-hour supervision. Internships are offered to young adults 21 years and older. We are a member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability, and all gifts are tax deductible.***



## MEMORIALS

*In memory of Bill & Marion Boyd,  
given by:*  
Greg & Diane Boyd

*In memory of Jerry Clayton, given by:*  
Roy & Debbie Clayton

*In memory of Rob Eggink, given by:*  
Dr. Steve & Kerri Latter

*In memory of Jack & Margaret Haden,  
given by:*  
Greg & Diane Boyd

*In memory of Chet Hartley, given by:*  
Sharon Rea

*In memory of Sue Mott, given by:*  
Christopher & Diane Streff

*In memory of Jim Parker, given by:*  
Terry & Ann Barley  
Mike & Gail Faulhaber  
Dr. Bill Barbour

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*In memory of Jamie Sneed, given by:*  
Caryn Galeckas  
Mike & Charlene Moule  
Christopher & Diane Streff

*In memory of John Wright, given by:*  
Jeff & Terri Wright

## HONORARIUMS

*In honor of Nick Breitbart, given by:*  
Curtis Palmer

*In honor of Ray & Marjorie Brown, given by:*  
Justin & Lynda Taylor

*In honor of Randy & Salli Hearn, given by:*  
Ken & Mary Harrison

*In honor of Marion Parker, given by:*  
Terry & Ann Barley  
Dr. Bill Barbour

*In honor of Kalah Richardson, given by:*  
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*In honor of Myrna Wright, given by:*  
Jeff & Terri Wright