

Wednesday, September 23 was another full and wonderful day for the teams from Gloucester, Western Tanganyika, and El Camino Real. The teams caravanned down 101 from the Monterey area to Jolon, where, after a brief stop at St. Luke's (f. 1884), we were joined by several others from around the diocese for Bible study at historic Mission San Antonio. The mission library was a rich setting for our study on the laborers and the vineyard. After exploring the mission a bit the teams headed south on Jolon Road to Hames Valley, just north of Bradley, for the Harvest Blessing.

About 50 people, including representatives from all three deaneries of ECR and the workers who had picked the grapes about to be blessed, joined us for the Eucharist and lunch. Guests tasted wine and salsa while final preparations were made, then gathered under a copse of oaks, on the site of the property's original homestead cabin for the service, which was primarily conducted in Spanish. Three handmade ceramic chalices with the symbol of a dragonfly and three patens with the names of our three dioceses, gifts from ECR to our companions, were blessed by Bishop Gerard and Bishop Michael before the service and were used for the Eucharist. Bishop Mary preached a simple and beautiful homily on the vine and the branches gospel from John, speaking of our need to stay connected to God and care for one another as a mother is connected to the growing child in her womb, as the workers are attentive to and care for the vines. Then came the blessings: the blessing over the water, from the baptismal liturgy, the blessing of seeds which will be sent to Western Tanganyika, the blessing of the land, orchards, and vineyards, the blessing of the grapes which were pulled by a team of Percheron draft horses, and finally, the blessing of the people. Bishops Michael and Gerard used bundles of rosemary to liberally sprinkle holy water over each thing, person, or creature being blessed while Bishop Mary said the blessings in Spanish. Then we shared simply and beautifully in our greatest blessing: God for us and with us, Jesus Christ made present to us in bread and wine.

"Haven't we just eaten?" Bishop Mary asked when told it was time for the more substantial physical meal. She echoed the sense that many of us had, that indeed we had been deeply spiritually fed. What followed was paella, made with vegetables grown and a wild pig slaughtered on the ranch accompanied, naturally, by more wine. Gradually the guests and workers filtered out and the team moved south to Pismo Beach, where they checked into a hotel and cleaned up.

Our last stop of the day was St. Barnabas in Arroyo Grande, which hosted a deanery BBQ and potluck in honor of our guests. The parish hall was packed, with around 100 people in attendance. Following the festive meal, we moved to the sanctuary, where Bishop Gerard and Bishop Michael - Bishop Gerard went first this time; Bishop Michael owned that this was because he'd been a "bad boy" who'd talked too long! - oriented those present to the strengths and struggles of their respective dioceses, their perspectives on the Anglican Communion, and their joys and hopes for this partnership. Images from the previous partnership trips to Tanzania and England flashed on a screen behind them as they spoke and those gathered posed thoughtful and thought-provoking questions. The St. Barnabas choir offered an "Alleluia" chorus in honor of our guests and the bishops closed our evening by saying the partnership prayer in Swahili, Spanish, and English.

The day closed with the teams relaxing back at the hotel and enjoying another glass of Hames Valley wine!  
*Submitted by Rev. Amy Denney Zuniga Member of Traveling Team for Partnership Visit.*