



Life-Giving Inspiration
from a Rustic Countryside

FARMHOUSE
Retreat



Terri Kraus
Photography by Renee Baker



TO:

FROM:

DATE:





Life-Giving Inspiration
from a Rustic Countryside

FARMHOUSE *Retreat*

Terri Kraus
Photography by Renee Baker



Tyndale House Publishers
Carol Stream, Illinois



LIVING
EXPRESSIONS
COLLECTION

Living Expressions invites you to explore God's Word in a way that is refreshing to the spirit and restorative to the soul.

Visit Tyndale online at tyndale.com.

Visit the author's website at terrikraus.com and the photographer's website at FodderstackFarm.com.

Tyndale, Tyndale's quill logo, *Living Expressions*, and the Living Expressions logo are registered trademarks of Tyndale House Ministries.

Farmhouse Retreat: Life-Giving Inspiration from a Rustic Countryside

Copyright © 2021 by Terri Kraus. All rights reserved.

Cover and interior photographs of farm and animals copyright © Renee Baker. All rights reserved. Other cover and interior photographs and illustrations are the property of their respective copyright holders, and all rights are reserved. Wildflowers copyright © Denise Anne/Creative Market; calligraphy patterns copyright © vestalana/Adobe Stock; note papers copyright © Picsfive/Shutterstock; farm, housework, agriculture, jars and cards copyright © Canicula/Shutterstock; natural found paper textures by Lost & Taken; gingham copyright © Francois Poirier/Adobe Stock.

Designed by Eva M. Winters

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked ESV are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NIV are taken from the Holy Bible, *New International Version*,® NIV.® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scripture quotations marked NKJV are taken from the New King James Version,® copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

For information about special discounts for bulk purchases, please contact Tyndale House Publishers at csresponse@tyndale.com, or call 1-855-277-9400.

ISBN 978-1-4964-4926-9

Printed in China

27 26 25 24 23 22 21
7 6 5 4 3 2 1



*To my amazing mom—Anna Frances Mascetti, 1924–2017—
my best friend, Italian cook straordinaria, and my most
enthusiastic cheerleader and godliest role model. You taught
me what faithfulness and unconditional love look like.*





Contents

Introduction: Welcome to Fodderstack Farm 1

Farm Hospitality 5

Morning Dew 9

Bird Songs 13

Fixer-Upper 17

Foraging for Decor 20

Be Still 23

Charlotte and Anastasia 27

Majestic Mountains 31

Master Gardener 35

Kitchen Herb Garden 38

Come Set a Spell 41

Duck House 45

Chicken Chapel 49

Golf Balls 53

Raising Chickens 56

It All Matters 59

Crow Angels 63

Joy Stones 67
Changing Seasons 71
Old-Time Laundry 74
On Helplessness 77
Bluegrass Beauty 81
The Treasure of Time 85
Mother Hen 89
Farm-to-Table 92
Healing Balm 95
Sunrise, Sunset 99
Ulysses 103
Living Bread 107
Bread 'n' Butter 110
Eunice and Little Blackie 113
Bambi 117
Shearing Day 121
The Shepherd's Psalm 125
Keeping Sheep 128
Children on the Farm 131
Canine Sunbathers 135
Summit Climbing 139

Refining Fire 143

Beekeeping 146

Darkness and Light 149

Craft Therapy 153

Hoof Trimming 157

Fallow Times 161

Home Canning 164

Starry, Starry Night 167

Horse Fuzz 171

Water Trough 175

Snowflake Wonder 179

Less Waste, More Joy 182

Notes 185

About Terri Kraus 191

About Renee Baker 193







Introduction

Welcome to Fodderstack Farm

FODDERSTACK FARM, a rustic countryside retreat nestled in the western North Carolina mountains, has become one of my favorite getaways since my friends Renee and Drew Baker purchased the property. It's a place where I've enjoyed uniquely connecting with family, friends, myself, and most importantly, God.

Originally called Five Crows Farm, its current name is a nod to nearby Fodderstack Mountain, located adjacent to the Pisgah National Forest, an area with more than five hundred thousand acres of hardwoods, mountainous terrain, majestic waterfalls, white water rivers, and hundreds of miles of trails. The Blue Ridge Parkway, one of America's favorite scenic drives, traverses large parts of the Forest to the northeast and southwest of Asheville—a part of the country breathtaking in its beauty.

Fodderstack Farm is primarily a sheep farm (sometimes called a fiber farm) and is also home to a horse—named Rooster Cogburn after one of the main characters in *True Grit*; two donkeys—Charlotte and Anastasia; chickens; a rooster; ducks; and rabbits. The farm was

FARMHOUSE RETREAT

started around 1940, the year scratched into a cement block lying in the pasture. The main farmhouse burned down years ago, and the current farmhouse, where the Bakers reside with their dogs and cats, was formerly a cottage for farm workers that they remodeled from the ground up.

The couple who previously owned the farm—the DeVotos—primarily raised goats. With the help of local people, they turned the barn into a house in 1985, retaining its original rustic elements. To maintain the handcrafted feel of the aged barnwood, they used an adze on the beams, giving them a hand-hewn look. The couple enjoyed their retirement on the farm until Mr. DeVoto passed away in 2001 doing what he loved. His ashes were strewn in the back creek in a small ceremony.

Drew and Renee bought the farm in 2013, when Drew left his position as senior manager at a marketing firm in the Chicago area to become a professor at Brevard College. They made more renovations to the barn house, working hard to preserve its historic charm while sensitively blending in many modern updates inside and out. Fencing, multiple structures for the animals, and an off-grid glamping (“glamorous camping”) cabin near the creek were added, and they also created a cutting garden. Its flowers and plants provide natural dyes for the yarn Renee spins from sheep’s wool, then knits into beautiful works of art. She also creates luxurious soaps and lotions using natural and essential oils.

The Bakers offered their beautifully renovated barn house as a vacation rental for several years, making it the subject of feature articles in *Our State* and *Living the Country Life* magazines. My family

INTRODUCTION

and I have been friends with the Bakers since 1986, and we've had the privilege of staying there on several occasions. Each time we visit, rustic warmth and creature comforts enfold us like a loving embrace.

It's our great pleasure to spend time with Drew and Renee while enjoying the animals, mountains, and other charms and serenity the farm offers, but we also delight in exploring the surrounding area. "America's Largest Home," built by George Washington Vanderbilt, sits on the Biltmore Estate, comprised of eight thousand lovely acres that are surrounded by the beauty of the Blue Ridge Mountains. It's a place where nature shouts of God's glory and his astounding creativity.

I have been renewed, restored, and inspired on Fodderstack Farm, where I commune with God in a way that's wonderfully different from my everyday life. It is my deep joy to transport you there and share these blessings with you via my devotions and Renee Baker's amazing gift of photography. My hope is that through the experiences shared in this book, you'll grow deeper in your understanding of our Lord and his loving ways as expressed in his creation and the life of the farm.

His invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been.

ROMANS 1:20, ESV

*For Christ alone—
Terri Kraus*

See photos of the farm's history at <https://youtu.be/pKgJy2Hr-Ck>.





Farm Hospitality



NESTLED AMONG the mountains of southwestern North Carolina, a curving drive leads to Fodderstack Farm, where the gate rests wide open. Just beyond it to the right stands the barn house, where my family and I have stayed as guests. The wide front porch, complete with rockers and a dining table, is adorned with fresh flowers. A lovely floral wreath graces the door, and a small chalkboard beside the door welcomes visitors by name and assures them they are expected with anticipation.

Beyond the entry is the wood-lined and beamed great room, furnished with leather sofas, rustic wood decor, and unique accessories. An enormous antique American flag hangs high on the two-story wall by the staircase. The master bedroom is also wood-lined and beamed; its king-size bed wears a buffalo-check comforter and large, thick shams.

The dining area, with its long farmhouse table and woven rattan chairs, promises wonderful family gatherings. The quaint kitchen features the cabinetry and sink from the original farmhouse, and



FARMHOUSE RETREAT

peeking in the refrigerator reveals a bowl of freshly gathered pastel eggs and other delicious breakfast items.

Upstairs, a loft area provides a cozy place to read, conveniently located between two bedrooms fitted with iron beds covered in quilts. Two comfortable bathrooms offer fluffy towels and luxuriously scented soaps and lotions for the pleasure of each visitor.

The Bakers have thought of everything to make a memorable stay for their guests. The overwhelming feeling and theme of the barn house is *hospitality*, which one source defines as “the friendly and generous reception and entertainment of guests, visitors, or strangers.” The word comes from the Latin *hospes*, meaning “sojourner, visitor, guest . . . friend.” It’s also related to the words *host*, *hospice*, *hostel*, and *hotel*.

Hospitality is also a consistent thread woven into the fabric of the Bible’s message, presented as a sacred, loving, selfless act of service in which hosts treat family, friends, and strangers alike, warmly welcoming them into their homes and enthusiastically inviting them to share in their lives. In the Old Testament, God commanded his people to extend hospitality to foreigners and sojourners and to love them as they loved themselves—because, he reminded them, they were once exiles in Egypt (Leviticus 19:33-34). The New Testament includes the following commands regarding hospitality:

Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.

1 PETER 4:9-10, NIV

FARM HOSPITALITY

Always be eager to practice hospitality.

ROMANS 12:13

Keep on loving each other as brothers and sisters. Don't forget to show hospitality to strangers.

HEBREWS 13:1-2

Most of us know of people in Christian circles who have the gift of hospitality—a serving gift from the Holy Spirit and characterized, we imagine, by one's effortless ability to be “the hostess with the mostest.” But ultimately, genuine hospitality is about the heart—about opening one's home and making guests feel welcomed, loved, and cared for, in Jesus' name.

How can you live more hospitably? Think of ways you can open your heart and home to someone who needs a warm welcome.







Morning Dew



IT'S DAYBREAK OVER Fodderstack Farm. The light from the pastel sky pierces through the fog that's hanging over the pasture like a shadowy blanket, illuminating the dew that has settled across the expanse. The moisture condenses on each green blade of grass and each leaf from the trees and plants, forming tiny, shimmering droplets—like miniature diamonds.

It's interesting that the Hebrew word for *dew* appears more than thirty times in the Bible and is frequently portrayed as a gift God sends down from heaven. In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses says,

Listen, O heavens, and I will speak!

Hear, O earth, the words that I say!

Let my teaching fall on you like rain;

let my speech settle like dew.

Let my words fall like rain on tender grass,

like gentle showers on young plants.

I will proclaim the name of the LORD;



FARMHOUSE RETREAT

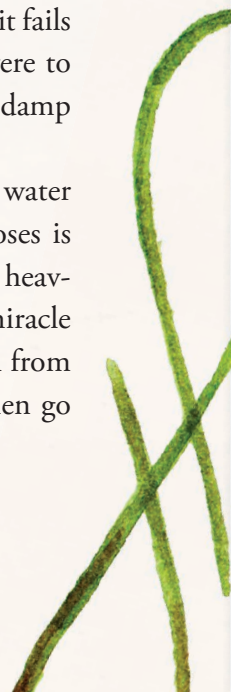
how glorious is our God!
He is the Rock; his deeds are perfect.
Everything he does is just and fair.
He is a faithful God who does no wrong;
how just and upright he is!

DEUTERONOMY 32:1-4

Moses says that his speech about God's splendor will settle on the Israelites like the morning dew. Even the tiniest droplets of dew don't whisper but *proclaim* (broadcast, announce, trumpet) the glory of God, bringing a drink of morning water to a dry and thirsty land. Though it doesn't make a big show, the dew expresses loudly and clearly the message of God's steadfastness ("He is the Rock") and his perfect deeds, justice, righteousness, and faithfulness.

It may be that we take no notice of such an ordinary occurrence: The dewy landscape presents itself to us in the emerging morning light, beckoning our attention, appreciation, and wonder; but it fails to impact our thoughts and emotions. What if instead we were to train ourselves to pause, pay attention, and let the beauty of a damp morning speak to us?

We see in the verses from Deuteronomy that these gifts of water from heaven are like teachings that fall upon the earth. Moses is begging all of creation to take notice, exclaiming, "Listen, O heavens, and I will speak!" His words point to God's majesty—a miracle happening right before our eyes. And once we see it and learn from it, allowing the miracle to bathe our souls in awe, we can then go forth and proclaim God's glorious attributes.



MORNING DEW

How many miracles are occurring all around us—not just in the morning but all day long? Are we looking for them and stopping to listen to what they are saying about God, or are we plowing through the hours unaware? It is a matter of intentionality. God is speaking all the time, and we must learn to take notice. Oh, the wonders that we will miss if we don't. Something as ordinary as the dew can become extraordinary when we see God in it.

How can you purpose in your heart to listen for God's voice in the ordinary? Take note of ways he may be showing you his glory throughout your day.







Bird Songs



ONE OF THE LOVELIEST aspects of life at Fodderstack Farm is hearing the songs of the birds in the quietness of the country—especially in the morning. In urban areas, it’s easy for the noises of civilization to drown out their melodies. We begin the day by readying ourselves and our families for school and work, and we don’t notice the avian choir performing outside.

Have you ever stopped to consider that no matter what the previous day was like, birds always start their new day with a song? When the sun begins to rise, they are already awake and warming up their voices. They live among us, seemingly to provide songs of joy and happiness and bring pleasure to our days.

Bird calls come in thousands of varieties—just a few examples include chirps, whistles, and trills, as well as flutelike, bell-like, and metallic sounds. Most birds have a characteristic tempo, rhythm, pitch, and tone to their calls. Their sounds have different meanings and uses, such as calling to the flock while in flight, contacting or wooing other birds, and, for babies, asking their mothers for food.



FARMHOUSE RETREAT

A good bird-watcher can tell what species a bird is, sight unseen, just by its call. And yet it's a bird's *song*—which is longer, more elaborate, and includes a string of musical syllables—that is most familiar to us. The melody seems to express happiness and joy.

Isn't it amazing that, like the birds of the air, God, the Creator of the universe, also sings over us? Zephaniah 3:17 says,

The LORD your God is living among you.

He is a mighty savior.

He will take delight in you with gladness.

With his love, he will calm all your fears.

He will rejoice over you with joyful songs.

God our Father delights in us and rejoices over us with gladness. He promises to calm our fears. He expresses his love to us like a parent who sings songs of love over their children. Even though we cannot see him, we are able to know him by the sound of his singing as he embraces us—*his* beloved children.

But is this the way we think about God when we come to him? We are often inclined to approach our Father with reservations, realizing how sinful we are, or we approach him seeking something for ourselves or asking for direction. How often do we come to him just to listen for his voice, for how he is singing over us? To delight in his provision of salvation? To pleasure in his favor and unconditional love? He is never too busy to lavish these gifts on us and will not rebuke us or turn us away. Rather, he's waiting for us to

BIRD SONGS

quiet ourselves long enough to hear his voice in song—and to relish its beauty and comfort.

Try sitting quietly, eyes closed, imagining that you are in God's arms and he is singing over you. What does his voice sound like? What are the words of his song? Focus on receiving the expression of joy and gladness he has for you. Give him your fears, and allow his song to calm you. Journal what you experience.







Fixer-Upper



THE BAKERS PURCHASED Fodderstack Farm when it was in foreclosure. It had been sadly neglected, with the barn house requiring major updating of electrical, plumbing, heating, and structural systems. Lighting and bath fixtures were replaced, new appliances were added, a large porch was built, and the list continues—just like on HGTV. Now it looks like a rustic Ralph Lauren ad.

There's something about those fixer-upper shows that's magical. The star designer finds a sad-looking place with little redeeming value—dated and tired, ravaged by the years and falling apart. The featured clients arrive and stare in disbelief. “This can't be it,” they remark with skepticism. And the designer responds, “All it needs is some love.” By seeing its potential and knowing exactly what to demolish and what to repurpose, the designer transforms the property into a dream home.

The designer is a miracle worker. When it's time for the big reveal, the old, rotten, and ugly have all been done away with, and what stands before the clients is fresh and beautiful. The home is



FARMHOUSE RETREAT

completely reborn, ready for new life. There are oohs and aahs, shrieks of surprise and delight, and tears of joy. “This can’t be the same house!” the clients exclaim.

Those fixer-upper shows are a beautiful reminder of what Christ does in our lives. Seemingly unredeemable, we come to him weary, world-worn, and in need of perfect love. Our lives may be in tatters—damaged by abuse or ruined by sin, poor choices, or circumstances not of our own making—but Christ sees our great worth. He paid the price for our redemption with his sacrificial death and glorious resurrection. He issues the invitation to abide with him, and when we say yes, he enters in and takes up residence.

By his grace alone, he sweeps us clean of the grime of sin. His love demolishes walls of hard-heartedness, and his mercy permeates the chambers of our hearts that need repair. He restores everything. His Spirit breathes life into the soul, bringing rebirth and new purpose. What seemed hopeless is full of promise.

Just like witnessing the transformation of the Bakers’ barn house, it’s astounding to see a changed life. It reminds us there is someone—Christ, the true Miracle Worker—who can do this amazing work, and it proves that no one is beyond his power to transform.

Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person.
The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

FIXER-UPPER

Prayerfully consider those in your life with whom you can share the Good News of Christ's transforming power. Make a list and pray for opportunities. Boost your faith by recalling those whose lives have been changed by our Lord.





Foraging for Decor



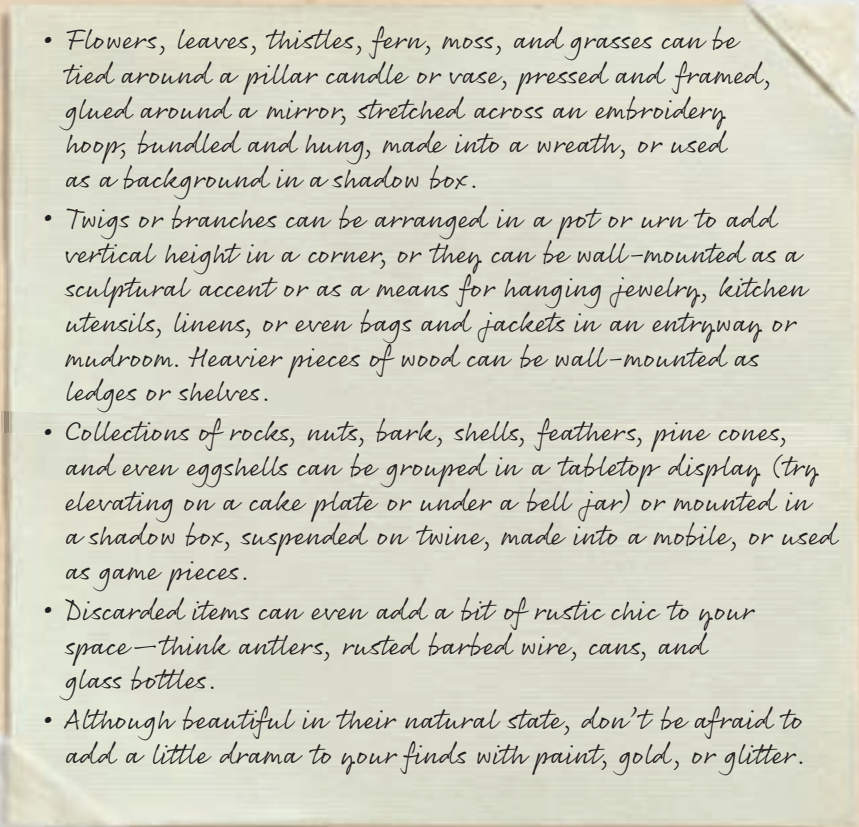
Strolling through the woods or along a beach brings freedom and peace to most. Yet despite an innate tendency to seek connections with the great outdoors, people today spend the majority of their time inside, leaving them feeling more disconnected from nature than ever before.

The remedy? Create a happy home that brings the beauty of the outside world in. Surround yourself with plants, natural objects, and images of nature—it's easier than you may think.

Engaging with nature in whatever form, even for a relatively short time, increases our sense of well-being and benefits us physically, spiritually, and emotionally. It reduces our blood pressure, heart rate, and muscle tension; it calms us, reducing feelings of stress, anxiety, and anger; it enhances our mood and stimulates creativity; it makes us feel more compassionate and connected to others and our environment; it improves cognitive performance, focus, and attention; and it even inspires us to be friendlier and more apt to reach out to others in our community.

Although nothing beats immersing ourselves in the true outdoors, we can capture the essence of what nature has to offer with a little creativity and imagination—and without much money.

Foraging is a great way to introduce natural materials like water, wood, stone, clay, branches, shells, nuts, bark, and even weeds into your home. In addition to displaying items in a vase or a bowl, there are many options for decorating your home with nature's visual treasures:

- 
- Flowers, leaves, thistles, fern, moss, and grasses can be tied around a pillar candle or vase, pressed and framed, glued around a mirror, stretched across an embroidery hoop, bundled and hung, made into a wreath, or used as a background in a shadow box.
 - Twigs or branches can be arranged in a pot or urn to add vertical height in a corner, or they can be wall-mounted as a sculptural accent or as a means for hanging jewelry, kitchen utensils, linens, or even bags and jackets in an entryway or mudroom. Heavier pieces of wood can be wall-mounted as ledges or shelves.
 - Collections of rocks, nuts, bark, shells, feathers, pine cones, and even eggshells can be grouped in a tabletop display (try elevating on a cake plate or under a bell jar) or mounted in a shadow box, suspended on twine, made into a mobile, or used as game pieces.
 - Discarded items can even add a bit of rustic chic to your space—think antlers, rusted barbed wire, cans, and glass bottles.
 - Although beautiful in their natural state, don't be afraid to add a little drama to your finds with paint, gold, or glitter.

The options are unlimited, so head outside and keep your eyes open to textures, shapes, and colors. Respectfully gather what is interesting, bring it home, and creatively incorporate it into your space. Well-displayed foraged materials add interest and natural beauty to your decor, giving you a sense of calm connectedness to the outdoors and reminding you of God's creativity.

