



New Earth News

A Quarterly Publication of Tierra Nueva

Fall 2005



A Letter from the Director

Finding Lost Sheep

I welcome you to Tierra Nueva's first quarterly newsletter, New Earth News. Here in these pages we hope you will be encouraged and transformed by a vision of God's coming Kingdom that includes **you**, along with every prisoner, immigrant worker, subsistence farmer, drug addict, student, pastor, service worker, stay-at-home mom/dad—whoever you are.

In order to **see** this Kingdom, we must be born from above through the Spirit's gracious, empowering work in our lives. The Holy Spirit anoints us like Jesus in Luke 4:18, so we can become announcers of Good News to the poor, freedom to the prisoners, sight to the blind, liberation to the oppressed. We are called to announce and embody a whole new world in the heart of this old broken one. God's Spirit makes us daughters and sons, giving us authority and power to usher in God's Reign.

The Lord's prayer is actually made up of imperatives that call down heaven's realities to earth: "Kingdom of God come, will of God be done, on earth as it is in heaven." We are the ones chosen and gifted to embody this Kingdom, which comes and is done through us—whoever we are, wherever we are, through whatever gifts we've been given.

We at Tierra Nueva are caught up in a vision of a shepherding ministry that focuses on seeking after lost sheep until they are found (Luke 15:4). We have consciously structured our ministries to:



Seek after lost sheep until they are found—through Skagit County Jail Ministry, migrant chaplaincy, and Tierra Nueva Honduras.

Care for, defend and protect—through the Family Support Center.

Gather, feed and heal—through our faith communities Road to Emmaus and Camino de Emaus, bilingual jail services and healing services.

Equip and send out—through The People's Seminary events and courses.

We invite you to journey with us as we seek and find the Gospel that has the power to save, heal, liberate, deliver, and bring total transformation. Join us so we can see together concrete signs of God's Kingdom: faith found or renewed, strangers welcomed, addicts recovered, prisoners released, the sick and broken healed, ordinary people empowered for ministry. Read the articles. Come to our events, worship with us. You are welcome at this banquet table.

Sincerely,

Bob Ekblad
Executive Director, Tierra Nueva

Help us protect the environment!

If you would like to receive your newsletter via e-mail, send an e-mail to info@peoplesseminary.org with the word "newsletter" in the subject line.



Freedom for the Prisoners—News from the Jail

Chris Hoke, Assistant Jail Chaplain



Another captive was set free last month. Ramón was facing thirty or more years in prison at

age nineteen, under four counts of rape, burglary, and kidnapping.

One Thursday night he walked into the Bible study at Skagit County Jail, where we would ask the Holy Spirit for strength to bless and forgive our enemies.

While we stood in a circle, Ramón quietly forgave and blessed the young woman who had falsely accused him, as well as the man who

had murdered his brother. The following week, Ramón was unable to contain his excitement. After he had released this woman from the bondage of judgments and anger, the very next morning the prosecutor's office received a handwritten letter in which she confessed her accusations to be lies, dropping the charges and apologizing. That night in the jail, Ramón practically led our worship. He told how that week he gave his life over to Jesus. He then initiated prayer for other inmates in our group.

Last week, he insisted I go with him to his nephew's trial. There, beside me on the back bench, he prayed with more maturity and simple conviction of God's power than I've ever seen. After his nephew was

released less than an hour later, Ramón stood with his mother, sister and nephew in the parking lot, under the blue sky. Ramón looked them individually in the eye: "God is real," he said in Spanish, nodding firmly. "He's stronger than any judge or prosecutor."

Blessing our enemies is a teaching we have all heard, but not one I grew up seeing practiced in any congregational setting. Maybe it's because we see no real or immediate benefit in it—a nearly impossible command.

Here on the margins, we are learning to trust the power of Jesus' call to forgive and bless our enemies. Forgiving love breaks the chains that shackle us to our enemies.

Caring for the Flock—the Family Support Center

Rocío Robles, Co-Director, FSC

There's never a typical day in the Family Support Center. I sit down to answer letters from the prison, or write to the believers in Honduras. But then a Mixteco or Triqui family comes in needing work clothes. It's not just the clothing—it's breaking down barriers so we can gain their confidence. The next time they have a problem, they won't be afraid to come.

I've met many families this way—especially wives of prisoners and single mothers struggling to support their children. Most are undocumented and some can't read or write. With great humility they ask me to fill out their work applications. Others are looking for a place to live with their children. Some don't know how to drive.

For example, Yolanda has four children and is undocumented. But that's not a barrier to working—she can count on us to help her fill out a money order, give her a ride, or just provide a place to talk about her pain.

Some people come with traffic violations and are afraid of landing in jail and being deported. Others have immigration applications and need to know how their case is going, or need a lawyer they can trust.

Other people live alone, carrying a heavy burden of loneliness. Tierra



Nueva is like an oasis, because here they have someone to tell their stories to, even though they tell the same stories again and again.

It's so beautiful when someone opens their heart to me for the first time.

Even when they repeat the same thing over and over again, I realize our mission here is to be servants.

The people are our highest priority. They always have to come first—the ones who need attention, or a ride, or come anguished, worried, sad, or alone.

We offer them a safe place where they can experience the love of Christ.



Good News to the Poor— Tierra Nueva Honduras

Bob Ekblad, Executive Director

Fifteen Tierra Nueva *promotores* (trainers) serve the poorest of the poor in some fifty Honduran villages. Every two weeks, David Calix, the 48-year-old coordinator, calls us from a scratchy internet phone. Third-grade educated David brilliantly pastors many of Tierra Nueva's Honduran staff, only one of whom is educated beyond sixth grade.

"Roberto, I am trying to motivate the promoters to continue to reach out to the poorest farmers. I encourage them to remember where they have come from. But they are tempted to forget. It is too painful to remember the poverty."

David tells me how TN promoters have all become successful farmers. Now the temptation is to pursue security, forget where they have come from, and harden their hearts. David gives examples that convict.

"Some are even wanting to ride motorcycles or cars instead of mules. There is even talk of each promoter having a cell phone," he says in dismay.

David insists that people need to remember the pain of growing up with nothing, of losing their fathers to other women or alcohol, or siblings to dysentery.

"Remembering where we've come from is important, Roberto. In this way we will not harden our hearts to the most broken people—those who spend their money on alcohol rather than seeds, or who are discouraged to the point of apathy."

Last week he told us of a hope-inspiring Bible study on the man born blind in John 9. "Jesus refuses to blame the man for his misfortune. This helped us to realize we must not blame the poor or ourselves."

We end our conversation discussing how the man's blindness and poverty, illnesses and calamities must not be seen as punishments for sin, but rather as opportunities for Jesus to visit them and offer healing, a new opportunity, a better system of farming, an irrigation project or inclusion into a faith community. We pray for the promoters, for David, for all of us—that we would have hearts of compassion.

On Earth As It Is In Heaven— Testimonies of Renewal

Amy Muia, Communications Director



Sometimes I used to catch glimpses that there was more to God than I had experienced. It began on a journey to Latin America to learn the theology of the poor. I met women whose husbands had been tortured and killed by the military, people living in garbage dumps, and believers studying the Bible in the midst of war.

I also met a woman who spoke of her faith in extraordinary ways. She talked about the Holy Spirit, visions, healings—things all completely new to me. "Please pray for me," I asked. "I want more of God."

We prayed, and nothing happened—I felt nothing, saw nothing, and healing didn't come. The disappointment was sharp. I immediately retreated, concluding that these aspects of the faith weren't for me. I was from the wrong denomination, I was too constrained, too intellectual. I had asked, God hadn't answered, and that was that.

But God did not forget my prayer. Several years later, I found Tierra Nueva. I loved the way they cared for the poor and welcomed the stranger. The Scripture studies fed my soul. And something else was happening. People were being touched by the Spirit. Some were healed. Others were seeing visions, hearing words from God, and experiencing God in a new way.

Again my hunger for God arose. Again I prayed. Nothing seemed to be happening, and I grew despondent. I was afraid of being left behind, afraid that God would come close to everyone but me. I was hungry and desperate.

One Friday, I attended the Tierra Nueva Bible study as usual, and the leaders offered to pray for us. I held out my hands, and suddenly God's presence came. God was so close, so powerful, and more personal than I had ever known. It was like passing through a veil and leaning against the very person of God. I realized that even as hungry as I was, God was even hungrier for me.

Follow your hunger today. There is more—much more—that we can experience of God, who is ready to draw us close. Keep seeking, asking, and knocking. I promise that God will open the door.

Come to the Table

Worshipping Communities:

Road to Emmanus

Tierra Nueva has two worshipping communities.
We meet each Sunday night in our Burlington office,
701 East Fairhaven. Everyone is welcome.
English service - 4:30 p.m.
Spanish service - 6:00 p.m.

Soaking Prayer

Come rest, receive, and make space
in the busyness just to be in God's presence.
Mondays from 7:00-9:00 p.m.
upstairs in the soaking room.
For more information call Elizabeth, 755-5299.

Just released!

Contact Tierra Nueva today to order
your copy of Bob's new book, *Reading the
Bible with the Damned*. Discover what the
Bible has to say to people who feel
abandoned by God.
Signed copies available.



Did you know?

The People's Seminary is a ministry of Tierra Nueva,
offering ministry training courses that empower ordinary people
to bring good news to a broken world. Courses are held at our
Burlington office.

Upcoming Courses:

WalMart: The High Cost of Low Price

This documentary will take you behind the glitz into the real
lives of workers, their families and communities, in an extraordinary
journey that will challenge the way you think, feel... and shop.

Wednesday, November 16, 2005 7:30 p.m.

For more information, check our website:

www.peoplesseminary.org
or call Sharon: 360-755-5299

Praise Moves

Movement and Scripture meditation Mondays at 5:45 p.m.
call Amy Savela for info, 202-8602

Healing Service

Receive prayer for your physical, emotional, or spiritual need.
Friday, December 2 at 7:00 p.m.



Tierra Nueva

PO Box 161
Burlington, WA 98233
360-755-5299 - 360-755-0768

Tierra Nueva is an ecumenical ministry dedicated to
proclaiming the Good News of God's reign
(on earth as it is in heaven) in solidarity with the
oppressed for our mutual liberation, healing,
empowerment, transformation, and total salvation.

Street Address:

701 E. Fairhaven Avenue, Burlington, WA, 98233

Web Address:

www.tierra-nueva.org

To request prayer, call:

360-755-5299

To receive publications by email:

info@peoplesseminary.org

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