

New Earth News

A Quarterly Publication of Tierra Nueva

Fall 2006

Letter from the Director

God Loves and Calls Violent Men

Violent men make the headlines daily, and many people consider them deserving of banishment or death. God has called me and many here at Tierra Nueva to seek, find, bind up, love, pray for and in various ways minister to violent men and women—both inside and outside jail.

God is calling the entire church to reach out in love to violent men and women, inviting them into a life filled with adventure, love and meaning as agents of transformation in the company of Jesus.



Every week I have the privilege of seeing hardened, violent men profoundly touched by God's affectionate embrace. When people in our weekly jail Bible studies come to truly realize that God adores them, they respond to God's call and become disciples—often 12-15 at a time.

Sinners' attraction to Jesus should come as no surprise. In Luke 15:1 "all the tax-gatherers and [all] the sinners were coming near him to listen to him." Jesus was known as a "friend of sinners" (Matt 11:19). "The Son of Man has come

to save that which was lost . . . it is not the will of your father who is in heaven that one of these little ones [lost sheep] perish" (Matt 18:11,14).

I often say to people in our jail Bible studies, "Take it as a compliment that you are harassed and targeted by the Enemy. He's trying to take you down because he knows what a threat you'd be if you were an agent of love for the Kingdom of God." This is not empty flattery, but a conviction repeatedly supported by Scripture.

Throughout Scripture we see God highly valuing violent men, calling them as God's choice ministers. Moses was called after murdering an Egyptian to be Israel's liberator. David was anointed after years of violence defending sheep and attacking Philistines, and became the author of our Psalms of worship. Jesus met the Apostle Paul in the midst of his violent campaign against the first Christians. Paul writes powerfully about God's choice of himself:

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because he considered me faithful, putting me into service; even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. And yet I was shown mercy, because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus.

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 poor for our mutual liberation, healing, empowerment, transformation, and total salvation.

Tierra Nueva
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A dynamic course from your friends at Tierra Nueva and the People's Seminary . . .

**Your Kingdom Come:
Transformational Ministry in the Margins and Mainstream**

Your Kingdom Come is coming again in 2007!

Details on back.



Healing Prayer is available for your physical, emotional, or spiritual need. Call 360-755-5299 for an appointment.

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It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. And yet for this reason I found mercy, in order that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate his perfect patience, as an example for those who would believe in him for eternal life (1 Tim 1:12-16).

Violent offender types like Paul and many others were targeted and attacked both by enemies of flesh and blood and spiritual enemies. **I believe that those most involved in violence today are at the top of God's list of people God is seeking and calling—and should be our highest priority in a different kind of Jesus-inspired war on terror.** God calls the worst as an example for those who would believe. So who and where might these big, bad “little ones” be?

Our county jails are filled with people charged with violent crimes as well as others labeled “felons” with violent convictions. Rather than demanding harsher prison sentences and fines that increase shame and violence, our incarcerated neighbors need much more love, respect and the honor of being invited to follow Jesus to bring life and liberation to the world.

Al-Qaeda and Taliban combatants and people who strap explosives to their bodies need to be placed at the top of our prayer and outreach priorities, and certainly not destroyed. We must stop excluding enemy combatants from those for whom we grieve, as if their deaths are less important than those of innocent civilians or US troupes. This grieves the Holy Spirit, who comes to comfort and defend.

The world's many orphans definitely need to be sponsored so their needs are provided. But let us not forget that most violent men are grown-up neglected and abused children or orphans in need of love, healing and spiritual adoption—which includes a calling. Rather than letting them be easy prey for the military recruiters, drug dealers and other forces that would rob, kill and destroy, join us in recruiting them as workers in God's harvest fields.



We have learned that loving our enemies is not an easy or natural task—but it is at the heart of our calling. This kind of extreme love can only come directly from God. We at Tierra Nueva are constantly humbled by both our weakness before the powers of violence, addictions and death and by the bigness of God's love.

Saying “yes” to the call to seek after lost sheep *until* we find them requires more of God's abundant love and the anointing of the Holy Spirit than we yet have. Thankfully, God is rich in

mercy and full of love and goodness, and is eager to show up and fill us so we can “not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12).

Let's join Jesus, who says, “I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners” (Mk 2:17). As more and more violent bad guys get recruited into God's service as agents of love, the Kingdom of God will certainly be drawing closer.

—Bob Ekblad, Executive Director



Your morning cup of coffee could benefit the ministry of Tierra Nueva!

Visit our web store to purchase our organic, shade-grown Honduran coffee. You'll be warmed inside and out.

www.tierra-nueva.org

Soaking Prayer

Find relief from the busyness and come rest in God's presence.

Monday nights at 7:00 pm
upstairs in the soaking prayer room at Tierra Nueva.



*Caring for the Flock—
The Family Support Center
Roger Capron, Co-Director*



Normally, Family Support Center staff and volunteers stand with the accused and the marginalized rather than side with the city, state or nation.

Occasionally, however, on behalf of some offenders we have partnered with one of the powers, namely the courts.

Such is the case with Bernice Andrade, a young, single mother of a precious seven year old girl, Alison.

Advocating actually comes naturally to Bernice, who wanted to help a friend get from Skagit County to Pierce County. Her friend was to begin work the next day in Bonney Lake, but had missed the last bus south out of Mount Vernon. If her friend didn't show up, or arrived late to work, he could lose his job.

Given these circumstances, Bernice decided to risk herself and drive the young man to Bonney

Lake, though she had no valid driver's license.

A block from their destination, a police vehicle drove by in the opposite direction. Bernice and her friend had parked at his residence and were getting out of the car when they heard sirens, and then looked up to see the patrol car stopped in front of them.

The officer said she had a suspended driver's license, something that happened when she couldn't pay a traffic fine at a time when she was unemployed.

Of course, the cop could only have known this if he had run the vehicle's license number. As a side note, if there were no moving violations, why did the officer stop her in the first place? The cop asked for her license and insurance of which she had none, and proceeded to issue the criminal traffic ticket and infraction for no insurance.

At her court hearing, Bernice encountered a "merciful" judge, who gave her the opportunity to pay one half of the penalty imposed, and work the other half off through community service at a non-profit agency. Otherwise, she was looking at not only a fine, but 90 days in jail.

Bernice accepted the judge's offer, and later recounted the story to her mother, who suggested she contact Tierra Nueva.

"Perhaps they could help you," she added.

Rocío and I responded by saying

that maybe she could help us! Bernice will be doing 131 hours of community service with Tierra Nueva at our Family Support Center. Bernice will be considered a "long-term" volunteer! This bilingual, compassionate young woman will

- Organize, clean and maintain the Tierra Nueva clothing closet
- Answer the telephone for Rocío and Roger, taking messages when necessary, or answering peoples' questions when appropriate
- Greet, converse with and assist the folks that drop into our Family Support Center with needs like communicating with agencies or office personnel that only speak English
- Help fill out job, human services, and housing applications

Rocío and I extend a warm welcome to Bernice for 131 hours! She will be a fantastic asset, because many times we have to close the Family Support Center when both of us are accompanying different individuals, or when one is on vacation and the other has to be out of the office on an assignment.

Who knows, maybe this could turn into an even longer term volunteer opportunity for Bernice!

Freedom for the Prisoners -

News from the Jail

Chris Hoke, Assistant Jail Chaplain

“So, how’ve things been going in the jail with you and pastor Robert?”

Sixers, 24, one of the demigods of the Skagit Valley’s Sureño gang scene, sits in the passenger seat, two days out of state prison and covered with new tattoos on his arms and face. He has just finished telling me about the inner-workings of prison gang violence and politics—how a person who oversteps a code is “marked” by a leader, and ruthlessly harmed by whomever gets the order. Within the hour.

I answer Sixers by telling him we’ve been seeing God move in even clearer ways that make inmates go “Whoa,” spreading news through whole jail pods about people actually being affected by God.

“It’s like God ‘marks’ dudes in the joint as well,” I tell him, “like you guys do. But instead of hurting them, he heals them, brings them life instead of death. Within the hour. Just this last Sunday, nine people were healed, man.”

“Nu-uh...” His tattooed fingers cover his surprised smile.

“Yeah, take last night for example. I’m meeting one-on-one with this Chicano man accused of murder. We’re praying, and I get this image in my head of toes. It’s like God is my ‘shot-caller,’ and he’s telling me to ‘get this guy,’ that there’s a problem with his toes. So I ask the man, ‘Do you have any pain in your toes?’ ‘Yes,’ he says, as he lifts his head. ‘You never told me that before, did you?’ ‘I’ve never told *anyone* about my toes—I hide this.’ ‘I think God wants to heal you,’ I venture.

“So I scoot my chair around the table and lay my hands on his white-socked toes that have severely ingrown nails. Then in Jesus’ name, I tell the pain to leave. I command the nails to grow straight.

“It’s like you on the street, Sixers. You were just telling me the power your name has around here: you say something, it happens.”

“Yup,” and he snaps his fingers.

“Same with Jesus’ authority over death, sickness, and stuff like that. I used Jesus’ name and authority with the unwanted pain hurting this man whom God ‘marked,’ and a minute later he’s squeezing his toes, crying, saying all the pain is gone, that minutes before he couldn’t even touch them!

“Almost immediately, he wants to be closer to God. Like he’s ‘jumped in’ to the gang. He wants to roll with God, let him ‘drive the car,’” I continue with the prison terms Neaners has taught me.

“Daaamnnn, man, that’s cool.” His eyes light up and he pauses before getting out of the car, shaking his head.

Gang members on the streets and men locked in the system are tired of being helpless and pushed around. Sixers’ attraction to Jesus’ power—of life and *not* violence—shows that what poor and disrespected young men in and out of bars, unserved by a forever-pending world of bureaucratic solutions, are desperate for real authority, even more than their threatening codes. They are hungry for power to effect change in their everyday lives—within the hour.

So we at Tierra Nueva now want to listen to God even more closely and join the authority of Jesus’ name to take the streets back under God’s new, life-giving reign.



On Earth As It Is in Heaven – Testimonies of Renewal

Ryann Lachowicz

I don't know if you've ever felt engulfed by darkness or in a pit of hopelessness, but I was just there. I grew up "knowing" Jesus, but that knowing has been more like a constant anxiety in my stomach over not measuring up.

As I got older, I thrived in ministry involvement in college and academics, striving after a life of social justice to the marginalized. I had gotten really good at jumping through the necessary hoops to show others (and myself) that I was "ok."

And then I fell apart. After graduating from Western, I received some personal blows that shattered the neat little path I had set up for myself. I felt lost. I didn't have any direction to go . . . no clue what to do with this degree I'd slaved for. My heart hurt badly. Relationships failed. I felt so distant from God and even disdainful. I started to turn my face from God and for the first time in my life identified with the prodigal son of Luke 15 instead of the older dutiful son. It was deep shame that drove me away from the Father, and after returning, deep shame remained.

Sometime in late spring I found myself sitting in Tierra Nueva's upper room at a migrant outreach training. I had been walking toward healing with God since November, but I was still severely disillusioned with the church, my life, and faith in general. That morning I came expecting a program. I came expecting to hear a list of good approaches and well-tested human efforts that would make an effective outreach. I expected to need to prove my worthiness for the task.

Instead, I was met with something real. I was confronted with people's hearts. I heard about their deep hunger for God, and that they had nothing to give without drawing life straight from God. I heard about how they were seeing God pour out life in supernatural, beautiful ways to people they minister to. There was peace in their eyes and it felt like life was seeping out of the baseboards and into my shoes.

From that day forward, deep in my gut something has been drawing me to Tierra Nueva. The first time I came to soaking prayer, I wept the entire two hours. It was the most overwhelming time of restoration and receiving God's delight that I've ever experienced. As I practice lying on the floor not "doing" anything but receiving from God, I feel the heaviness, the duty, the rules and the strivings crumble away.

For the first time in my life, I am desperately hungry for God. There's something strangely wonderful about being a major mess up. It's freed me from thinking I have any chance of measuring up! This place of desperation and hunger has opened me up to receiving outpourings of the Holy Spirit, filling me up, knocking me over, feeding my soul, speaking words for my life or for others, and giving life to the scripture.

I feel a bit like a bewildered child, but I know now what an incredibly GOOD Father I have. I am so thankful God has led me to this Tierra Nueva community where we receive love, listen for the Father's voice and minister out of a place of rest and empowerment by the Holy Spirit.





Tierra Nueva

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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.

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Web Address:

www.tierra-nueva.org

To request prayer, call:

360-755-5299

To receive publications by email:

info@peoplesseminary.org

To donate to the ministry of Tierra Nueva:

- donate by phone at 360-755-5299
- donate online at www.tierra-nueva.org
- mail checks to PO Box 161, Burlington, WA 98233.



Worship with Us

Two worshipping communities meet at Tierra Nueva on Sunday nights in our Burlington office, at 701 East Fairhaven. Everyone is welcome. English service - 4:30 pm. Spanish service - 6:30 pm.

Upcoming Soaking School Dates

The soaking school was so successful last year, we decided to do it again! Catch the Fire will offer two weekend courses this spring to go more in-depth on the topic of soaking prayer.

Soaking Seminar 1

Thursday, Feb 1 (for soaking school graduates)
Friday & Saturday, Feb 2-3 (everyone welcome!)

Soaking Seminar 2

Thursday, April 19 (for soaking school graduates)
Friday & Saturday, April 20-21 (everyone welcome!)

Thursday evening session—7:30pm
Friday evening—7:30 pm
Saturday all day—9:30 am-10:30 pm

For more information and registration, call Catch the Fire, 1-866-500-0003, or visit www.tierra-nueva.org.

*A dynamic course from your friends at
Tierra Nueva and the People's Seminary . . .*

Your Kingdom Come: Transformational Ministry in the Margins and Mainstream

This course received rave reviews last year as a one-week event. In 2007, The People's Seminary will make it available in monthly installments!

The five sessions are offered once a month on Tuesday evenings. The course will be taught by Tierra Nueva staff on the topics of ministry on the margins, empowerment, allegiance, and the power of the cross. A freewill offering will be collected.

Tues, January 9
Tues, February 6
Tues, March 6
Tues, April 10
Tues, May 8

7:00 pm at Tierra Nueva, 701 East Fairhaven

*For more information, visit our website,
www.tierra-nueva.org, or call 360-755-5299.*