



# SETTING *the* OPPRESSED FREE

Tierra Nueva  
Fall 2018 newsletter  
: Freedom, Justice, Forgiveness,  
Transformation, Peace



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Tierra Nueva (New Earth) is an international Christian ministry based in Burlington, Washington that seeks to share the good news of God's total liberation, healing, and transformation in Jesus Christ with people on the margins—especially those affected by addiction, incarceration, and immigration.

We are dedicated to proclaiming the Good News of God's Kingdom (on earth as it is in heaven) with the oppressed for our mutual liberation, holistic healing, empowerment, and total salvation. We do this through pastoral advocacy, chaplaincy and re-entry support, evangelism, discipleship, and healing prayer.

# FROM the EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I waited patiently for the Lord. He inclined to me and heard my cry. He picked me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay. He set my feet upon a rock and made my footsteps firm; he put a new song in my mouth; a song of praise to my God. Many will and fear and put their trust in the Lord.

Psalm 40:1-3

What the psalmist writes about here is what we get to participate in all the time: the powerful testimony of those who are rescued and transformed. Many have been rescued from the pit of destruction; brought out of the miry clay of addiction, oppressive debt, and being labeled by their past actions; given firm ground beneath their feet through healing, community, and work; and a new song of praise in their mouths.

We see what God has done and our faith increases. You should be encouraged, too. Your prayer and financial support helps all this to happen.

Now more than ever, families affected by immigration, incarceration and addiction are vilified in America. Anti-immigration attitudes are at a fever pitch, and the US has the highest incarceration rate in the world. We also face the immense need of 600,000 prisoners being released onto the streets every year, with little support to help them live transformed lives in our communities.

At Tierra Nueva, these populations are at the heart of our work. The “illegal immigrant,” the “criminal” and the “addict,” so scapegoated in the national fervor, are the “lost sheep” we embrace

with the Good News in Jesus: that **God adores them, rescues them, calls them by name, and brings them home.** It is to this Kingdom work that we give ourselves, and it is for this that we expend our resources.

Thank you for helping us to be a part of what Jesus is doing here. Your support through financial partnering and prayer helps to make this work possible. You are building bridges in God's Kingdom as you participate where lives and communities are transformed by Jesus.

You can invest in the long-term sustainability of Tierra Nueva by becoming a General Fund donor. Please consider an end-of-year gift or making a monthly or annual commitment. You can sign up on our website or mail a check made payable to Tierra Nueva.

God's Peace to you in this season.

Gratefully,  
Mike Neelley  
Executive Director

Tierra Nueva  
PO Box 161  
Burlington, Washington 98233  
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# A CONVERSATION with JIM & PASTOR JULIO: *Family Support Center*

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**Listen to this conversation on the Tierra Nueva Podcast. Access on our site or your favorite podcast outlet.**



**How long have we been meeting?  
How long has it been since I first met you?**

It was 2003 when I started coming around here so, that's about fifteen years I started coming around Tierra Nueva. I lived a couple blocks away. I didn't go to church all the time or anything, but I lived nearby and it's always been part of my life here in Burlington.

**You started coming to church more when Psalms and Gospels started, huh?**

Yes, mainly Psalms in the evenings. I would check in and it was good for me, for some structure. It seemed to fit my life really well. Even if it only took 15-20 minutes, it was nice to have a place to check in once a day.

**Talk a little bit about what caused your addiction and to the point where you got clean.**

I moved to Burlington in 2005. At that point in my life, my now-deceased wife Ruthie, she and I had to move out of Sedro Woolley. It just got too crazy. We were over there involved in dealing crack cocaine and partying too much. We needed to get away from that. We

wound up here in Burlington in a little house off the beaten path basically. At that time, I was recovering from back surgeries and addiction to pain pills from 1994 until 2000. I was taking lots of pain medications for a broken back, two back surgeries turned into three back surgeries, so lots and lots of pain pills to deal with the pain. That turned into a heavy addiction. I could only feed it with continued use of heroin after my doctors cut me off from the medication.

**What caused you to give your life over to the new you, to being free of drugs and alcohol?**

Well, in the last years, my addiction got so bad where I was actually bed-ridden with infection. I was so full of heroin and infection in my legs I couldn't walk for a few weeks. I was stuck in bed. People had to bring me food and drugs just to keep me alive. I was hospitalized a couple times. In all that time, I knew God was working on me to take it away—my addiction.

**I remember you telling me that.**

I knew God was working on me, so I slowly put it in his hands and he took my addiction away to where it was easy to put it down finally because I was



just so tired of it. I had to do something, and I wanted to live. God took me to death's door and showed me where I was going to wind up if I didn't quit. It got my attention. Slowly, I've gotten myself going out to Didg\*alič Wellness Center and checking into their program. They set me up with a doctor that afternoon. I was interviewed. I got a physical from the doctor. They started dosing me with methadone the following day. That was the big turnaround for me.

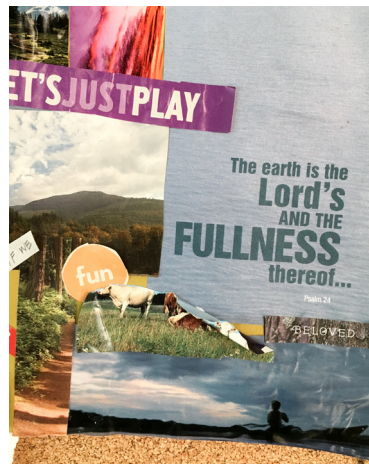
### How long have you been clean now?

Since the beginning of May.

**I've known you for about five years. You've lived down the street from me the whole time I've been here at Tierra Nueva. You are an individual that would come receive services from FSC, Pastor Salvio would give you a ride to the food bank, and we kept seeing little changes at a time. We're so grateful that you're able to turn your life around, to give it to God, and staying clean. I remember telling you a long time ago that before I died, I wanted to see you clean. God granted that prayer for me. I'm really proud of you and excited for you and all this stuff that's going to happen. God has plans for you in the years to come.**

It was very important for me in my recovery that you, Julio, and everybody else at Tierra Nueva didn't give up on me. I saw many people come and go through my life, others drying from their use and all that. The only real solid place with any consistency was here at Tierra Nueva. It played a big role in keeping me in touch with God and life—it's good people. A big part of my change was checking in with the guys here.

Amen. ♦



# SEEKING JUSTICE IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM: Danielle Riley

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you.

Jeremiah 29:11-12

Amy is a regular attendee at our weekly Sunday Bible study at the Skagit jail. She is always ready to dig in and receive whatever good news the Holy Spirit has for her. The other women in the jail constantly remark about what an encouragement she is. She prays for her sisters often, is always quick to listen and provide words of encouragement, and shares Scripture every evening. In doing so, she shares God's presence and comfort daily in the county jail.

One Sunday we talked about forgiveness and how we might experience it for ourselves in daily life. Amy began to cry. She is constantly thinking of her four young children at home without her while she fights for leniency.

(At the Community Justice Center, inmates are only allowed visits with loved ones via video feed; Amy is never able to see, hug, or kiss her children.)

She shared her desire to plead guilty to all charges and transition to prison where she would be able to have in-person visits with her children.

Forgiveness doesn't feel like a part of the "justice" system for Amy. We encounter situations like hers frequently in the jail.

Women are kept in custody because they have no money for bail. Instead, they are offered a "deal" with credit for the time already served in jail and

a quick release if they just plead guilty. Free from jail, they are branded with a criminal record because of their desire to be free. This process overlooks actual rehabilitation, changes of heart and the movement of the Holy Spirit; these women are assumed guilty and deserving of punishment.

It has been an honor witnessing Amy's relationship with Jesus blossom in jail. Even though her charges and sentencing are daunting, even though it may be years before she is able to go home to her children, she speaks with confidence that God will carry her through and use this time for good. She trusts in his ways and is an encouragement to all the women around her, including myself.

Amy will be praying fervently for God's mercy and justice to prevail. Pray with me on her behalf. ♦

**Listen to this article on the Tierra Nueva Podcast. Danielle shares further insight on the experience of incarceration.**

**Email Danielle @Tierra-Nueva.org for the weekly prayer email from women's jail ministry.**

# SIN is EASY / GOD is Hard:

## Kevin Riley

### **Listen to Kevin's full sermon on the Tierra Nueva Podcast.**

**And keep an eye out for Hold Fast, the new podcast featuring Kevin and Danielle and the work going on at Mount Baker Presbyterian.**

In Burlington, where there used to be a Christian book store at the outlet mall. And for some reason, Danielle and I liked to go there in the middle of our addiction. We just thought, "This God stuff is cool. It's so shiny." We're there one day and Danielle walks up to me and hands me this book. It says: For I know the plans I have for you. Jeremiah 29:11.



I froze. I melted. And I cried. I walked up to the cashier and told her what happened. She says, "You've just been touched by God." That was the first time ever. God came out and said, "Hey, you know what? I have different plans for you than what you're doing." Did I listen? No. No way. Not yet.

Since that day, I've had a total rebirth. I never understood who God was. I always knew he was real. I was always afraid of him. I remember being a little kid and repeating over and over in my head, "I BELIEVE IN GOD, I BELIEVE IN GOD, I BELIEVE IN GOD," even though I didn't know who he was.

Danielle and I got arrested. We're in jail, reading the Bible, and Jeremiah 29:11 kept coming up in Our Daily Bread or whatever devotional we could get our hands on. After we got out from jail and we came together, we found out that we were reading the same passages. God was talking to both of us in the same way at the same time. After jail, I was camping outside of Trinity Presbyterian. Danielle was on house arrest at her parents' house around the corner. My nights' routine: getting drugs and taking it back to her house to pass it through her window. That's the way it went for about a month. She woke me up one day and said,

*Kevin is now the Commissioned Pastor at Mount Baker Presbyterian Church in Concrete. His commissioning service was in October of 2018. This piece is adapted from the sermon he preached that morning.*

"I'm pregnant. And I'm going to the doctor."  
Danielle goes in to get examined, and I wait outside in the lobby with our dog Peanut. She comes out and says, "I'm pregnant."  
We got back that area where I was camping, and that's the first time I ever prayed something other than, "Get me the hell out of this." I prayed, "God if you really want us to do better, if you want us to be in a better place, we need your help. We need to be forcibly removed from this so we can survive. If we're not forcibly removed, the baby's not going to survive, and we're not going to survive."

The sheriff's department came by. They ran our names and for the first time in a long time, I came back clean, but she came back as on home monitoring. She was going back to jail and I'm shouting, "God! Not like this! This is what I asked for, but not how I asked for it!"

For the next month, I was on the streets getting money for phone calls. And doing what I needed to do to survive. One day, I showed up at Tierra Nueva. There's a guy there by the name of Julio. The first thing he says is, "Hey man. Do you wanna burrito?" He takes me over to Antojito's. It's that simple gesture that really started the relationship between Julio and I. So I kept coming around the church and I kept telling him stories about Danielle and how we were so in love, how she's pregnant with

my kid in jail. God really worked through Julio to get to me. God was constantly saying, "I want that man."  
During that time of meeting with Julio, attending Psalms here and there, coming to the building, I started seeing something in people that I really, really wanted. Everybody there had this way about them—it was attractive, it was sexy, and I wanted it. I didn't know what it was, but I wanted it.  
I showed up to Tierra Nueva one day, and in the back of the parking lot, there was a broken box truck. That's where I made my bed for a couple weeks. It wasn't until I told somebody else this story that it really resonated what God was doing. I was seeking God with the heart of a child because that's the only

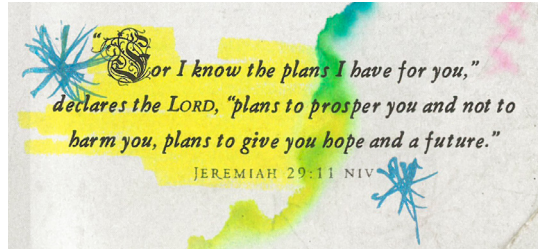
*Danielle and Kevin attending Whitworth Ministry Summit.*





way I knew how. On Burlington hill, there's a cross that lights up at night. I thought because I was sleeping so close with that cross lit up, I was safe. And at the nights, the trains would come through with their horns going. My brain associated that with the Lord's trumpet scaring all the evil spirits away. So as I stayed there in that parking lot and sought after God, the only way that I knew how. I'm the only one that loves that train. Especially when it comes through during service, I'm going, "Yes! Louder!"

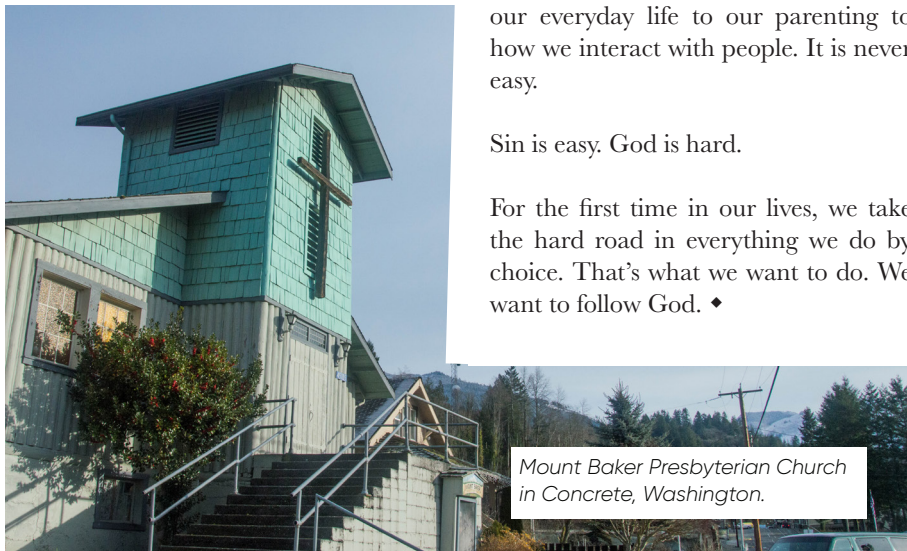
I decided to take a step further and do something that I'd never done before. I decided to trust people. I decided to let people love me. And I decided to listen to people who knew better than I did. That's when I had my first interaction with Alan. He said, "If you're going to continue to stay here, we have to give you a drug test. We have to make sure you're clean. That was the first time I



heard the voice of the enemy. Alan and Julio both gave me the drug test and as they're waiting for the results on the strip to come back, I heard the enemy tell me, "You know it's going to come up dirty," even though I hadn't used. The lie I wanted to tell myself and listen to was that I needed to run away. Just as I was about to go inside and grab my stuff, Julio came running out and gave me this giant hug, and said, "You passed, bro!" I said, "Did you have a doubt?" That was the start of this new life. That was the start of this new foundation, the start of God doing something that was above all of us—more than we could ever understand. Over the last four years, Danielle and I have continued to seek Jesus in everything that we do from our everyday life to our parenting to how we interact with people. It is never easy.

Sin is easy. God is hard.

For the first time in our lives, we take the hard road in everything we do by choice. That's what we want to do. We want to follow God. ♦



Mount Baker Presbyterian Church in Concrete, Washington.

# THE CONTINUED WORK OF LIBERATION:

## Emily Wilkes

*Emily is a full-time volunteer staff from South Africa. She's involved in Women's Pastoral Advocacy, Jail Ministry, and Sunday Worshipping Community.*

I come from a country with a dark history of legislated racial segregation called apartheid. South Africa was divided into categories of 'whites' and 'non-whites' and the government sought to separate those categories in any way possible. Everywhere! The areas in which people lived, beaches, restrooms, and even benches were classified for exclusive use by skin color. It was a system that allowed—even encouraged—hatred between fellow countrymen. It was evil to its very core.

I've been thinking about my country's history, not as a direct comparison to

what I see here in Washington, but because I am reminded that liberation is both a moment and a life-long process. South Africa was set free from apartheid in the early 1990s, but the devastating effects are still being felt today. In the same way, drugs, alcohol, homelessness, and incarceration leave marks on people's lives that don't immediately disappear in a day.

I'm new to Tierra Nueva's ministry. I have been soaking in the life stories of your people here. I met ladies in the jail who shared about how hopeful they are for when they get out, that their lives will be different. One woman seemed to be realizing that she may have to give up her entire support network of friends and family on the outside if she wanted to stay clean. The weight of that sacrifice was so evident when she spoke. She seemed to understand deeply that



complete freedom from the addiction that had bound her would take constant diligence and immense strength. But I have also met people like Danielle and Kevin Riley who are now living in beautiful freedom. I hear stories about their past addictions and jail stints, but the couple that I work with today are nothing like their history would dictate. They have an inspiring marriage, are fantastic parents, and are returning to the haunts of their previous lives to bring others through as well. The common thread that runs through all of it though is that I see God's hand at work. I see him offering hope and life to the lady in jail who desperately wanted change, I hear how God moved in moments and through processes in the

Rileys, and I experience God renewing my own strength when I feel like I don't know what to do, or how to love people like he does. Back home, I see that as God draws people to himself: he calls us to love those around us with his love and unconditional acceptance. In that way, God is at work uniting divisions and challenging roots of discrimination in our hearts. God is the master of dramatic life changing moments, but he also gives us continued grace and guidance to persevere while we learn to truly live in freedom. ♦

For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.  
Galatians 5:1



# OUR RENEWED VISION: Bob Ekblad

Tierra Nueva is a shepherding ministry that seeks to train and mobilize shepherds who seek after lost sheep until they are found, bringing them back to secure “home” settings where their return is celebrated amongst friends.

The prophet Ezekiel focuses on lost sheep and the need for shepherds. Gracie and I have been ruminating on those scriptures since our Honduras days in 1982, when we unwittingly began Tierra Nueva.

Ezekiel's strong words reproaching the self-focusing shepherds of Israel are followed by this passage.

“Those who are sickly you have not strengthened, the diseased you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up, the scattered you have not brought back, nor have you sought for the lost; but with force and with severity you have dominated them. They were scattered for lack of a shepherd, and they became food for every beast of the field and were scattered. My flock wandered through all the mountains and on every high hill; my flock was scattered over all the surface of the earth, and there was no one to search or seek for them.” (Ezekiel 34:4-6 NASB)

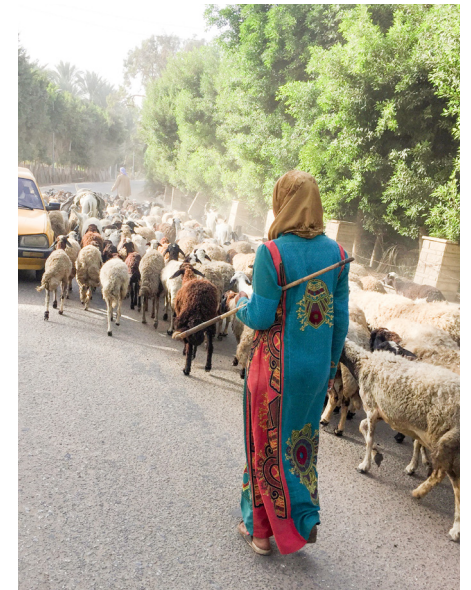
Then and today, we have firsthand witness of systemic neglect of the poor in Honduras—visible now in the massive exodus; migrants in desperate search of refuge.

Here in our own country, we witness harsh treatment of immigrant workers, severe sentences and fines for the incarcerated, and inadequate infrastructure for the addicted. We are inspired by

the Lord's leadership in pursuit of the excluded, visible in the next part of the chapter:

“For thus says the Lord God, ‘Behold, I myself will search for my sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will care for my sheep and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered on a cloudy and gloomy day.’” (Ezekiel 34:11-12 NASB)

The Lord will “bring them back,” “gather them,” and “feed them in a







good pasture,” and “they will lie down on good grazing ground and feed in rich pasture.” (34:13-14) Psalm 23 fills out God’s shepherding ministry even further.

We see that Jesus himself identifies fully with this movement when he says, “I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” (John 10:11 NASB)

“Seeing the people, [Jesus] felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beg the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest.’” (Matthew 9:36-38 NASB) When Jesus is critiqued by religious leaders for eating with tax collectors and sinners, he tells the parable of a shepherd who leaves the 99 in the open field and goes after the lost sheep. Caring for the many who are already gathered is not an excuse to neglect the one who has wandered off.

We seek after today’s equivalents of

“lost sheep” through our regular ministry in the jails, migrant labor camps, low-income housing units, the streets of Burlington, and the unnoticed spaces of Skagit County.

We look to the shepherd in Ezekiel and in Jesus’ parable: gathering, feeding and bringing to rest, celebrating returns.

“When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’” (Luke 15:5-6)

The shepherd finds the lost sheep and carries her on his shoulders—making sure she feels secure and protected. Raising up disciples of Jesus involves building trust through building relationships. The shepherd doesn’t correct the sheep, but rejoices instead. The shepherd calls together his friends and neighbors, inviting them to celebrate the sheep that was found.

In this season, we are moving to more fully implement this vision. Our ministries serve as flocks of friendship; people gather around Jesus—the master Good Shepherd.

We’re growing in our inter-ministry collaboration. We draw from weekly staff prayer, on-site training with The People’s Seminary, and pastoral advocacy. We continually equip and strengthen shepherds who are adept at seeking, finding, and gathering people affected

by incarceration, addiction, and immigration.

“In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” ♦





# FORGIVENESS SETS the CAPTIVES FREE:

Mike Neelley

**Listen to this article on  
the Tierra Nueva Podcast.**

**Mike and Alvin discuss the  
mechanics of systemic  
forgiveness and reconciliation.**

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

When Jesus began his ministry, he referred to this passage from Isaiah 61 (Luke 4:18-19) as his mission statement. This is what Jesus was about. As followers of Jesus at Tierra Nueva, that makes this our mission statement as well.

We have seen Jesus set people free from many forms of oppression. One of the most powerful ways that we regularly see is when people forgive those who have wronged them. We know forgiveness is challenging to practice because we've been wounded and it can feel like forgiving is saying what happened to us was okay. But forgiveness takes sin very seriously and is the only way of fully acknowledging it for what it is.

Jesus tells us in Matthew 18 that when we refuse to forgive, we are handed over to torturers. The act of forgiveness sets the prisoner free, and we often realize that we ourselves are the prisoner.

I once prayed with Casey\*, a young man with deep, uncontrollable anger issues. It caused him to be violent against his family. Through much courage and aching vulnerability, he told me about growing up amidst his father's regular violence toward him and his siblings.

*\*Casey is not  
his real name.*

I asked, "Have you been able to forgive him?"

He hesitated. "Yes, I think so."

I told him that in forgiveness we go in our hearts, take the other person to court with Jesus, read our list of charges against them while making no excuses for their actions. In our hearts, we tell this person how their actions affected us. This is important because it moves forgiveness from our heads to our hearts. Once we've done this, through faith and as an act of our will, we are able to forgive them for what they've done to us. Doing so frees us from carrying the burden of carrying sin because we hand the offender over to Jesus.

He looked at me and said, "I don't think I've done that."

So we prayed together. And as he let himself name the violence he received, he wept and was able to forgive his dad. The oppression of unforgiveness that fueled his anger was lifted. Jesus set him free and transformed his relationships. ♦



*A prayer tunnel for reconciliation, liberation, and forgiveness at Street Church in Vancouver, BC. The People's Seminary hosted Transformational Ministry for People on the Margins this past October.*

# THE ENJAMBED CAPTIVE:

Matt  
Malyon

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**Listen to this article on  
the [Tierra Nueva Podcast](#).**

**Also, hear student writing and  
updates on [The Underground  
Writing Podcast](#).**

I've said this many times: almost all of our students are in tightly confined spaces. This is often literally true, as with our incarcerated students. For other students, the entrapment is more figurative and describes various emotional or physical challenges. Some of our students embody a space which contains both the literal and figurative.

I've also said something like this before, and it remains true: Underground Writing uses creative writing as a way to free student voices from captivity.

During a recent workshop with incarcerated adults, I asked students to write a response to a poem by the late great Palestinian poet, Mahmoud Darwish. Darwish's poem, "And We Love Life" has a repeating line that appears throughout the poem:

*We love life if we find a way to it.*

I'd asked the students to respond to the poem, particularly this repeated line, in a way that was meaningful to them—with one small requirement. "Try to imagine yourself 5-10 years from now. Things have truly worked out in the best possible way, in a way you're almost scared to hope will occur. What's it like in that space? What do things look like? How do you feel?"

A number of students shared summaries of what they'd written in response. One student produced a poem. Something he said instantly resonated. "I was broken and

thought it was all over, but it's not true. There's more." Many of the students in the classroom nodded their heads and muttered, "Ain't that true."

Something resonated for me as well. I fixated on the line, or what I had heard as two lines.

"I love that line," I said, "where you talk about things being over. Here's how I heard it."

*I was broken and thought it was all  
over but it's not true. There's more.*

I continued, "What I love about it is that the reader/listener gets to the end of the line and it seems, if only for a second, that things are resolved. Things are over. But they're not. And as you move to the next line the thought is extended, revised, changed,"

*...but that's not true. There's more.*

The students seemed intrigued, seemed to be following where I was leading them.

"In poetry," I said, "this spill-over, the carrying-over-of sense or grammatical construction, is called enjambment. What's so great about it here is that the enjambment is mirroring what's being said."

A few students nodded their heads.

"The line isn't over, and neither is your life," I said, looking directly at the student who wrote the poem. He pounded his hand on the table and smiled in affirmation.

"True," he said.

This is a realization that was facilitated by the intersection of literature, self-expression, and creative writing. It was a sort of jailbreak, as it were—a release. Through the grace-filled mystery of writing, we continue to see voices freed from places of literal and figurative captivity. We've seen it happen time and



again in our weekly, bi-weekly, and monthly creative writing workshops.

This year we launched our fifth site: a workshop situated in the Skagit County Community Justice Center—our county’s new jail. This site meets weekly, alternating between workshops for women and men. We currently have six Teaching Writers, a creative writing mentorship for incarcerated folks called “re/vision,” a brief bi-weekly podcast—The Underground Writing Podcast—and we are working on two anthologies: our first all-sites student writing anthology, and a separate anthology with our Migrant Leaders Club site. The first of these anthologies—What No One Ever Tells You—is scheduled for release in December 2018. It was recently honored by (and funded through) a grant from the Washington State Arts Commission. What No One Ever Tells You can be ordered via our website.

As we mentioned in the last newsletter... for the long-term sustainability and growth of Underground Writing, the next chapter of our story is already being written: we are planning to launch as our own 501c3 Arts Non-Profit, based in Mount Vernon, Washington. The process has taken longer than expected, but the inaugural Board is now complete. We plan to file our paperwork with the Washington Secretary of State in the next few months.

We’re excited, of course, and ask for your prayers in this time of transition. And please, keep reading... keep following our story. We’d love to keep in touch with you.

If you have questions, please e-mail [matt@undergroundwriting.org](mailto:matt@undergroundwriting.org) and visit us online at [undergroundwriting.org](http://undergroundwriting.org). ♦



*A workshop at Skagit County Juvenile Detention, reading Etheridge Knight.*

## BOLD, SET FREE: Alvin Shim



*The People’s Seminary at Street Church in Vancouver, along with First Nations Bible College, 24-7 Prayer, students from Regent College, Jacob’s Well, and others.*

The picture above and from page 14 were taken in October of this year at a Certificate Training for Ministry at the Margins (The People’s Seminary) in Vancouver. It was hosted by Street Church, located on Hastings and Main. The church was flanked by an overflowing safe-injection site and a needle-exchange site—both wildly busy. Hundreds of people dwell in ragged tents, on cardboard beds, and alongside overflowing shopping carts. It’s staggering and scary to witness.

After several hours of lively discussion on topics like HEARING GOD FOR LIBERATION AND MISSION and FACILITATING DIALOGICAL BIBLE STUDY, I found myself walking the streets as often as I could, losing count of how many out-in-the-open IV injections I saw.

I once read an article by an atheist philanthropist advocating the merits of Christianity to the oppressed world.\* He saw how the inclusive nature of Christ (and, at its best, the church) pulls the broken-hearted into hope and self-ac-

tualization—he argued that the church, not money, is what’s most needed.

Walking those streets, I doubted the efficacy of the church—even a church like Tierra Nueva that is explicitly operating to gather the people on the margins. Why were we spending time singing songs or arguing about nationalism and divinity upstairs? There and here, and where you’re reading this, there are people dying on the streets right outside of our doors. The idea of harm reduction operations like safe injection and needle exchange is literally to keep people alive longer so they have a better chance to attempt recovery and rehabilitation. Let’s put our money and time and attention in housing, social workers, drug counselors, and job training instead.

At Tierra Nueva, we often remind each other that we can’t want recovery more than the people who need it. That’s why

\* Parris, Matthew. *As an atheist, I truly believe Africa needs God*. 2008.

we sing songs and study the Scriptures and gather diverse groups together in worship. Not only is it a more true reflection of God's Kingdom, but it's also a better way to equip each other to do the work. **Jesus teaches, demonstrates, empowers, and assigns us to do what he did.** In fact, he said that we would do greater things than he because he anoints us with the Holy Spirit to continue the work: healing the sick, raising the dead, breaking his children free from addiction, trauma, and anxiety.

We see the despair in Vancouver on our streets as well. We hear stories, often firsthand, of devastation. We also see healing and transformation, when we dare to believe it is possible.

All of the above doesn't merely help us do the work of meeting God's people on the streets; all of the above is the work. If you're reading this newsletter, you're probably somewhat aware of the work we do. Please join us—let's practice bold, Spirit-led witness in scary places. ♦

12 "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.

13 Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.  
John 14:12-13

6 Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

7 And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'

8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons.  
Matthew 10:6-8

8 What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?  
Micah 6:8

## Some of what Tierra Nueva does

### Worshipping Community

We gather on Sundays at 4:30 pm at our building to worship, share prayer, hear the message, share communion, and celebrate unity.

### Pastoral Advocacy

Staff walk alongside our community, providing pastoral support through spiritual, practical, holistic means. We practice unconditional love and patience, and often speak on behalf of the powerless.

### Jail Ministry

Our chaplains bring the Gospel to Skagit Community Justice Center and Munroe Correctional Facility, often finding/following those we know from Pastoral Advocacy and FSC.

### Family Support Center

Mondays and Wednesdays from 11:00 am to 4:00 pm. We open our building and resources (food, clothing, info on local food banks and organizations). Staff provide prayer and pastoral support.

### The People's Seminary

We train ministry workers to bring Good News where they are in God's Kingdom. This theological training addresses the illusory gap between the mainstream church and the marginalized.

### Gospels and Psalms Group

We gather every morning to read Gospels and every evening to read Psalms. Our community uses this regular community to provide support to each other. Pastor Julio anoints all who attend.

## Some of our Podcast episodes

Tierra Nueva and The Underground Writing Podcast publish new episodes regularly.

In addition to authors reading and discussing most of the articles in this newsletter, we explore specific themes in our work of mutual transformation.

Listen online, subscribe via your podcast app, and look for announcements on our Facebook and Instagram accounts.



Our jail ministry team shares stories from going into the Skagit County Community Justice Center. This episode features Kevin Riley, Mike Neelley, Gracie Ekblad, and Matt Malyon.

Published: Oct. 25, 2018



Raquel Martinez speaks to CTMM in Burlington. She shares her story of transformation from a life of trauma, poverty, gang violence, and fleeing from El Salvador.

Published: July 25, 2018



Matt speaks with UW Teaching Writer Jen Bradbury after the week-long intensive held at juvenile detention. They explored the young adult novel-in-poems *Long Way Down* by Jason Reynolds.

Published: Nov. 5, 2018



Pastor Mike Neelley brings the message on Sunday from 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 and Romans 12:2 exploring the idea that Christians have one allegiance, in body and mind.

Published: Oct. 28, 2018



## Three of our Core Values

1) **Hosting God's Presence.** We receive God's love and are immersed in the Holy Spirit when we pray, worship, contemplate Jesus, meditate on Scripture, and minister to each other.

2) **Connecting People with Jesus.** Hearing good news and receiving God's love inspires us to help others meet Jesus.

3) **Reading Scripture with Jesus** reflects our commitment to finding Good News in Scripture through prayerful study and dialogical interaction with the poor, each other, and the Saints that precede and surround us.

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