



A Report on the Inaugural

Word and World Mentoring Program

April 2011– April 2012

The opportunity to build authentic relationships between sisters and brothers in the next generation of Christians who are risking themselves for the sake of the gospel is a blessing beyond words.

Rose Berger



Word and World

Since 2001, Word and World has carved out alternative spaces for theological formation, bridging the gulf of the seminary, the sanctuary, and the street.. Through schools, retreats, and mentoring, Word and World draws faith-based activists from various movements into a community of discipleship focused on social & cultural analysis and biblical reflection for social transformation. Our goal is to encourage and strengthen disciples to become “radically biblical and biblically radical” in their work for peace and justice.

The cornerstones Word and World have been a series of ecumenical and inclusive schools that integrate the insights and experiences of “seminary, sanctuary, and street”: the first school in Greensboro, NC, focused on the legacies of the civil rights movement; the second in Tucson, AR, centered on the philosophies and practices of liberation theology; the third school in Philadelphia, PA highlighted the struggles of the peace movement; and the fourth school in Rochester, NY focused on the social, economic, and ecclesiastical changes engendered by faith-based feminist, womanist, mujerista, and LGBT movements. Subsequent schools in Memphis, TN and Tar Heel, NC drew on the tradition of faith and labor organizing for economic justice. The legacy of these “streams” informed the Mentoring Program curriculum.



Wood cut from a series illustrating the principles of Sabbath Economics by program participant Julia Jack Scott

Mentoring Program

The Word and World Mentoring Program put motivated, passionate 22-30- year-olds with a thirst for justice and a hunger for formation in conversation with some of the most influential and committed radical theologians and activist-scholars of our day. This year-long course of study and reflection was one answer to what lay theologian William Stringfellow might have called a vocational question—namely, in the face of globalization, political division, environmental degradation, and a culture of violence, *what is theological education for?* While there are many theology programs which offer credentials for careers in the academy or institutional church, few options equip everyday disciples for the ongoing work of living an alternative vision of community, downward mobility, reconciliation, and social transformation. The Word and World Mentoring Program addresses the need for people engaged in movements for social transformation- (“the Movement”),- to be sustained by Scripture studies, critical reflection, and the history of struggles for change.

"I can hardly believe it: Going on four decades ago, as a theology student in NY, I was drawn into a series of gatherings around bible study and direct action summarily called "the underground seminary," (not Bonhoeffer's Finkenwald, yet remembering and seeded by it). This thing put me in relation to movement theological mentors who remain for me to this day lodestars. It changed my life and fixed my vocation. It put my pen to paper, my voice to pulpit and street, my hand to movement community, and my ass in jail. It was among the predecessors (with freedom schools and base communities) of what would come to be "Word and World," the alternative seminary of sanctuary and streets.

Now for the last decade Word and World has been my own beloved community, a constellation of companions who have called the tune for my own work, year by year. Thinking we had run our course and fulfilled our intent, we gathered "one last time" to tell some stories, lift a cup, and put it to bed. But no. But yes. Another generation won't let it rest. We are revived, among other things, in a mentoring program conceived from the bottom up. On a raveling rope, which is to say on pure grace, we are raising the sails once again."

-Bill Wylie-Kellermann



Woodcuts from a series illustrating the principles of Sabbath Economics by mentee Julia Jack Scott



"Maybe what you really want is to talk with people who flooded the streets and filled the jails for the simple right to eat at a lunch counter. You want to learn about the training and strategy that lead to that moment, and talk to those same folks who continue to organize 40 years later. Maybe you really want to study with people who can put that question to you, "how do you read," to help you locate yourself on the map of privilege, to help you read through the lies of racism, hetero/sexism, materialism, militarism. You want scholars of scripture who can interpret the old stories of life on the "business end" of Empire, a history told by the "losers" (the ones, as it happens, who shall inherit the earth). You want to read the books these mentors have written and the ones that helped them write their lives. You want the strongest leaves on your tree to show you how they've held fast through

government shake downs, through economic drought, through watching the best fall around them. You want to know what keeps them going, so you can keep going, so maybe the ones who come after can keep going too."



- Kate Foran, Hartford, CT

Retreat #1: Jeanie Wylie Community

Detroit, MI

April 2011

Seventeen talented, vibrant, and enthusiastic activists gathered from around the country to begin the Mentoring Program, along with the six mentors and the W&W Board. On the first night, we gathered at a nearby community space to create an altar on which everyone placed objects and shared stories. Word and World fellow travelers Jim Perkinson and Lily Mendoza joined us for the evening, and in true Word and World style, Jim graced us with his amazing poetry.



On Saturday we unpacked the nuts and bolts of the mentoring program. Participants chose a variety of work projects that represent part of their give-back to Word and World, ushering into the organization new life and energy. . On Sunday, we spent the morning at St. Peter's Church (where Bill Wylie-Kellerman pastors). The morning included a Bible study led by Mike Boucher (and Theresa Tensuan from a distance) on one of the resurrection accounts through a restorative justice lens. Our day culminated in a beautiful worship celebration as we joined the St. Peter's Community for their Sunday service. One of our mentors, Laurel Dykstra, gave an amazing sermon that brought together the weekend's themes.



Friday began with a Bible study on restorative justice led by mentors, Ched Myers and Elaine Enns. We broke open the text of Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus as a story of restorative justice. This theme became the lens for our time together, as we had all read Ched and Elaine's, *Ambassadors of Reconciliation Vol. I and II* in preparation for the retreat. We then immersed ourselves in our locality, and heard from Bill Wylie-Kellerman on Detroit history and current events. The group was then joined by Ms. Freda Sampson of the [Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion](#) and we heard about the efforts towards truth and reconciliation related to racial segregation in housing in Detroit. Our day continued with visits to a number of local sites (for example, we explored the subversive themes of the Diego Riveira Detroit Indusy Murals and visited the Catherine Ferguson Academy, an alternative high school for young mothers complete with a working farm.



Retreat #2: Center for the Bible and Social Justice

Stony Point Center, NY

October 2011

The second Mentoring Retreat included Bible study, ritual & prayer, and reflection sessions organized by program participants Kara Bender and Tevyn East. Building our community altar, bringing our joys and sorrows into the circle, and exploring our guiding texts *Sister Outsider* and *An Ethic For Christians* brought opportunities for deep personal and political reflection. After large group discussions on the shared reading, participants and mentors organized themselves into smaller curriculum groups that would shape the rest of the year's study. (see page 7)



The retreat coincided with the opening of the *Center and Library for the Bible and Social Justice* at Stony Point Center in New York, an event which included panel discussions with biblical scholars (and mentors to some of the mentors) Drs. Norman Gottwald, Herman Waetjean, and Bob Elliot. The idea for the Center & Library was born years ago when Dr. Gottwald, inspired by W&W, decided his vast collection should be accessible to movement scholars.

The weekend also celebrated the release of the anthology *Liberating Biblical Justice*, edited by mentors Ched Myers and Laurel Dykstra. The collection of readings and images explores how the Bible informs our reading of political movements and vice versa—a core commitment of W&W.



Our Saturday evening public event featured rousing performances of music and poetry, including special guests Charlie King and (name of Jazz pianist???). Tevyn East presented "Blood on the Cedars," a combination of dance and spoken word which explored themes from Ched Myers and Jim Perkinson's work on the cedars as a Biblical symbol of ecological destruction by Empire. The group picked up on the symbolism by planting a tree at Stony Point (right) and by keeping a tree sculpture at the center of our circles as a reminder of our relationship to the Tree of Life (above).



Retreat #3: Center for Environmental Transformation

Camden, NJ

April 2012

The third retreat picked up the themes of eco-justice we touched on during the second retreat. With its commitment to the marginalized community and exploited land of Camden, the Center for Environmental Transformation set the context for exploring and articulating a theology of environmental justice. In keeping with the pedagogical traditions of W&W schools, our site visits to gardens, rain swales, greenhouses and murals grounded our discussions.

During the final evening of the retreat, participants shared the projects they had been working on throughout the year (see pages 10-11). The result was an inspiring array of “gifts to the movement,” representing the talent, hard work, and commitment of this dynamic group. The weekend also offered spaces for evaluation of the program and the commissioning of participants and mentors. Each mentor called forth his or her mentees and offered a blessing in a moving closing ritual, and each participant lifted up in gratitude the individuals who shaped their year.



“The three retreats helped to capture the essence of Word & World’s mission to bring together the seminary, the sanctuary, and the streets. Connecting and learning from elders and activists who were doing the hard work of pairing theology and justice captured my imagination and gave me new ideas of what could be done in my own context. The re-greening of industrial, left-behind cities, and the reconciliation of inter-faith groups, gave us glimpses of God’s people reclaiming what empire had wrenched apart. “

- Kara Bender, Chicago, IL



Overview of Program



Common Books

Ambassadors of Reconciliation, Vol 1 & 2

by Elaine Enns and Ched Myers

Home Economics by Wendell Berry

The Long Loneliness by Dorothy Day

The Black Christ by Kelly Douglass

Whole Life Economics by Barbara Brandt

Sister Outsider by Audre Lorde

An Ethic for Christians By William Stringfellow

Curriculum Groups

Writing Group: Biography as Theology

Restorative Justice

Mapping the Movement

Retreats

Jeanie Wylie Community, Detroit, MI

Stony Point Center, Stony Point, NY

Center for Environmental Transformation, Camden, NJ

Other Expectations

Monthly calls with Mentors and Full Group

Monthly written reflections on reading and personal journey shared with mentor.

Sweat Equity to Word and World: Fundraising, Database, Communication, and Programing Planning

The opportunity to build authentic relationships between sisters and brothers in the next generation of Christians who are risking themselves for the sake of the gospel is a blessing beyond words. When I think about the mentoring relationships—reading the “classics” that have influenced our faith journeys, writing our truths, carrying our tears, raging with our wounds, and creating beauty and truth out of our study and relationships. The community formed through Word and World mentors and mentees is like a young redwood forest. When I walk among this community I know I’m treading on a sacred inter-connected root system, amid Spirit-blown communication, and I revel in the wisdom of these “witness trees,” whose presence will be felt on the earth for hundreds of years.

- Rose Berger, Sojourners



Who were this Year's Mentors?



Rose Berger, Associate Editor and Poetry Editor for *Sojourners* magazine, is the author of *Who Killed Donte Manning? The Story of an American Neighborhood* and co-author of *Drawn By God: The History of the Society of Medical Mission Sisters 1968-1991*. Additionally, she writes a regular column on spirituality and justice for *Sojourners* magazine. Rose was a member and pastor of the Sojourners intentional Christian community in Washington, D.C., for 12 years. She has a veteran history in social justice activism, including educating and training groups in nonviolence, leading retreats in spirituality and justice, and preaching. Recently, she's been a leader in the faith communities response to global warming. A Roman Catholic, Rose was raised among the Franciscans and Catholic Workers on the West Coast and continues in that tradition today. She's a published poet with an MFA in poetry. She lives in the Columbia Heights neighborhood of Washington, D.C., with her flat-coat retriever Solea. www.rosemarieberger.com



Laurel Dykstra is a writer, preacher, activist, popular educator and a street performer with long-term commitment to working on issues of urban poverty. She is a Queer parent and member of an alternative family. Laurel is part of an interfaith collective that organizes anti-racist and anti-colonial education events for activists and scholars. Raised in the Anglican Church, Laurel studied at Episcopal Divinity School, spent more than ten years in the Catholic Worker and Radical Discipleship movements and was recently ordained a priest in the Anglican Diocese of New Westminster. Much of Laurel's scholarship focuses on the intersection of women, scripture and justice: *Set Them Free: The Other Side of Exodus* (Orbis, 2002), *Liberating Biblical Study* (with Ched Myers, Cascade, 2011). Laurel is editor of *Bury the Dead: Stories of Death and Dying, Resistance and Discipleship* (forthcoming Cascade, 2013) an anthology that includes contributions from several Word and World mentors and mentees.



Elaine Enns has been working in the field of restorative justice and conflict transformation since 1989 as mediator, consultant, educator and trainer. She provides mediation and consultation services for individuals, churches, schools, community organizations, criminal justice agencies and businesses, and travels throughout North America teaching and training. Born and raised in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Elaine currently lives in Oak View, CA, where she serves as the Program Director for the Restorative Justice Program with Bartimaeus Cooperative Ministries. Her most recent publication is "Ambassadors of Reconciliation: A New Testament Theology and Diverse Christian Practices of Restorative Justice and Peacemaking" with Ched Myers. (Orbis, 2009) She was a founding board member of Word and World.



Joyce Hollyday is a co-founder and co-pastor of Circle of Mercy, an ecumenical congregation in the mountains of western North Carolina celebrating the transformative power of the gospel. She has served as an Associate Conference Minister for the United Church of Christ and as an editor of *Sojourners* magazine, covering faith-based struggles for justice and peace in this country and around the globe. She was a founding member of Witness for Peace, a nonviolent prayerful and protective presence in Nicaragua's war zones, and an observer to South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation process. A prolific author, Joyce's most recent book is *On the Heels of Freedom*, an oral history of African-American UCC congregations in the South. She was a founding board member of Word and World.



Ched Myers has worked for more than 30 years with various peace and justice organizations and movements, including the Pacific Concerns Resource Center and the American Friends Service Committee. He currently codirects Bartimaeus Cooperative Ministries, an ecumenical organization promoting biblical literacy, church renewal and faith-based witness for justice. His publications include *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus* (Orbis, 1988), *Who Will Roll Away the Stone: Discipleship Queries for First World Christians* (Orbis, 1994), *The Biblical Vision of Sabbath Economics* (Tell the Word Press, 2001), and *Ambassadors of Reconciliation* (with Elaine Enns, Orbis, 2009). He was a founding board member of Word and World.



Theresa Tensuan-Eli teaches contemporary American literature and culture in the English Department and the Gender and Sexuality Studies Program at Haverford College, where she has fostered a number of conferences and collaborations on the interrelations between the arts and social change. She is the author of *Breaking the Frame: Comics and the art of social transformation* (forthcoming from the University Press of Mississippi) and is working with filmmaker Mary DiLullo on a documentary on Lynda Barry. She is currently at work on a new project on conversion narratives.

Learning the Word in the shell of the World

Written by Bill Wylie-Kellermann for his mentees at Final Retreat



Bill Wylie-Kellermann is a United Methodist pastor serving St Peter's Episcopal

Church and community activist in Detroit. His writing generally frames social and political issues through the theological lens of the "principalities and powers." For near four decades he has been a frequent participant in non-violent resistance actions and his book, *Seasons of Faith and Conscience* (Orbis, 1991/ Wipf & Stock, 2008) is a biblical and sociological articulation of "liturgical direct action." Having edited *Keeper of the Word: Selected Writings of William Stringfellow* (Eerdmans, 1994), he is just now resuming work, after a long hiatus, on a biography of Stringfellow. A graduate of Union Seminary in NYC, Bill currently teaches at Ecumenical Theological Seminary, Marygrove College MA in Social Justice, and for SCUPE (Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education in Chicago). He's a founding board member of W&W.

it is

new as an egg nested high in the cleft of a rock
teeming precariously, with life,
and ancient, even as the rock itself

fresh as manna glistening the ground
of a wilderness camp

convened in the company of ungulates, angels, and
wild beasts.

we travel light, learning this day
our daily bread – and nothing more

it is living and lucid in the school of Isaiah

harboring for decades, their mentor's edgy and
sighted poems

read, re-imagined, re-writ, performed as news

of imperial collapse at the turn of history's hope
and healing.

all as we stumble, hastening to keep up

shook by parables afoot, spun over shoulder

by a rabbi (this image of God) schooling us in the
Way by walking it

barely sitting to teach

till in the occupied temple court

with spies and cops hovering

practically the spot where Paul was busted

student of Gamaliel and Stephen

organizing a movement

one road, one household, one city at a time

tell me what eklesia looks like

this is what eklesia looks like

and so it looked to hermits and monks of invention

trekking off again to desert huts

jumping ship from empire's smooth and bellicose
arrangement

there to gather wry stories and sayings,

to ponder the sparest in a cup

what would clare or francis,

(gone begging in mendicancy) say?

taught by birds and sister moon to pray.

wending their way to Gandhi's ashram

clinging like warriors in a circle to truth

the deep thing worth dying for

Bonhoeffer had an appointment there

to re-learn the Sermon on the Mount

from a Hindu pilgrim with

salt of the earth and sea in hand.

but he was waylaid by events

necessitating a seminary underground

where he set the needle on a 78

of Negro Spirituals from Abyssinian

and translated them, guttural thick and precise,

as a stick in the spokes of a wheel –

find the cost of freedom schools buried in the
ground

how does it all come round again? rise again and
live?

it is in the silence broken by Audre, by Martin,

it's there in Daniel's poem telling Phil's hammer
stroke

or in Dorothy's little way

and Peter's agronomic university

it is in the soil, the fallen grain,

the hospitable loaf passed, teeming and ancient,

hand to hand to hand

in all we have, and all we are

being enough,

it is

Participants and their Final Projects

“Gifts to the Movement”



Tim Bastedo

Started a blog to share writings on Christianity, divinity, and human value including themes explored during the Mentoring Program. www.derechristianity.com



Kara Bender, *Reba Place, Chicago, IL*

Created and facilitated a process with individuals reflecting on their experience around race and racial identity; taking those stories, memories, feelings, and thoughts and translating them into dance. www.flickr.com/photos/wordandworlddanceproject/sets/



Matt Carson, *Occupy Wall Street, New York, NY*

Influenced by reading Stringfellow, Gottwald, and Dykstra while living with Occupy Wallstreet, he created a Spiritual Resistance Narrative Group for Occupiers to share stories of resistance from their particular faith traditions



Cara Curtis, *Philadelphia, PA*

Co-organized a ten week course at the Alternative Seminary focused on *Liberating Biblical Study: Scholarship, Art, and Action*. Put together a course study packet for others to use for study.



Tevyn East, *The Affording Hope Project*

Crafted a performance and liturgical piece called *Blood on the Cedars* which addresses the imperial conquest of nature and connects the feral theatricality of the Hebrew prophets to contemporary resistance movements. www.affordinghopeproject.org/about/new-work/blood-on-the-cedars



Charletta Erb, *Bartimeaus Cooperative, Oakland, CA*

Presented on ethics and the interplay of power with varied practices of conflict transformation and restorative justice, from mediation, to circle processes to advocacy. Led several conflict skills and restorative justice workshops with community members, Occupy Chicago and young adults in a criminal justice context. www.restorativejusticeevanston.com



Chris Grataski, *Ezekial's Guild, Lynchburg, VA*

Began work on a book which is an invitation to re-think the work of solidarity, resistance, liberation and spirituality from a thoroughgoing bioregional perspective.



From Kara Bender's Dance Project



Julie Jack-Scott, *Possibility Alliance*,

Created five woodcut prints around the theme of Sabbath Economics with personal and theological reflections. You can view her work throughout this report.



Bethany Loberg, *SHARE, El Salvador*

Put together the Romero Celebration Guide which was sent out to all of SHARE's sister organizations and contacts in the U.S. to help support them in planning commemorative events for the 32nd anniversary of Archbishop Romero's martyrdom. www.share-elsalvador.org/get-involved/learn-more/share-educational-materials



Danielle Miller, *Oceanside Lutheran Church in Oceanside, NY*

Deep to Deep is a three day experiential retreat using the stages of Restorative Justice to unpack our God image, focusing on those relational pieces that do violence to God, ourselves or others, and rebuilding a more holistic image of God. www.oceansidelutheran.com



Tim Nafziger, *Christian Peacemakers Team, Oakland, CA*

Taught a series of four classes on becoming an ally. Drawing from Bell Hook's book [Becoming an Ally](#) as well as the books studied in the Mentoring Program, he focused being an ally within a Christian context. www.cpt.org



Elizabeth Nicolas, *Philadelphia, PA*

Co-organized a ten week course at the Alternative Seminary focused on *Liberating Biblical Study: Scholarship, Art, and Action*. Put together a course study packet for others to use for study.



Melissa Shank Grataski, *Ezikial's Guild, Lynchburg, VA*

Put together a booklet on women's herbal health focusing on self-care, seasonal ritual, and planting one's own bioregional women's herb garden. The booklet weaves together prayer, ritual, and stories of women's healers throughout history.



Lydia Wylie-Kellermann, *Jeanie Wylie Community, Detroit, MI*

Wrote a piece entitled *Learning it in my Bones: Holding Her Body, Touching Nonviolence* about the experience of her mom dying at home in conversation with the culture's attitudes towards death and dying. To be published in [Bury the Dead: Stories of Death and Dying, Resistance and Discipleship](#). www.jeaniewyliecommunity.blogspot.com

Upcoming Word & World Events

2013

Carnival, September and October 2013

Lamentation Retreat, November 2013,

A celebration of Day of Dead and All Souls Days focused on our own grief and resistance to the culture's response to death and dying. Will be honoring the new release of Bury the Dead: Stories of Death and Dying, Resistance and Discipleship

Men's Retreat, November 2013, Stony Point, NY

The men's retreat will be a chance for men to explore their own commitments to activism, deepen their connections to each other in the work and connect more fully to movement work and its application to today's world.

Stringfellow Retreat, December 2013, Detroit, MI

A retreat around the voice and writings of William Stringfellow, theologian and advocate, which will allow him to speak in conversation with our own struggles in the present moment and in company with a new generation. Honoring the new release of, William Stringfellow Essential Writings: Living Humanly in the Midst of Empire.

2014

Word and World School, June 2014, Detroit MI

The Detroit 2014 school will look at the intersectionality of oppression and resurrection through the lens of the "land" beneath our feet. The land has been the witness to countless atrocities - against the earth, against native people, against people of color, against the poor (to name but a few). Yet it has also witnessed resistance to these oppressions and is witnessing, once again, efforts at resurrection and hope. World and World hopes to bring forth these stories in a way that reunites the seminary, sanctuary and streets through a 'church as movement' lens - restoring our fractured selves, communities and relations.

2015

Mentoring Program

Shortly after the School, we plan to do a second round of the Mentoring Program



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