

St. Matthew's Messenger – June 8, 2009

Prayer Corner – Deacon Paul Bellan-Boyer

“I call on you, O God, for you will answer me.” (Psalm 17:6)

Sometimes we may underestimate the ordinariness of prayer in a faithful life. If prayer is to become a regular part of our lives, we need to attend to some “mechanics” so that our prayer may flourish.

At St. Matthew's one of those mechanics is the congregation's prayer list, the way we as a congregation organize our prayers for specific people. Beginning after Pentecost, we will make some changes to the way we keep track of those for whom we pray.

To place a name on the prayer list, simply fill out a blue prayer card, and place it in the offering plate, or give it to the pastor, deacon, or assisting minister. You may also share a prayer request individually, but the card helps us make sure the prayer becomes part of the collective prayer of the church.

Individual prayer requests normally stay on the list for about a month, unless we know there is a special reason to maintain the prayer for a longer time. Only the first names of people are normally shared in public, except by special arrangement with the pastor or deacon.

Each Sunday we will read out loud about half the names in the prayers of the church. The full prayer list will be printed in the bulletin so that you may include them in your personal prayers.

“All the Saints Before Us...” -- Iconographer Lisa Bellan-Boyer



Seattle, Leader of the Suquamish and Duwamish People
(1786 - June 7, 1866)

Usually referred to as “Chief Seattle,” for whom the city on Puget Sound in Washington State is named, Seathl was an elder and leader of the Duwamish tribal confederacy. The day of his commemoration is June 7th.

According to the ELCA worship resource, Sundays and Seasons: “When the tribes were faced with an increase in white settlers, Seattle chose to live and work peacefully with them rather than engage in wars. After Seattle became a Roman Catholic, he began the practice of morning and evening prayer in the tribe, a practice that continued after his death.” At his baptism, Seathl took the name “Noah,” so that he is also listed in some historical sources as “Chief Noah Seattle.”

There is an enduring controversy around the historical facts, myths, and legends that claim a connection to Seathl, particularly surrounding the various versions of a speech he is said to have made in 1859 at a treaty negotiation held at Point Elliot, or Muckl-te-oh, on traditional Salish land claimed by Isaac Stevens, Governor of the Washington Territory, on behalf of the United States Government. The first version of this legendary speech was not published until nearly thirty years after the fact, in an article in the Seattle Sunday Star. There are many questions around the authenticity of the language in this speech. The second version of the speech, attributed to Chief Seattle, was actually written by screenwriter Ted Perry in 1971 for a film about ecology, titled: “Home,” that was produced by the Southern Baptist Convention.

Ted Perry was surprised, and spoke frequently about how he never intended for his fictional version of Chief Seattle’s speech to be taken as his literal words; but that did not stop the text of this 1971 version of the “Speech of Chief Seattle” from circulating all around the world, as the awareness of our ecological interdependence was beginning to dawn in the early 1970’s. Since then, it has been embraced by many tribal teachers as reflecting the traditional spirituality and worldview of indigenous, First Nations people, “authentic” in spirit, if not in historical fact. Others have complained about the widespread appropriation of this speech, on the grounds that it has reinforced racist stereotyping of the “noble savage,” using this image of Native Americans in commercial exploitations of the ecology movement.

While this, second version, speaks of the connectedness of humankind with creation and the Creator, and the consequences of forgetting this relatedness; the first version presents a darker interpretation of the brokenness and pain of an occupied community, the isolation of human groups, one from another, and the irreconcilable divisions that result. The words, despite the distance in time and translation, speak with contemporary immediacy and power; and with the timelessness of the prophetic voices in the Hebrew Bible.

The image above is from a late-19th century tinted postcard, sold as a souvenir of Seattle. It is in the collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian. This widely copied portrait is from the original photograph taken prior to 1866, by Thwaites, Photographer, in Portland, Oregon, complete with all the backdrop elements of a mid-19th century studio: Grecian urn and pedestal, carpet, curtain, etcetera. Note that, as a traditional elder, Seathl has chosen to close his eyes from the photographic image, to protect his spirit; in sharp contrast to the striking eyes depicted in his woven hat. The eyes, raven, and salmon symbols may have appeared on the original hat, but this is not clear in the photographic plate. In this image (along with the embellishments on the shirt) these elements are included as later interpretations, by the postcard painter, of these sacred symbols of Northwest Coast First People.

The following are brief excerpts of the speech attributed to Chief Seattle, first from the 1887 version, written by Dr. Henry A. Smith:

“Youth is impulsive. When our young men grow angry at some real or imaginary wrong, and disfigure their faces with black paint, it denotes that their hearts are black, and that they are often cruel and relentless, and our old men and old women are unable to restrain them. Thus it has ever been. Thus it was when the white man began to push our forefathers ever westward. But let us hope that the hostilities between us may never return. We would have everything to lose and nothing to gain. Revenge by young men is considered gain, even at the cost of their own lives, but old men who stay at home in times of war, and mothers who have sons to lose, know better.”

And this excerpt is from the second version of the speech, written in 1971:

“You must teach your children that the ground beneath their feet is the ashes of their grandfathers. So that they will respect the land, tell your children that the earth is rich with the lives of our kin. Teach your children what we have taught our children, that the earth is our Mother.

This we know, that the Earth is our mother. Whatever befalls the Earth befalls the sons of the earth. If they spit upon the ground, they spit upon themselves.

This we know - the Earth does not belong to man - man belongs to the Earth. This we know. All things are connected.

Whatever befalls the Earth - befalls the sons of the Earth. Man did not weave the web of life - he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.

Your destiny is a mystery to us, for we do not understand when the buffalo are all slaughtered, the wild horses tamed, the secret corners of the forest heavy with the scent of many men, and the view of the ripe hills blotted by talking wires. --The end of living and the beginning of survival.

When the last red man is vanished from the earth, and his memory is only the shadow of a cloud moving across the prairie, the shores and forests will still hold the spirits of my people. For they love this earth as the newborn loves its mother's heartbeat. So if we sell you our land, love it as we've loved it. Care for it as we've cared for it. Hold in your mind the memory of the land as it is when you take it. And with all your strength, with all your mind, with all your heart, preserve it for your children, and love it... as the Great Spirit loves us all.”

Coffee Hour - Stephanie Sheppard

I am urging members of the congregation to sign up for coffee hour on any given Sunday. The coffee hour sign up sheet is posted in Bavendam Hall above the microwave. Place your name and phone number on any date that is available and you will get a reminder call for that Sunday. Coffee hour consists of you bringing some healthy goodies, setting up on table, and after service is over, going downstairs to take out the milk and other beverages and distribute to the other members of the church. After it is all over, pack up everything and clean up.

A Story of Christian Kindness – Barbara Ervin

Recently, I asked Diane Kaese how I would go about starting a vegetable garden. I had never grown food in my backyard, and I thought it would be both fun and thrifty. However, Diane was not satisfied with giving me a few pointers. Before I could protest, she was driving me to the store to pick out vegetables to plant and to pick up all the materials I would need. She then came over and tilled my yard and planted a wide variety of vegetables and herbs. But it was not just Diane! The whole Kaese-Bakirtjy family was helping out. Reed, Gerry, and Wynn were helping out in my yard, and Dana and was at home making dinner for the family for when they got back. It made me feel so loved. All I did was ask one question, and without blinking an eye, the whole family came out to replant my backyard.

Upcoming Events

Sunday, June 7 – 10AM Worship begins for the Summer (Resume 11AM worship on Sept. 13)

Monday, June 8 – Council Meeting.

Pizza at 6:30, meeting at 7:00. All congregation members welcome to attend

Saturday, June 13 – Annual Picnic at Crossroads Retreat Camp.

See Lydia Brown to sign up. Please sign up so that we can arrange rides for everybody, but even if you forget to sign up, come and bring your friends.

Sunday, June 14 – Congregational Meeting following Worship to decide whether call Pastor Kristin Engstrom

Friday, June 26 – Family Game Night

Sunday, June 28 – Worship moves to Bavendam Hall for the Summer

Monday, July 13 – Council Meeting.

Pizza at 6:30, meeting at 7:00. All congregation members welcome to attend

Have Your Say!

To submit an article to The Messenger, St. Matthew's occasional newsletter, contact Paul Ellis, either in person, or via email: gupert.mcsportstien@gmail.com

Beginning next issue: A serialized history of St. Matthew's.