

# Session 1:

## Regional Characteristics of the Pacific Northwest

**GUIDING QUESTION** What are some unique characteristics of the Pacific Northwest bioregion?

**PREPARATION**

- ◆ **Handouts**
  - Salmon Nation Quiz (3 sides including answers)
  - More about the “Practicing Our Faith in Salmon Nation” Project (2 sides)
  - Chinook Blessing Litany (1 side)
  - Characteristics of the Pacific Northwest (2 sides)
- ◆ **Candle and other items for altar/worship area**

**GATHERING**  
10 minutes

As people enter, have them work on the Salmon Nation quiz. Keep the tone light. If people get too serious about the quiz, encourage them to work in groups, google answers on their iphones, use the answer key, etc. Depending on time, correct as a group or hand out the answer key. Ask people to share something they learned.

**WELCOME**  
5 minutes

Give an overview of the course and/or hand out sheet entitled “More About the Practicing Our Faith in Salmon Nation Project”.

**OPENING WORSHIP**  
5 minutes

- Light the candle in your worship area.
- Begin with a short prayer.
- Read Psalm 104:24-30.
- Say the Chinook Blessing Litany (attached).

**INTRODUCTIONS**  
5 minutes

Have participants introduce themselves and say how long they or their family have/has been in the Pacific Northwest.

**SMALL GROUP  
DISCUSSION**  
15 minutes

Share this thought from Timothy Egan (former New York Times correspondent and author of *The Good Rain: Across Time and Terrain in the Pacific Northwest*):

People immigrating to the Northwest have always left their pasts behind. ... Someone once told me that the Oregon Trail was the perfect metaphor for the Northwest because the further west you went, the more family heirlooms you threw off the wagon because you had to lighten the load. Finally, when you arrive in The Dalles, you say, “Do I really want to get rid of the organ?” — or the piano — or something really heavy that you have carried this far and you say, “What the hell!” and throw it off. You are left with nothing as you arrive in the Northwest. I think this is a good metaphor for how we are a region of newcomers. We are a region of people from somewhere else. There has always been that sense of escape. You come here and you are going to try something completely different. You are going to shed your past. — *from Salmon Nation Project discussion with Timothy Egan, June 5, 2006*

In groups of 3-4:

- **Share**  
some brief background about how they ended up the Northwest
- **Answer**  
What “heirlooms” did you or your family leave behind as you travelled west? These can be physical objects as well as values, affiliations, participation in religious or voluntary organizations, past history, culture, etc.
- **Discuss**  
how leaving heirlooms and the past behind might influence the religious landscape of the Northwest.

**LARGE GROUP  
TIME**  
15 minutes

Hand out “Characteristics of the Pacific Northwest” and ask class participants to skim. With the class make a list of Northwest characteristics, using the handout and participants’ knowledge of the Northwest.

If time, ask participants to brainstorm what they see as the gifts, yearnings and needs of this place. Record their thoughts and keep this list for future sessions. If time is short, give this question as homework. In future sessions, there will be a chance to reflect on how the church in the Northwest is or isn’t responding to these gifts, yearnings and needs.

**CLOSING PRAYER**  
5 minutes

Close with prayer, asking participants to name something about the Northwest for which they are thankful.

# Salmon Nation Quiz

(Or, Some Things I Didn't Know When I Lived In Southeast Iowa)

## Part One: True or False?

1. \_\_\_\_ Sir Francis Drake claimed to have visited the coast of Oregon in 1592, and said that he found there “the most vile, thicke and stinking fogges.” It is a land of “congealed rain,” he wrote.
2. \_\_\_\_ The men of Lewis and Clark’s Corps of Discovery didn’t mind eating dog meat, but they never did understand why the natives liked salmon.
3. \_\_\_\_ The life cycle of the salmon is: egg, alevin, fry, parr, smolt, mature salmon.
4. \_\_\_\_ There once were over 50 distinct tribes of the Pacific Northwest.
5. \_\_\_\_ The tribal leaders who participated in the Whitman massacre in 1847 did so in part because they believed that Rev. Whitman had intentionally poisoned their people with malaria and other diseases.
6. \_\_\_\_ The massacre of the Whitmans led to decades of pummeling, cheating, and hanging members of the Nez Perce, Cayuse, Walla Walla and Umatilla tribes by European-American settlers looking for land.
7. \_\_\_\_ 30% of the world’s salmon now come from hatcheries. A larger percentage come to our tables as farmed fish, raised and fed artificially in net pens their entire lives. Wild salmon, around 20% of all harvested salmon in 2008, come mostly from Alaska and British Columbia.
8. \_\_\_\_ Under threat of over-logging and elk slaughter, President Teddy Roosevelt declared large parts of the Olympic Peninsula to be a protected national monument. His cousin, FDR, visited Lake Quinalt and became enchanted, and named the area a national park.
9. \_\_\_\_ Mixed-race couples could not legally be married in Oregon from 1862 to 1951. (Some Roman Catholic bishops urged priests to marry such couples anyway, even if they had to go to jail.)
10. \_\_\_\_ The Ku Klux Klan in Oregon focused much of its energy intimidating and persecuting Catholics.
11. \_\_\_\_ During World War II, more than 150,000 Japanese and Americans of Japanese descent were sent to internment camps in the eastern regions of Washington and Idaho.

12. \_\_\_\_ The Pacific Northwest boasts more mega-churches, per capita, than any other region of the country.

## Part Two: Short Answers

13. Name five towns in the Pacific Northwest with a dwindling extraction-based (such as logging or mining) economy:
14. Name five mountains in the Pacific NW named for people who never visited here:
15. Only about 1 out of every \_\_\_\_ Northwesterners both identify and affiliate with a religious denomination.
16. The Boldt Decision was named after a conservative judge in Seattle, George W. Boldt, who decided in favor of tribes seeking fishing rights they claimed had been lost through generations of broken treaties by the US Government. This decision has been compared to Brown v. Board of Education for its significance to the native coastal communities of the NW. The Nisqually leader who led the tribes to this decision was named \_\_\_\_\_.
17. Trappers in the 19th century, in fierce competition for the much-desired furs from the Northwest, intentionally tried to trap this animal to extinction: \_\_\_\_\_.
18. Salmon Nation has an absence of a dominant religious denomination. The largest religious denomination in the Northwest is the \_\_\_\_\_ church, with just \_\_\_\_% of the population.
19. Anthropologists estimate that people have been meeting and trading at Celilo Falls for \_\_\_\_\_ years.
20. Circle five species of salmon:

Coho	Chum	Chinook	Mt. Hood
Grouper	Sockeye	Black	Columbia River
Largemouth	Rainbow	Pink	Copper River

# Salmon Nation Quiz

## Answer Key

**Part One** All statements are true.  
**True or False?**

**Part Two**  
**Short Answers**

13. Coos Bay, Sweet Home, Coquille, Vernonia, Roseburg, LaGrande, etc.
14. Hood, Jefferson, Washington, Adams, Rainier, St. Helens, etc.
15. 1 out of 3 Pacific Northwestern people don't identify or affiliate with any tradition, 1 out of 3 both identify and affiliate, and 1 out of 3 identify but don't affiliate (e.g. "I used to be Methodist, but I don't go any more").
16. Billy Frank. On February 12, 1974, Federal Judge George Boldt (1903-1984) issued an historic ruling reaffirming the rights of Washington's Indian tribes to fish in accustomed places. The "Boldt Decision" allocates 50% of the annual catch to treaty tribes, which enraged other fishermen. At the same time, Judge Boldt denied landless tribes – among them the Samish, Snoqualmie, Steilacoom and Duwamish – federal recognition and treaty rights.
17. Beaver were a prized commodity in the early 19th century, and Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company competed with each other by trying to trap the animal to extinction, calling it the "Fur Desert Policy" implemented in the eastern parts of Washington and Oregon.
18. The Roman Catholic church currently counts 11% of total population in NW as members. (Lutherans are about 2% or a little less of the total population).
19. 12,000 years ago people were gathering at Celilo Falls
20. Salmon (See book *Salmon Nation*): Coho or silver, Chinook or spring or Tyee or king, Chum or dog, Pink or Humpie, Sockeye or Red, and finally Kokanie, which are landlocked Sockeye.

**References** *Religion and Public Life in the Pacific Northwest: The None Zone*, edited by Patricia O'Connell Killen and Mark Silk, AltaMira Press, 2004.

*The Good Rain: Across Time and Terrain in the Pacific Northwest*, by Timoth Egan, Vintage Books of Random House, 1990.

*Salmon Nation: People, Fish and Our Common Home*, edited by Edward C. Wolk and Seth Zuckerman, published by Ecotrust, Portland, Oregon, 2003.

"'Ruining' the Rivers in the Snake Country: The Hudson's Bay Company's Fur Desert Policy," by Jennifer Ott in *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, Volume 104, No. 2, Summer 2003.

# More about the “Practicing Our Faith in Salmon Nation” project

Feel free to contact any member of the Salmon Nation group; contact information is on the reverse. Please see our website under development at [www.salmon.luther-house.org](http://www.salmon.luther-house.org) for more information and free downloads including a 7-week adult education class plan on congregational ministry in the Pacific NW; full bibliography of Pacific Northwest writers, artists, and resources; and more.

*The defining feature of religion in the Pacific Northwest is that most of the population is “unchurched.” Fewer people in Oregon, Washington, and Alaska affiliate with a religious institution than in any other region of the United States. More people here claim “none” when asked their religious identification ... and, unlike any other region, the single largest segment of the Pacific Northwest’s population is composed of those who identify with a religious tradition but have no affiliation with a religious community. – Patricia O’Connell Killen<sup>1</sup>*

*An anthropologist new to the Pacific Northwest would find more fish icons than crucifixes. – Timothy Egan<sup>2</sup>*

*Wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish, once these waters reach there. It will become fresh; and everything will live where the river goes.” – Ezekiel 47:9*

## About the name “Salmon Nation”:

The Pacific Northwest has been known by a number of names from the time of its first inhabitants, the indigenous tribes who greeted Lewis and Clark in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, to the present. In the 1970’s and 80’s, novelist Ernest Callenbach and journalist Joel Garreau referred to it as “Ecotopia.” More recently, business leaders and bio-regionalists have dubbed it “Cascadia.” Patricia Killen calls it the “None Zone.” Ecotrust, a regional non-profit whose mission is to promote environmental, economic, and social sustainability, has developed the concept of “Salmon Nation,” defined as “a place, a state of mind, and a gift.” We chose this term as a way of framing the region for the purposes of our project.

## About the Salmon Nation Project:

This project grew out of an endeavor by seven parish clergy and two religion professors to carry out our pastoral and teaching vocations more effectively in the beautiful but challenging environment of the Pacific Northwest. Our group was convened in March of 2004 by Dr. Patricia Killen and Dr. Samuel Torvend of Pacific Lutheran University’s Center for the Study of Religion, Cultures, and Society. In December of 2005, we received a generous grant allowing us to meet with some leading social, cultural, and artistic voices of our region for conversations about the place we all share in common.

<sup>1</sup> Patricia O’Connell Killen, “Patterns of the Past, Prospects for the Future: Religion in the None Zone” in *Religion and Public Life in the Pacific Northwest: The None Zone* (Religion by Region Series), edited by Patricia O’Connell Killen and Mark Silk, AltaMira Press, 2004, p.9.

<sup>2</sup> Timothy Egan, *The Winemaker’s Daughter*, Alfred A. Knopf, 2004, p.120.

Through our conversations, our goal was to:

- Listen to some leading voices of our regional culture to learn how they understand the place we live and how they make spiritual sense of it.
- Reflect theologically on what we hear in these conversations regarding ways in which to more effectively articulate the Christian faith – ways that are true to our tradition but also make sense in the context of the Pacific Northwest.
- Assist the people we serve to practice their faith in more meaningful ways, aware that they are likely to be a “minority” in demographic terms for the foreseeable future.
- Offer one another spiritual and collegial support as we seek new ways to more effectively practice ministry in a region with historically low religious identification and affiliation.

The primary questions that guided our project were:

1. What shapes the lived theological imagination of the people of the Pacific Northwest? How do people in this region of relatively low institutional religious affiliation make meaning?
2. What do Lutherans have to offer from our theological and liturgical tradition that might address the spiritual longings of the people who live here?

### **Project participants and contact information:**

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<sup>3</sup> Pr. Brian Brandt resigned from the project early due to time constraints.

## Chinook Blessing Litany : Remembering God is in all things

We call upon the earth, our planet home, with its beautiful depths and soaring heights, its vitality and abundance of life, and together we ask that it:

**Teach us, and show us the way.**

We call upon the mountains, the Cascades and the Olympics, the high green valleys and the meadows filled with wild flowers, the snows that never melt, the summits of intense silence, and we ask that they:

**Teach us, and show us the way.**

We call upon the waters that rim the earth, horizon to horizon,  
That flow in our rivers and streams, that fall upon our gardens and fields, and we ask that they:

**Teach us, and show us the way.**

We call upon the land which grows our food, the nurturing soil, the fertile fields, the abundant gardens and orchards, and we ask that they:

**Teach us, and show us the way.**

We call upon the forest, the great trees reaching strongly to the sky with earth in their roots and the heavens in their branches, the fir and the pine and the cedar, and we ask them to:

**Teach us, and show us the way.**

We call upon the creatures of the fields and the forest and the seas, our brothers and sisters the wolves and deer, the eagle and dove, the great whales and the dolphin, the beautiful Orca and salmon who share our Northwest home, and we ask them to:

**Teach us, and show us the way.**

We call upon all those who have lived on this earth, our ancestors and our friends, who dreamed the best for future generations, and upon whose lives our lives are built, and with thanksgiving, we call upon them to:

**Teach us, and show us the way.**

And lastly, we call upon all that we hold most sacred, the presence and power of the Great Spirit of love and truth which flows through all the universe...to be with us to:

**Teach us and show us the way.**

*Used with permission of the Whidbey Institute at Chinook*

# Characteristics of the Pacific Northwest

*Historian Gordon Dodds identifies some important themes that emerge from a study of the region's history. He writes from the perspective of Oregon, and while there are some important differences between Oregon and Washington, many of his insights apply to both states.*

1. The Pacific Northwest has always been characterized by a **proximity to nature**. Until very recently, the regional economy was based upon timber, fishing, mining, and the availability of cheap hydro-power. But from before the time of white settlement, nature has also been valuable to the region's people spiritually as well as economically and there has always been a strong environmental movement here.
2. **Pacific Northwesterners have not been very community-minded**. While the region's politics have been mostly "clean" and civil, community spirit has been lacking and political parties are weak. This can be seen in the popularity of tax limitation measures, low support for the arts and education (Washington is better than Oregon on this one), and a reluctance by people to commit time and dollars to charitable causes in comparison with other regions.
3. Part of this may be attributed to the region's reputation as the "**land of the second-chance**" from the Oregon trail to the depression to the great California migration of the 80s.
4. The region has been relatively **homogenous**. Most of the residents have been of northern European descent while others have been "uncomfortable" here. This is changing, but there is a mostly unacknowledged legacy of racism that is part of the region's history.
5. The Pacific Northwest has been a **colony** in every sense of the word.
  - Economic: Hudson's Bay Co., railroads, timber (we still export raw logs like a third-world country), the federal government, Wall Street, etc.
  - Political: The seniority system has greatly benefited our region. Historian Bernard Devoto once characterized Pacific Northwesterners' attitude toward the federal government as being not unlike an adolescent: "Leave us alone and give us more money!"
  - Cultural: Except for the Indians and a few writers, our region has not been very artistically innovative or distinctive. (This may be changing with the emergence of a regional group of writers).
  - Religious: We always get our "theological experts" from outside the region; with few exceptions, there haven't been any new "religions" that sprang from the region; the Pacific Northwest is a non-player in the ELCA.<sup>1</sup>
6. Despite a progressive reputation, the Pacific Northwest has tended to be **politically conservative/ libertarian**. People use progressive means to preserve the best of the past, e.g., the bottle-bill, land-use planning, growth management, etc. Dodds has called Oregonians "cheap progressives," i.e., they will vote for progressive legislation as long as it doesn't cost them anything.

## A few facts and figures<sup>2</sup>

- The Pacific Northwest has 1/5 of the nation's total land base yet 3.5% of the population.
- Fewer people per square mile live here than in any other region.
- 4 of 5 Northwesterners live in urban areas.
- While the nation's population tripled in the 20th century, the Pacific Northwest grew by only 10%.
- As a region we are whiter than the nation as a whole.
- The Pacific Northwest has the lowest level of illiteracy in the nation, a higher median household income, a lower percentage in poverty, yet the highest per capita hunger rate in the nation.
- The Pacific Northwest has persistently higher unemployment.

<sup>1</sup> Gordon Dodds, *The American Northwest: A History of Oregon and Washington*, The Forum Press, 1986, 353. [Taken from *Preaching the Gospel in Ecotopia*, by John Rosenberg, Feb. 28, 1998.]

<sup>2</sup> Patricia O'Connell Killen and Mark Silk, eds., *Religion and Public Life in the Pacific Northwest: The None Zone*, 2004, chapter 1 [Taken from class outline by Jim Norlie, spring 2008].