

Quick tips for doing ministry in the Pacific Northwest

(Suggested by "Practicing our Faith in Salmon Nation" project participants)

- a. Read *The None Zone*, ed. by Patricia O'Connell Killen and Mark Silk or *Sacred Landscapes in Tension*, ed. by Jan Shipps and Mark Silk (Religion & Public Life Series, AltaMira Press).
- b. Know that ministry is tough out here; don't take it personally.
- c. Don't assume that people – even the ones in your churches – know much about Lutheranism, the Bible, or Christianity.
- d. Pay attention to the wild salmon; they are a barometer of the health of this bio-region.
- e. Listen to and elicit the stories of this place – and of your congregation. Then proclaim them.
- f. People out here are thirsty for God, and our rich liturgical and theological tradition can help quench that thirst. Explain things, but don't water them down.
- g. Ministry can be lonely out here. Cultivate a community of colleagues for prayer, discussion and support. Meet regularly.
- h. Intentional, regular faith practices such as grace before meals, scripture reading, retreats, and service to others are important for you and your congregation to connect to God's presence. People may need basic instruction in how to do these.
- i. Although small in numbers, the church in these parts can and does make a difference in its service to and advocacy for "the least of these."
- j. Proclaim in this nature-loving place that God is in, with, and under all of creation.
- k. The Pacific Northwest is further along the post-Constantinian/post-Christian trajectory than other U.S. regions. Value this! We are on the cutting edge of ministry.
- l. Concern for creation and ecojustice can be meeting grounds for your members and those outside the congregation.
- m. Don't equate church attendance with faith.
- n. Offer a peaceful refuge, community, a connection to the earth, a strong moral center and opportunities to serve others.
- o. Ask questions. Listen.
- p. Let awareness of the natural world influence your worship practices.
- q. Take time to learn the history of your place. Read Timothy Egan's *The Good Rain*.
- r. Identify your watershed and ways to protect it.
- s. Take a hike – and let the natural world speak to your spirit.
- t. Free your preaching from theological jargon.
- u. The Pacific Northwest has a history of importing its culture from "back East." Cultivate and support uniquely Northwest cultural expressions in your congregation and beyond. Dig for them.