Coeur d’Alene clergy offer a perspective

It is time to offer another perspective, from inside the world of Christian faith.

Many Christians across this region of North Idaho take this coronavirus pandemic seriously. They share deep concern for people in our communities who have dedicated their lives to our health and well-being and put themselves at risk to care for those infected by this disease. Many have been vaccinated and are willing to accept a temporary burden of precautions that have been strongly recommended in order to reduce risk of the free spreading of the disease among us all as neighbors.

In Numbers 21, when the Israelites were plagued and bitten by poisonous snakes, God directed Moses to create a brazen serpent and to set it where all in the camp could see. Those who took the action to look upon the bronze serpent were healed and saved.

The letter of James (3:16-18) urges followers of Christ to show their faith in their actions by watching over how they speak, caring for people in need, and treating people with dignity. “The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.”

Anger has run hot these days, and can seem attractive for its passion, but anger can become its own seductive addiction, easily binding and warping our thoughts. As Proverbs guides us, “Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn their ways and get yourself ensnared” (Prov. 22:24-25).

As a group of pastors here in North Idaho, our meditations in scripture together have brought us repeatedly to how we are called to follow Jesus’ example by giving up our own selves for the sake of others. Jesus does not call his followers to defend their right to make all their own choices. He calls them to follow him, give up themselves and the things they hold dear, to love God, and love others at least as much as themselves.

We believe that the freedom we are given is not simply to do whatever we please. We are given freedom to rise in care, defense, healing, and empowerment of others around us.

As ministers of the Gospel, we honor and give thanks for healthcare workers and for researchers seeking to bring healing from this pandemic. We affirm calls from community leaders for vaccination. We pray continuously for children, teachers, and all those working in schools and colleges, and for those in protective services and in places where people shop and gather.

We take on the appropriate cautions of this time—vaccination, wearing masks in more public places—as a period of change in our lives so that we can take our part in helping protect others and reducing risk for others. We urge all to do the same, out of loving concern for others around you. We pray continuously for you, our neighbors, our nation and the world.

Fr. David Gortner, Pastor Bob Albing, Rev. Heather Seman, Rev. Seth Rumage, Pastor Dan Forsgren, Rev. Michael Grabenstein, Rev. Terese Fandel, Rev. Glenda Empsall, Rev. Grant MacLean, Rev. Alice Ling and Pastor Matthew Erickson wrote this letter which was published Oct. 6 in the Coeur d’Alene Press.

Margo Hill shares article ‘No Honor in Genocide’

Xest xl xalt. Greetings and good day. I am pleased to share that my article, “No Honor in Genocide: A Case Study of Street Renaming and Community Organizing in the Wake of National Decolonization Efforts,” was published in the Gonzaga Journal of Hate Studies.

The case study provides an example wherein Indigenous people have objected to a place-name that honors genocide and thus consequently employed strategies to change the name to one that reclaims the Indigenous narrative.

For over two centuries, white settlers had named towns and landforms as a function of the settler-colonial mentality, even though these places and landmarks already had established Indigenous names.

The Sp̓oq̓ínš have always lived on these lands and interacted with their environment. Their cultural knowledge and identity are part of the landscape.

Tribal communities worked with urban Native Americans, non-Native allies and the Spokane City Council to challenge oppressive structures and change a name that honored genocide.

The 42 organizations, including Spokane Falls Community College, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, The NATIVE Project, American Indian Community Center, as well as the Peace and Justice Action League, urged City Council members to ensure the expedient renaming of Fort George Wright Dr.

The lands of the Inland Northwest were not acquired in a peaceful manner, but rather as a brutal attack on Indigenous villages and families. As part of society’s movement toward social equity, we need to critically analyze the teaching of history and the power relations of place-naming.

The City of Spokane’s leadership recognized the sovereign territory and the importance of self-determination of renaming and thus asked the Spokane Tribe to lead the renaming process.

The Spokane City Council stayed courageous and challenged existing institutions of colonialism as well as questioned its own complicity in those institutions.

It maintained a pathway that led to decolonization, instead of using ideals of democracy to supplant Indigenous ways of knowing and doing. The City respected Indigenous understanding of Tribal territories.

The article is at https://doi.org/10.33972/jhs.200. Lem Lemsh sl lx laxt. Thank you my friends!

Margo Hill - Spokane Tribe of Indians