

MM Email Blue Sheet – A Travel Report

Celebrating Memories Between Sandwiches

The previous Blue Sheet was dedicated to my friend, Teddy Turner, who had died in the night prior to my writing. We would be in Spokane for his service on Saturday.

I sent the following email from Spokane this past Friday to my local group in Corvallis explaining still another trip out of town. My advisory committee (Jean) said it should have been sent to my total email list. So here's what I said:

Hi, all...

We're in Spokane at the moment. I wanted to talk to someone after just connecting to our motel Wi-Fi.

We left Corvallis at day-break Friday after a traditional early dawn coffee date with a longtime colleague of Jean's (Doug Nordyke) and drove through mostly dry weather through the Columbia River Gorge and up into Washington.

A fairly nice drive spelled by three cat-nap rest moments along the way. We arrived in Spokane at 3:30 where we spent the rest of the time catching up our energy losses and general road-weariness. As I write Jean is in the pool or spa or somewhere getting her bones back in order.

Why are we here? We always ask that question whenever we travel far places to be with people we have known for ages who are hurting in one way or another. We look at each other, lift a little toast, and say, "It's what we do."

We left our house back in order after still another hosting of an event — this time for former teachers of the last school where Jean taught over 10 years ago. An early Christmas party at our house has been a tradition they don't know how to break.

The last thing I did before leaving for Spokane (after getting my hair cut) was stop by the Old World Deli to ask Ted whether we're still doing Christmas Eve. He laughed and said, "Onward and Upward!" So, I guess that's still on my agenda.

We're here in Spokane to be present for the grand celebration for my friend, Teddy Turner. He has been a Christian Church minister all his career, but has been an active Episcopalian since retirement. He's added at least a dozen Episcopalians to our mailing list for some reason. Our first meeting was over peanut butter and jelly sandwiches that Jean and I provided over 50 years ago when he was pastor in Olympia. Our last meeting was over Tuna sandwiches that he and Clara Fern provided just a few weeks ago in Spokane. That's sacred communion in my book.

We are in Spokane to be present with Clara Fern and their two children and families. We'll show up at the service and be present. Sunday we will drive home. That's it.

We'll have to miss Ted and Diane's first anniversary party Saturday in Portland, but we can't be present for everything. So here we are. Time to wind ourselves down and rest up a bit for whatever tomorrow brings.

Jean and Art (from Spokane)

Report from Saturday

Teddy was a life-long Christian Church member and minister. On retirement he was drawn to the Episcopal tradition, in particular St John's Episcopal Cathedral in Spokane. He was happy there, having been what I call a "high church" Disciple all along. He liked liturgy and tradition which he planned for his personal funeral. He had "the works" with the full Book of Common Prayer funeral service. His children and grandchildren had parts in the liturgy. There was even a full choir. Quite dignified and solemn as Teddy wanted.

Teddy had reminded me years ago that one should not take the liturgy any more literally than one takes the Bible or words of hymns we sing. Good advice, but it's hard to recite the creeds and sing hymn words and listen to scriptures without the mind hanging up on the words. I remind myself that some of the words I hang up on offer life-lifting comfort to others.

We visited with folks afterward, meeting Teddy's admirers in that congregation as well as a number he had added to our Blue Sheet list. They wanted to remain on the list.

Only one other Christian Church clergy colleague of Teddy's (Jim Burford) was present with us for the funeral. We represented the denomination Teddy served in churches in Nampa, Olympia, Tempe and Vincennes.

It happened to be pretty good days for driving from Corvallis to Spokane. 950 miles round trip. Lots of time for us to remember the friendship that took place in those years between sandwiches.

Postscript

Our Advent candle representing "hope" burned out the other night. From bright warming glow, to darkness. Just like that. That's not an easy metaphor to live with. Many dear friends are among those who wonder if the "hope" candle will ever burn again. It's easy to light a candle and call it "hope," but not so easy to call hope to brighten a grief-darkened life. I come back to the "Whispering Hope" words... "*Hope with a gentle persuasion...*" Hope is in the world, not as a bright light you can flick on, but as a "*gentle persuasion,*" a tug toward life. At Christmas, once again, we light a candle for hope... anyway.

Art Morgan, December 10, 2012