

A NOTE ON "OPEN PRAYER"

The past two Wednesdays, during sung morning prayer, we have invited a time of open prayer and it was followed by sung prayers. Thus, three uses of "prayer" in one sentence. "Sung morning prayer" is shorthand for a prayer-form that, as anyone who has been here more than one year knows, can take many forms. "Open prayer" is a phrase that means different things to different people (more on that below). And many folks will have conceived "Bring you best to our worst" as a hymn rather than a "sung prayer", but such they are. All of which begs the question: what, then, is "prayer"?

Prayer has taken many and varied forms, and been understood in many and varied ways throughout Christian history. During the course of the coming weeks in Marquand, we will have the opportunity to join in body prayers, labyrinth-walking, meditation, creedal speech, litanies, formal petitions, beseeching, prayers of the people in manifold formats, extemporaneous prayer, extemporaneous responses to prayer, joys and concerns led various ways, short prayers, long prayers, collects, prayers of Great Thanksgiving, silent prayer, blessings-as-prayers, contemplation, and the prayer that Jesus taught us will be sung, chanted, and spoken in many languages and translations. All of them are "prayer" in one tradition or another.

"Open prayer" also varies. In some traditions it is a time of silence; in others it is a time when congregants simultaneously murmur in just-audible sounds but with no discernible words; in others it is a time when a few people speak their concerns at great length; and in yet others it is a time to call out names and concerns briefly.

When we invite open prayer in Marquand during Sung Morning Prayer on Wednesdays, we are inviting the last of these. You are invited to either say your prayers internally or to call them out so that we can all hear. If people are murmuring their prayers by making just-audible noise, then other people will not speak their prayers over that sound (because it feels like one speech is violating another). There will be other times when corporate murmuring is invited in Marquand, but during open prayer on Wednesdays what is needed is a clear petition, spoken at a volume that others can hear. This is because the community listens to and commits to pray with these spoken petitions, and many of us continue to pray for those things named on Wednesdays throughout the rest of the week.

The same applies to the prayer board outside chapel. If you haven't found it yet, it is to the right of the main chapel doors, and there are pens and pieces of paper on the table beneath it so that you can add your prayers. Many of us read these prayers on a daily basis and pray for the people and causes that are written there. You are encouraged both to write your own prayers and pray for those of others by using this community prayer board.

LOOKING AHEAD:

MARQUAND ARTIST IN RESIDENCE.

Next week, we will welcome in our midst an artist in residence for one week. Aileen Lambert was born in rural County Wexford, in the southeast of Ireland in 1975, where she now lives and works. Her practice spans video, performance and sound work, as well as participatory public art projects. Aileen's video, sound and live art practice is concerned with the relationship that the body has with its environment. Much of the work is concerned with a futile attempt to preserve something that is intangible, and uses voice, breath and shadow to explore archetypal notions of life and death and the passing of time.

Aileen is well known on the national art circuit in Ireland and in the past twelve months has presented three new bodies of video, performance and sound work. These include the solo show *Come and Gone* (Wexford Arts Centre, January '08, Droichead Arts Centre, Drogheda, January '09, and the Linenhall Arts Centre, Castlebar, in June '09). *Tide*, a solo show produced specially for Sirius Arts Centre, Cobh, in June '08, and *Within and Without*, another solo show for Triskel, Cork, in April 2009. She presents her work widely internationally and in the past two years has presented work at the *National Review of Live Art* (Glasgow), *Festival Miden* (Greece), *Infr'Action International Performance Art Festival* (France), *Transhift '08* (USA), *Art Video Screening* (Sweden), *Live Art Falmouth* (England), *Darklight Film Festival* (Dublin), *SWG Art Gallery* (Newfoundland), *7000IS* (Iceland), *Anti Festival of Contemporary Art* (Finland), *Tract* (England), *EV+A* (Limerick), *Tulca* (Galway), and *Out of Site* (Dublin).

During her time at Yale, Aileen will engage students in exploring the performance possibilities of using water which she has collected from a selection of holy wells near her home in Ireland. Aileen also plans to engage with students in developing a new live breath/vocal performance work for Marquand Chapel. If you'd like more information or if you would like to be in touch with Aileen in advance of her arrival, please visit www.aileenlambert.com.

A FEW NOTES ABOUT THE COMING WEEK IN CHAPEL:

MONDAY will be a liturgy for the Feast Day of St. Hildegard of Bingen. Many churches around the world honor this feast day for a truly remarkable woman in the history of the Christian church, about whom Teresa Berger, Professor of Liturgical Studies, who created and will lead today's service, has written. Hildegard's Day actually falls on September 17th but we are celebrating it today, which for many Christians is the Feast of the Holy Cross and therefore quite appropriate to a woman who bequeathed the church beautiful meditations upon the cross, because Kim and Reggie are coming on Thursday (see below). It is easy to find out the facts of Hildegard's life (use Wikipedia for starters). What may be more difficult is for those

from Christian traditions that do not honor the saints to understand why others do, or to enter into ecumenical worship with them on these days.

The first thing to think about is that, contrary to certain misconceptions, the Saint is not being prayed-to, as if they were another God (or they should not be, anyway). Prayers on saints days are always offered to God, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and in the name Christ, as they are on all other days. But on feast days, the saint is brought clearly to mind, and called upon, and imagined, as a means of enabling or helping the worshipper to make that prayer. Saints are thus seen as guides, as exemplars, as ones who have gone before us (the cloud of witnesses, perhaps) who, like us, sought to follow Jesus: role models, if you like.

Saints are also seen as *delightful*, pointing to the quality of *joy* that characterises the Christian way of life. Saints are, therefore, remembered not with essays or duties, but with *feast days* – fiestas, festivals, days to lift the spirits and remember that our calling is ultimately to give praise to God and that our lives would give God glory (and not to get too enmeshed solely in the difficulties of this life).

MONDAY NIGHT – the Gospel Choir will meet for its first rehearsal of the year (in chapel) and will sing during worship on Tuesday morning. All are welcome to come along at 7pm to join the fellowship of the Gospel Choir.

TUESDAY is led by the Committee for Spiritual Formation, whose Chairperson this year, John Hare, will offer the sermon. Dr. Hare is the Noah Porter Professor of Philosophical Theology at YDS and a composer of sacred music. This week, as he has in the past, in addition to sharing his gifts for preaching, Prof. Hare will also share his deep sense of and love for the place of poetry in Christian reflection. All are encouraged to come to reflect upon and commit to tending their own spiritual formation in the year ahead.

WEDNESDAY is Sung Morning Prayer, continuing the wonderful setting of global song. This week's reading will be the Sermon on the Mount which, following the lectionary, should have been last week, but dyslexia hit and so this week's gospel ("wisdom is vindicated by all her children") was read last week's by mistake. Ooops.

Patrick Evans writes: On **THURSDAY**, we welcome back Kim and Reggie Harris, who by now are old friends of the Marquand worshiping community. Kim is a Ph.D. candidate in liturgy at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, and she and Reggie have toured the world over the last three decades as musicians, worship leaders, and storytellers drawing on African and African-American traditions. They are active in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany, and are currently at work, with Roger Holland, on Mass settings based on the spirituals.

Centered on the lectionary reading for Thursday from 1 Timothy chapter 4, they will lead us in a service of storytelling and song with the theme "Watchwords for the Journey." Storytelling and song have long been important elements of African-

American worshipping communities, and we are blessed to be led in this way by Kim and Reggie this week. For more information about their work, please go to <http://www.kimandreggie.com>.



FRIDAY will be Holy Communion, using Lutheran texts and resources, and led by the Lutheran Student Group. Prof. Paul Stuehrenberg, PhD, will preach and the Rev. Callista Isabelle will preside. Paul is the Librarian here at YDS and Associate Professor (adjunct) of Theological Literature, and Callista is Associate Chaplain downtown in the Office of Religious Ministries at Yale. Both are pastors in the ELCA and both have led worship many times before in Marquand, where we welcome them back as leaders with the Lutheran student group this week.

Blessings on your week,
Siobhán Garrigan
(Dean of Chapel.)