

PREACH

the Word

Vol. 2 No. 6

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Professional Growth

The Commission on Worship launched this newsletter as part of an effort to provide opportunity for preachers in WELS to grow professionally. Each of the issues in volume two have had a single focus. The single focus of this issue will be on the broader purpose of this publication—professional growth.

Perhaps the biggest obstacle to a preacher's professional growth is the inexorable press for time. That is one of the reasons the decision was made to limit *Preach the Word* to four pages. We don't want it to end up on the pile of things to be read later, when there's time.

During the years that I served as a mission counselor for the California Mission Board, one busy mission congregation pastor who impressed me with his commitment to continuing professional growth was Pastor Steven Degner. So I turned to him with a request to share his thoughts about growing professionally in the preparation and delivery of sermons. His response follows. It was faxed to me during Holy Week.

I also asked James Westendorf and the Homiletics Department at the Seminary to provide a bibliography of recent publications, books, or articles, that a busy pastor might find helpful.

THANK YOU

With this issue, we conclude the second volume of *Preach the Word*. During these six issues, we have profited from the pulpit and classroom experience of our editor, Pastor Joel Gerlach.

What many of our readers may not know is that Pastor Gerlach spent the better part of his first year of retirement serving temporarily in Germany, New Jersey, and now in Kodiak, Alaska. (Did I miss one?) Somewhere between vacancies (or during them) he found time to help us hone our communication skills. He has also set for us a pattern of a fruitful and fulfilling retirement, as God gave him health. Wherever this finds you, Joel, thank you! And God's richest blessings!

In our next issue, we will welcome Pastor Victor Prange aboard and pray that our ascended Savior would bless his efforts to God's glory!

In his service and yours,
Wayne A. Laitinen
Managing Editor

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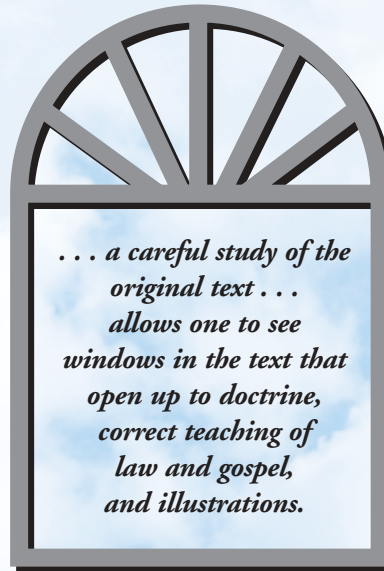
PREACH
the Word

A Busy Pastor Shares His Thoughts on Professional Growth

The foundation laid at the seminary was important. Professor Gerald Hoenecke helped us become well grounded in one method of researching and writing sermons. Rather than entering the ministry with a plethora of ways to deliver a sermon, we were given one basic plan that would serve us well if we honed our skills within that format.

While at the seminary, I was led into the green pastures of exegetical study by Professor Wilbert Gawrisch and his study of Psalms. That foundation has helped me to approach sermon preparation with a careful study of the original text and with careful attention to how the words in the text are used in other portions of Scripture. This allows one to see windows in the text that open up to doctrine, correct teaching of law and gospel, and illustrations.

Shortly after entering the ministry, I had the opportunity to photocopy books of sermons by Walter A. Maier of *The Lutheran Hour*. If help was needed for illustrations, or for ways to express a certain truth, or for development of delivery and dramatics, Maier was there to help take a sermon to the next level. For my 1999 Good Friday message,



I will revisit some of his Lenten sermons to strengthen parts of a sermon that was already entered into the computer.

While serving in Santa Barbara, I had the privilege of developing a close friendship with Pastor Al Wagner, premier pulpiter in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in the 1950's and founder of the ELS Wayfarer's Chapel in Ventura County. I listened to as many tapes of his sermons as possible. Always there was a wealth of illustrations. Wagner's sermons opened my eyes to see how important it is to have "windows" in every sermon and feathers for arrows, while faithfully preaching law and gospel.

About a year after entering the ministry, I purchased a full set of *Luther's Works*. My favorite volumes contain the sermons he delivered from the Gospel of John, especially the sermon on the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. This sermon serves as a touchstone for preaching the gospel. The harried herald will quickly be energized by spending time with Luther, especially his sermon on the Lamb from John 1:29.

A few years ago, the pastors in Southern California were treated to a presentation on preaching by Prof. John Jeske. Years of teaching homiletics at the sem were distilled into about six hours. It was vintage Jeske. Especially valuable was his in-depth discussion on preaching the law. I treasure that as a growth time for sermon work.

Paramount for every WELS pastor is the faithful preaching of law and gospel. The old adage that Walther's *Law and Gospel* be read every year applies even more as we preach the gospel in this postmodern era. I asked Allen Schroeder from Mesa, Ariz., what he does to maintain his professional growth in sermon work. Before I completed the sentence, he said, "I read Walther's *Law and Gospel* every year." His

"Guard against a desire to study the Scriptures merely to gain knowledge and understanding or even to be able to teach others. For I believe that you are not such a foolish student as to seek recognition or glory by this activity. Your aim must be clear and certain, for doing even this may conceal conceit and empty pride."—Luther in a letter to Spalatin.

firm conviction encouraged me to revisit this classic I've read through several times.

My growth in sermon work has further been nurtured by pastors in our district whom we have cherished for their ability to expound on a text and to bring out the treasures from that text, new and old. After hearing one of Professor David Valleskey's sermons, preached when he was still a member of our district in the late 70's, I vowed that I wanted to be able, with God's help, to faithfully bring out the truths of the text the way he did. Modeling other preachers helps us to lift our sermon work to new levels.

The computer has helped improve sermon work. A few years ago, I ordered a software program for deeper Bible study called "Bible Works" by Hermeneutika. This program aids the study of the Hebrew and Greek. It is especially useful for doing quick root searches in words to see how they are used in other parts of Scripture. If it is true that writing makes an exact man, then the word processor can help us hone our sermons. I can look back at the finished product and ask, "Where do I see the law?" and "Where do I see the gospel?" and "What do I need to change?"

Help for sermon work can come from the least expected places. My father, a dairy farmer, was not afraid to challenge my brother, Charlie, and me with the words, "I liked your sermon, but there was not enough in it for the kids." I cannot look at the final product without thinking of his words, and then looking for a place to bring in light for the kids. This demands constant effort and always challenges me.

Resources for Professional Growth

(Materials submitted by Pastor Silas Krueger and members of the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Homiletics Department)

There are many ways the preacher can grow in his craft, with his brothers or individually. The following is a list of some materials that preachers might consider for use either as individuals or in groups.

Journals

The seminary library presently subscribes to three journals on preaching. They are:

- *Preacher's Magazine**, Randall E. Denny, editor, published by Beacon Hill Press
- *Preaching (The Professional Journal for Preachers)**, Michael Duduit, editor, published by Preaching Resources, Inc.
- *Concordia Pulpit Resources (A Quarterly Journal for Preaching)**, Edwin J. Kolb, editor, published by CPH

The content of all three consists chiefly of sample sermons or sermon studies and articles on preaching and related topics. By far the most useful of the three for a confessional Lutheran preacher, not surprisingly, is *Concordia Pulpit Resources*. The *Concordia Journal*, coming out of Missouri's St. Louis seminary, is not a journal dealing only with preaching, but its January 1999 issue (Volume 25, #1) was devoted to preaching and contains some excellent articles.

Books

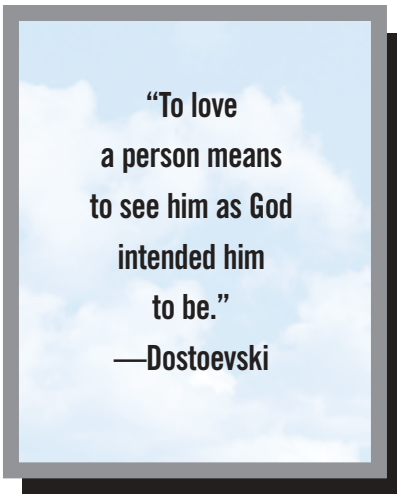
The following books are noted because they have been influential in advocating alternate modes of sermon presentation:

Inductive preaching

Preaching that seeks to reflect the

process the preacher goes through as he grapples with the text.

- *As One Without Authority** by Fred Craddock, Phillips, 1971
- *Inductive Preaching* and Learning to Preach Like Jesus* by Ralph and Gregg Lewis, Crossway Books, 1983, 1989



“To love
a person means
to see him as God
intended him
to be.”
—Dostoevski

Story preaching

- *Preaching the Story** by Edmund Steimle, Morris Niedenthal, and Charles Rice, Fortress Press, 1980
- *Thinking in Story, Preaching in a Post-Literate Age** by Richard Jensen, CSS Publishing Co., 1993

Narrative preaching

Preaching following the structure of narrative that includes discrepancy, conflict, reversal, resolution, and application.

- *Telling the Truth: The Gospel as Tragedy, Comedy, and Fairy Tale* by Frederick Buechner, Harper, 1977

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- *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form* by Eugene Lowry, John Knox Press, 1980

Phenomenological (“Moves”) preaching

Preaching approximating the “moves” of a conversation that naturally lead to a certain conclusion.

- *Homiletics: Moves and Structure** by David Buttrick, Fortress Press, 1987

Transconscious

(African-American) preaching

Preaching that focuses on the emotions and the intuition as much as on the mental. Emphasizes a celebrative note.

- *Celebration and Experience in Preaching* by Henry Mitchell, Abingdon Press, 1990
- *They Like to Never Quit Praisin’ God: The Role of Celebration in Preaching* by Frank Thomas, United Church Press, 1997

Literary forms and preaching

Preaching form that seeks to match the literary forms of the Biblical text.

- *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text**, by Sidney Greidanus, Eerdmanns, 1985
- *Preaching and the Literary Forms*

of the Bible, by Thomas Long, Fortress Press, 1989

- *The Sermon as Symphony: Preaching the Literary Forms of the Bible*, by Mike Graves, Judson Press, 1997

Conversational preaching

- *The Roundtable Pulpit: Where Leadership and Preaching Meet* by John McClure, Abingdon Press, 1989
- *Sharing the Word: Preaching in the Roundtable Church* by Lucy Atkinson Rose, John Knox Press, 1997.

Various members of the homiletics department found these publications interesting:

- *Preaching the Creative Gospel Creatively** by Frances Rossow, CPH, 1983
- *Preaching that Matters* by Stephen Farris, John Knox Press, 1998 (a book on analogies in texts and sermons)
- *The Foolishness of Preaching** by Robert Farrar Capon, Eerdmanns, 1998 (a series of lectures by the author delivered at Seabury-Western Theological Seminary in 1996)
- *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, edited by John MacArthur Jr., Word Publishing, 1992 (a series of articles on expository preaching

contributed by the faculty of The Master’s Seminary).

Summer Quarter courses and Pastors Institute presentations

The following were presented at the seminary either during Summer Quarter or at the Fall Pastors Institute in recent years, but are available in satellite form for presentation anywhere in the synod:

- *Lutheran Preaching in a Contemporary World* (also available on audiotape)
- *Preaching that Fosters Sanctification*
- *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*

James Westendorf prepared these presentations.

The members of the seminary homiletics department also stand ready to present workshops on homiletics whenever possible.

Please note the availability of the Preaching Consultant Program, being made available by the Preach the Word Committee of the Commission on Worship. It is the prayer of this committee that the use of preaching consultants and the videotapes of selected WELS preachers, soon to be distributed, will add to the available opportunities to hone homiletical skills.

* Available from the seminary library.

**“It’s important to put Hebrew, Greek and Latin in their proper place—
not, as Pilate did, at the head of the cross, but at the bottom of the cross,
in humble service to him who adorned it.”**

—Dr. Norman Madsen, former professor at Bethany Lutheran Seminary