Leading Worship

Session One – Lay Servant Path

Learning Goals

1. Understand the role of the lay servant as a leader in worship
2. Develop a working knowledge of the liturgical calendar and other resources for worship preparation including The UM Hymnal and The UM Book of Worship
3. To understand that each element of worship should focus on a cohesive theme, must draw the worshippers toward God in Jesus Christ, and should move them toward a response of discipleship

Lesson Outline

1. Welcome, devotion, and prayer
2. Remembering worship services
3. Basic Outline of a Worship Service
4. Planning a worship service
5. Examination of the Christian year

Lesson Plan

1. Welcome, Devotion, Prayer
   Welcome participants. Share a brief outline of the day. Share in a devotion that focuses on worship. Lead in prayer
2. Remembering Worship Services
   Ask participants to recall and make notes about the best worship service they ever participated, using the following questions:
   a. Where was it? When was it?
   b. What was your role in the service – congregational participant, choir member, worship leader, acolyte, usher?
   c. What made it memorable?

   Ask participants the same questions about the most disappointing worship service

   Divide into groups of two or three to discuss their reflections

3. Basic Outline of a Worship Service
   a. Key things to remind participants about worship
      i. It is a corporate activity
      ii. Worship is not a spectator sport, but designed for all to participate
iii. Our task in leading worship is to invite and enable each worshiper to participate in worship and praise to God, not to watch leaders go through the motions for them.

b. Explain the basic outline of a worship service: Entrance, Proclamation and Response, Thanksgiving and Communion, and Sending Forth. See The United Methodist Hymnal, page 2. Have the participants examine an order of worship from one of the churches. Where are these elements found?

4. Planning a Worship Service
   a. Have participants look through The UM Hymnal to familiarize themselves with it.
   b. Divide into groups of two or three. Give a theme for a Sunday service and have each group select hymns/songs, liturgies, Scripture readings for each section of the worship service.

5. Examination of the Christian Year
   a. Give each table group sheets of colored construction paper (white, red, green and purple) with the following labels at the top of the sheets:
      i. Advent (purple paper)
      ii. Christmas Season (white)
      iii. Christmas Day (white)
      iv. Epiphany of the Lord (white)
      v. Season after Epiphany (green)
      vi. Baptism of the Lord (white)
      vii. Lent (purple)
      viii. Ash Wednesday (purple)
      ix. Holy Thursday (purple)
      x. Easter Day (White)
      xi. Easter Season (white)
      xii. Day of Pentecost (red)
      xiii. Season after Pentecost, also called Ordinary Time (green)
      xiv. All Saints Day (white)
   b. Ask table groups to list on the paper as much information as possible about each season or day, including suggested invocations, prayers of confession, hymns, songs, and so forth. The UM Hymnal and The UM Book of Worship will be helpful for this exercise. These are to be posted on the wall for others to look and see what other groups have done.

Resources:
Certified Lay Minister Resource GBOD Discipleship Resources – 2008
The Special Days and Seasons of the Christian Year. Abingdon Press, 1998
Teaching

Session Two- Lay Servant Track

Learning goals:

1. The participants will understand how preaching and teaching are different and similar
2. The participants will identify characteristics of a good teacher
3. Two models of teaching will be described
4. A lesson plan will be drafted in groups

Lesson outline:

1. Recall how the participants learn best – lecture, hands-on experience, one on one, small group, reading, etc.
2. Guide the participants through distinguishing between preaching and teaching
3. List characteristics of a good teacher
4. Discuss two models of teaching – teaching for facts and teaching for faith
5. Have participants take a familiar Bible story and work out a lesson plan

Lesson plan:

1. Ask the participants to form pairs and recall a memory related to teaching from Sunday school, youth group, small group, etc. Then ask them how do they usually learn best – from someone lecturing, a hands on experience, one on one mentoring, a small group, reading, or other means.
2. Guide the group in a discussion about the common traits and differences between teaching and preaching
   a. Common traits:
      i. They have the same purpose or goal in mind: to help people grow in their relationship with God through Jesus Christ and to help them identify and live out their discipleship in the world
      ii. They have a commitment to their task
      iii. Passion for the gospel of Jesus Christ and desire to help people grow more like Christ every day.
      iv. Both are learners like those they are teaching/and preaching.
   b. Differences:
      i. The preacher usually determines what content will be and deals with content in the sermon. Teacher selects content but has ongoing interaction with students; the content may be redirected, or refocused. Preacher usually covers what he/she intends but teacher may get interrupted or drawn into a different direction and is unable to cover all the material.
ii. Preacher presents to a passive group. A teacher presents to an interactive group that has comments, questions, arguments, etc.

iii. The preacher and teacher are seen as the informed authority, but preachers are less likely to learn from the group because of lack of interaction. The teacher, on the other hand, will be more likely to learn because of interaction from other members.

3. Have participants make a list of what makes a good teacher. Ask how they fulfill these characteristics. You could even lead the discussion in best practices of teaching.

4. Lead a conversation about two models: teaching for facts and teaching for faith
   a. Teaching for facts: based on giving and receiving information. Teacher is the source and students are receivers. Mastery of facts, dates, and historical data is the goal. Also called teaching for information. Examples of this are learning the books of the Bible, names of disciples, number of plagues, etc.
   b. Teaching for faith: goal is to transform individuals as they grow into more Christ like disciples. Teacher is a guide rather than a source of information, and students contribute to the teacher's growth as the teacher leads them. Teaching for faith presents the biblical foundation and then calls people to respond based on their love for God and desire to serve faithfully. Teaching for faith is often called transformational teaching.

5. Direct the participants to form pairs and to choose a familiar Bible story. Ask them to work through how they would teach this lesson for facts and then how to teach the same story for faith.

Resources:

Certified Lay Minister Resource, GBOD Discipleship Resources – 2008
Lay Servant Ministry Book, Discipleship Resources, 2013


Prayer

Session Three - Lay Servant Path

Learning Goals:
1. The participants will identify different types of prayer
2. The participants will examine Scriptural prayers
3. The participants will learn methods of incorporating prayer into the life of their congregation

Lesson Outline:
1. Various types of prayer, like intercessory, adoration, thanksgiving, meditative, silent, will be discussed
2. Scripture references will be given as a means of discovering more about prayer
3. Ideas of incorporating prayer into the life of the congregation will be given

Lesson Plan:
1. Various types of Prayer
   a. Begin with a discussion with this question, "What is Prayer?" Have participants share ideas of what prayer is
   b. Continue the discussion with the various kinds of prayer
      i. Intercessory – an invitation into God’s care for us, our families, and our world. No concern is too trivial for God to receive. It is not a way to manipulate God into doing our will.
      ii. Adoration – to take joyful pleasure in God and His nature
      iii. Thanksgiving- a loving gratitude for the presence of God with us and His world. Delight of God and his good will is the foundation of our thankfulness.
      iv. Silent – to free ourselves of addiction to and distraction of noise so we can be totally present to the Lord; to open ourselves to God in a place beyond words.
      v. Meditative- taking a long look at God and his work and His Word. It is slowing down and giving undivided attention to God.

2. Scripture References to Prayer
   a. Have the participants break into groups of two or three to examine a passage of Scripture
      Hannah’s prayer I Samuel 2:1-10
      David’s prayer at the end of his life I Chronicles 29:10-19
      Job’s prayer of surrender Job 42:1-6
      Daniel’s prayer of confession Daniel 9:4-19
Habakkuk’s prayer for God’s victory Habakkuk 3:1-19
Mary’s prayer of joy Luke 1:26-56
Jesus’ prayer Matthew 6:5-15
Jesus’ prayer for the disciples John 17
Paul’s prayer Ephesians 3:14-21

b. Have each group answer these questions about the passage
   i. What type of prayer is this?
   ii. What does this passage teach us about prayer?
   iii. How can this passage help shape our prayer life in our
        congregation?

c. Have each group share with each other their findings

3. Prayer Ideas in the church
   a. Discuss various ideas of how to incorporate prayer into the life of a church
      i. Prayer room
      ii. Prayer groups
      iii. Study on prayer on a regular basis
      iv. Prayer focus for the week
      v. Prayer vigil
      vi. Labyrinth prayer
      vii. Prayer partners
      viii. Prayer walks
      ix. Prayer Shawls

   b. Have participants share more ideas that have been successful in their
      congregation

Resources:


Becoming a Praying Congregation. Rueben Job, Abingdon Press, 2009

Pray the Price. Terry Tekyl, Prayer Point Press, 1997
Living Out Our UM Faith
Session 4 - Lay Servant Path

Lesson Objectives:

1. The participants will explore what makes United Methodism unique
2. The participants will comprehend the Quadrilateral and how to implement it in our theology
3. The participants will explore the General Rules
4. The participants will gain an understanding of our membership vows.

Lesson Plan:

1. The Quadrilateral is made of four parts – Scripture, tradition, experience and reason. Explain what these four parts mean and how they interact and support each other.
   a. Divide into groups and give them an issue to support and argue against using the Quadrilateral: separation of Church and State, evolution, Euthanasia, Death Penalty, Abortion, and prayer in school
2. Discuss the General Rules:
   a. Do no harm
   b. Do good
   c. Attend to the ordinance of God (Stay in love with God) with prayer, Holy Communion, Bible study, worship, acts of mercy, service, etc.
   d. Ask: How can we live out these rules on a daily basis? Have participants respond.

   a. Prayers – Praying with and for our local congregation, we draw closer to our fellow believers and to Christ.
      i. What are some examples that we use in our worship service?
      ii. Hand out hymnals and open to the “Orders of Daily Praise and Prayer” pg. 876. Did you know that there is an order of service intended for daily use by UM while away from church? Why, do you think our hymnal includes these services?
      iii. How does your church practice prayers?
   b. Presence – Presence means more than “showing up” to church. How does our presence impact our Christian life?
      i. When has someone “showed up” in your life when you needed their support?
      ii. Read Ruth 1:1-19a. Are you as devoted to anyone as Ruth was to Naomi? Are you as devoted to God as Ruth was to Naomi and the
God of Israel? How can you show the same level of devotion to the church – your faith family and your friends in Christ?

1. What does “presence” look like in your church? Your life?

iii. Gifts – These are the spiritual gifts God has given each of us.

1. Read I Corinthians 12:4-7. Why is it so important that God gives us a variety of gifts? What, do you think, did Paul mean by “for the common good” in verse 7? How have you been able to use your gifts for the good of others and for God?

2. What does “gifts” look like in your church? life?

iv. Service –

1. Read John 13:3-15. Foot washing in Jesus’ day was something a servant did as a courtesy for a house guest. The average person had filthy feet due to walking barefoot or in sandals. It was a dirty job and something a teacher did not do for his students. Why do you think Jesus washed the disciples’ feet even though doing so was unusual and unconventional? What are some similar acts of humble service that we could perform in our culture today?

2. How does your church “serve” your community? How do you serve your community?

v. Witness – We only added “witness” to our vows in 2008. Why do you think it was necessary to add this to our membership vows?

1. What does “witness” mean to you? How did Jesus witness? How did the disciples?

2. How does your church “witness?” How do you witness?
Preaching
Session Five - Lay Servant Path

Learning Goals:
1. Participants will learn how to prepare a sermon, including choosing Scripture, developing themes, using liturgical guides
2. Participants will understand the steps in preparing and delivering a sermon

Lesson Outline:
1. Participants will identify characteristics of a good sermon
2. Participants will learn about the steps in preparing a sermon
3. Participants will discuss the elements of delivering a good sermon
4. Participants will work in pairs to begin the process of preparing a sermon

Lesson Plan:
1. Have two sheets of newsprint and at the top write, “Good preaching includes...” and “Poor preaching includes...” Urge the participants to list as many responses as possible. Look for emerging themes in both areas
2. Walk the participants through what it takes to prepare and deliver a sermon. See the attached document from Certified Lay Minister Resources.
3. Have participants to look at the Revised Common Lectionary (The Book of Worship, pages 227-37). Ask each participant to study the Lectionary from Year A for the Sunday nearest his or her birthday. Have them examine the Scriptures and resources and identify a point for preaching, making notes about possible directions. Share what they have with a partner for opportunities for feedback and clarification.

Resources:
Certified Lay Minister Resource. Discipleship Resources - 2008
Go Preach! A Primer for Beginning Preachers. Discipleship Resources, 2002
Lay Servant Ministries Basic Course Participant’s Book. Discipleship Resources, 2013
Participant’s Guide

Introduction

As a certified lay minister, you may be required to preach often. Prior to your assignment to a pastoral charge, discuss how often you will provide pulpit supply. This should be covered as a part of the covenant formed with the Mutual Ministry Team and your equipping clergy person. (See Module 1.)

There is no one definition of preaching that fully describes its function or importance. Some scholars speak of the preacher as a witness, describing what he or she has experienced and knows to be true; others think of the preacher as a messenger, bearing a word that comes from God. Some see the preacher as the group therapist convening patients on Sunday morning; others assume the persona of the storyteller who relives events from olden times. Fred Craddock, a major voice in preaching, offers a helpful definition for our purposes: preaching is making the revelation of God present and appropriate to the hearers.¹

Preparation

Your preparation for preaching did not begin with a speech class; it began with your life and witness as a mature Christian on a journey toward Christian perfection, to use Wesleyan language. It continues as you turn your attention to a particular text with an open heart, ready to hear what the text offers you and the congregation for your journey together. Part of your preparation is to experience the text that you plan to share with your congregation.

Robert Mulholland, author of Shaped by the Word², encourages us to rethink the way we read and study the Bible. Many of us were taught to dissect the text, squeezing it for hidden meanings and nuances until we felt that we had mastered all that there was to learn about the passage. By contrast, Mulholland suggests that we sit under the text as one sits under a tutor, allowing the text to tell us (individually and collectively) about ourselves. Instead of reading the word, allow it to read us! Such an

¹ Fred Craddock, Preaching, p. 51
² Robert Mulholland, Shaped by the Word
approach produces sermons that hold the potential of being part of a larger encounter between God and the people in the context of worship.

**Personal Preparation: Read, Pray, Meditate, Imagine**

Spend time reading the lectionary texts (or other texts that you have selected) for the week you will preach. Pray for guidance.

As you prepare to write your sermon, you might think your first step is to study biblical commentaries and other aids that explain the passage. Wrong! God speaks to us through the Scriptures and through prayer.

Read the Scripture out loud several times. Read it from several different Bible translations, and note any differences you discover. Take a walk, or sit and meditate on the Scripture passage. As you prayerfully approach the text, think about the Bible characters you encounter.

Remember that the Bible was written about real people, not caricatures. Think about how the people you encounter felt, spoke, or reacted. What do you think motivated them to respond the way they did? What emotions influenced their actions and thinking? Were they believers of great faith, of some faith, or of no faith at all? How would it feel to walk in their shoes? How would you react?

Experience the passage through the eyes of one of the characters. How does it feel to be Mary, the mother of Jesus—teenaged and pregnant—now forced to travel to pay taxes to a foreign government? How does it feel to be Zacchaeus, up a tree, perhaps hoping that no one would notice that he was present?

What was it like for Jairus to bury the pride of his religious office in order to ask Jesus to come to his home to heal his dying daughter? What if you were Mary, Zacchaeus, Jairus, or even Nathan preparing to confront King David about adultery and murder! Remember, the Bible was written to address the issues of real people, with real emotions.

Make notes from your own time of prayerful study.
What did you notice or realize for the first time about this text and its characters? For example, one day it occurred to me that the woman with an issue of blood in Mark 5 technically rendered Jesus unclean when she touched the hem of his garment, thus creating a problem for Jairus, the religious leader. Once this happened, should he have allowed an unclean man to touch his daughter?

Do you have any questions about the sequence of events? Was it the whirlwind or the chariot and horses that carried Elijah into heaven in 2 Kings 2?

Were you troubled by potential relationship problems between characters in the selected text? Was it so wrong for the elder brother to be resentful of his younger brother’s reception in the Story of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15?

What else do you remember about the Bible characters from previous times of study? For instance, do you remember anything from Mary Magdalene’s past in Luke 8?

The sermon begins with your own prayerful study of the text. After you have lived with the text and allowed it to speak to you, then you are ready to see what others are saying about the text.

Sermon Resources

There are many fine resources available in Christian bookstores that will enhance your sermon preparation. We recommend that you begin with the following basic resources:

Bibles. The New Revised Standard Translation is currently being used in many United Methodist churches. Consider comparing this standard translation with other recent translations like The New International Version or with modern versions, such as


Module II, Section 2, Page 40
The Good News Bible, The New Living Bible, or The Message, that attempt to render the ancient text in everyday language. If members of your congregation use the King James or New King James Versions, make sure that you are aware of their variations as you prepare your sermon.

**Bible Dictionary.** A Bible dictionary helps with word meanings and identifies people and places.

**Bible Handbook.** Look for a Bible handbook that provides background information on the books of the Bible, chapter themes, and other "big picture" information that is helpful in interpreting smaller portions of Scripture.

**Manners and Customs of Bible Times.** We are several millennia removed from the culture and customs recorded in the Bible. A book describing biblical customs will help you understand the significance of some details recorded in the text.

**Maps.** Where was it? How far away was it? Was it Gentile or Jewish territory? Who lives there now? A good set of biblical maps, found either in a study Bible or in a separate resource, is indispensable. As you study the Bible passage, note carefully where it occurred and what was unique about the geographical setting. How did the geographical setting affect what was happening in the passage?

**Commentaries.** Bible commentaries are expensive. Before purchasing one, find out what is available in your church and public libraries. Consider asking an ordained or licensed pastor for suggestions regarding which texts you might purchase for your own use. If your church does not have a biblical commentary in

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The General Board of Discipleship maintains an excellent worship resources Web site at [http://www.umcworship.org](http://www.umcworship.org). Another excellent site is [http://www.textweek.com](http://www.textweek.com). The indexes at these two sites should lead you to a wealth of practical resources for your sermon. If you do not own a computer, most public libraries have computers available for public use at little or no cost.

Distribute sample copies of resources for the next Sunday's lectionary readings from both of these sites.

its library, you may want to request that it consider an annual budget line item for the purchase of commentaries and other Bible study aids.

**Internet Resources.** The list of quality Internet resources for preaching is growing exponentially. There are many excellent Internet resources that may prove helpful as you develop your sermon. Some sites even include sample sermons. These are helpful, but do not be tempted to use one of these in place of writing your own sermon. There is no substitute for an authentic sermon preached by an authentic Christian.

Study resources are designed to enhance, not replace, your own personal prayerful consideration of the text. Evaluate what you read, and decide whether you agree or disagree with how biblical scholars interpret the text. Look for particular words in the text that have powerful meanings, and discover how they have been rendered in various Bible translations. Use your own head and heart as you begin to develop a deeper understanding of the Scripture.

**Exercise**

In pairs, discuss the kinds of study resources that you find most helpful.

**What am I looking for?** When Philip encountered an Ethiopian finance minister reading the book of Isaiah on the road to Gaza in Acts 8, he asked him, “Do you understand what you are reading?” At the end of your sermon, people present should be able to understand something about one of the texts that they heard that morning. While preparing your sermon, ask yourself the following questions:

**Why was this written?** For example, the Apostle Paul’s letters to the churches were usually in response to a question, situation, or even an argument taking place. The events in the Gospel were written as a report of what eyewitnesses had seen. Often, the first chapter of a book in the Bible will give you clues as to why the book was written. For example, in the preface to Luke’s Gospel, Luke explains that his Gospel was written to share the results of his personal research with his friend Theophilus.
What do the words mean? At times, the language of the Christian church can be confusing. When the Bible mentions "salvation" or "grace," what did those words mean to the original audience? Are there differences between what we think the original writers meant and the way we have come to interpret theological terms?

What is the context? The Bible was written in a particular region of the world to a particular audience in ways that address universal life concerns. Though we are looking for those universal elements, the context in which they are discussed is also important. Therefore, geography, world history, and culture are important elements of your study. The fact that Joseph and Mary were required to go to Bethlehem to pay their taxes becomes more meaningful in light of the fact that this tax money went to the Romans, who occupied Israel at the time.

Interpreting the Text

This is where we move from learning what the text says to what the text means. There is no objective reading of the Bible. Biblical texts are best seen through the lens of personal experience and local context.

What is the text saying to you? What does this text suggest about your relationships with God and with people here and everywhere? When the text reads you, to use Dr. Mulholland’s imagery, what does it reveal? Does the text change you in any way? Every encounter with the Bible holds the potential for positive change.

What is this text saying in my context? In other words, what might people in my faith and local communities hear in this text? What is going on in people’s lives, and how do they need to hear the Word to help them deal with their joys and sorrows?

Since most certified lay ministers serve part-time, you may not have a lot of time to listen to your parishioners and will therefore need to develop some creative listening tools. As you make your home or hospital calls, listen carefully to what people are telling you. Read the local newspaper, and see what is going on in your community. You might even develop an online forum, where people can give you sermon feedback and ideas.
One pastor maintains a list of all the people in her congregation, with notes about what is currently going on in their lives. This has become an important sermon-development tool that shows the congregation she is listening to them. A word of caution, however: confidential information must remain confidential!

Finally, what is this text saying to the entire human family? We are not alone in this world; we share the planet with billions of people with whom we hold much in common. The Bible transcends age and time, ethnicity and politics, and it speaks to the universal human predicament. What about this text is common to all of us, in spite of our differences?

Preparing Your Sermon

There are as many techniques for preparing sermons as there are people who write them. Kennon Callahan, in his book Preaching Grace, suggests that the best technique begins with an awareness of the preacher’s working style. Some people study all week and write their sermons at the end of their preparation time, while others put their sermons together in bits and pieces along the way. Some people set appointed times to spend with their sermons each day, while others work marathon-style from start to finish, emerging with complete sermons after a night (or two) of wrestling. There is no one correct way to write a sermon. It is more important that you discover what works best for you.

Sermon Construction

There are many ways to put a sermon together. As you develop your preaching skills, you will become adept at determining the most effective way to put yours together. There are, however, certain elements that should be present in most of your sermons.

A Clear, Understandable, Relevant Main Point

What’s the point? Why are you planning to preach this sermon? After spending time with the text in prayer and meditation, studying the text, and considering the context in which your sermon

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3 Kennon Callahan, Preaching Grace

Sermon Construction Checklist

- Clear, understandable, relevant main point
- Good introduction
- Relevant illustrations
- Summary (both within the sermon and at the end)
- Memorable conclusion
- Appropriate invitation

will be preached, it is time to identify one main point for your sermon.

Many sermons lose impact because they attempt to cover too many points in a short period of time. It will be impossible to share all that you have gained from a week or more of prayerful study. Good memorable sermons focus on one major point that is illustrated in as many ways as it takes to convey its meaning.

A Good Introduction

Begin well. The opening illustration sets the tone for the entire sermon. What do you need to do or say to prepare the congregation for your main point? Be deliberate in planning your first and last sentences. You only have one chance to catch everyone’s attention.

Relevant Illustrations

Look for clear, relevant, tasteful ways to help the congregation understand your main point. Sermon illustrations need not be limited to an oft-told story, a joke, or a news article. There are innumerable ways to illustrate a sermon. Think of creative ways to illustrate your main point and any subpoints you may have.

Consider using music. Invite worshippers to sing portions of hymns at different points throughout the sermon. Write a portion of your sermon in poetic rhyme or in rap, and invite young peo-
ple to accompany that portion with instruments. Write a chorus that the congregation can read from the printed bulletin at a specific time. Try writing a sermon based on a psalm text that includes prayers, hymns, and other responses found in The United Methodist Hymnal. Think of projecting media, such as PowerPoint presentations, as illustration tools. Instead of projecting your sermon outline, use images, sounds, and media clips that illustrate your main point. These are just a few examples of ways to illustrate your sermon. The sermon never has to sound the same Sunday after Sunday. The Bible uses a wide variety of literary forms, and these can and should be reflected in sermon preparation.

Summaries

Summaries at the end of complex sections or at the end of the sermon are good for both preacher and listener. Summarization gives the preacher the opportunity to list the points that were presented, and it offers an additional opportunity for clarification.

Summaries are also helpful for many listeners. These days, a number of worshippers come to church with pad and pencil, expecting both an outline that they are able to follow and main points that are clear and understandable.

A Memorable Conclusion

You only have one opportunity to bring the sermon to a lasting conclusion. A conclusion answers the question, “So what?” Many preachers know how to prepare sermons, but do not know how to end them. They drag on and on, repeating themselves, until the sermon seemingly runs out of gas.

A sermon is more than an interesting exposition of biblical facts and character sketches. It answers the question, “What does the sermon imply for us present today?” This is your final opportunity to make your main point relevant to the listener.

An Appropriate Invitation

If a conclusion answers the question, “So what,” then an invita-
tion answers the question, "Now what?" At the end of your sermon, offer ways for members of the congregation to apply any invitation implicit in the text.

The text shapes invitations. Does it invite people to express hospitality or to care for the needs of the poor? Does it invite people to forgive one another or to experience God's forgiveness? Does it invite people to embrace a new lifestyle or to share their faith with the neighbors? Does it invite people to faith in God through Jesus Christ? Though you may be preaching to the baptized, do not ignore this invitation when it appears in the text. There are times when even the baptized feel moved to respond to a call to discipleship.

The invitation is also shaped by the context. For example, a sermon on the prodigal son might suggest that a congregation think of ways to receive a former church member who has been released from prison. A sermon on the Gadarene demoniac may challenge another congregation's attitudes toward a member who secretly struggles with mental illness. At another church, a sermon on forgiveness might pierce the hearts of feuding families. To repeat, the invitation is shaped by the context. What could members of these congregations do at the end of a sermon?

Your relationship with the congregation is another factor demanding attention. How much do you know about the worship style of the congregation, and how well does the congregation know or trust you? If you are the assigned leader of the congregation, think of the invitation at the end of your sermon as the beginning point of pastoral care.

For example, if you preach a sermon on forgiveness to the congregation with feuding families, be prepared to make pastoral visits to both sides of the great divide. If you are a visiting preach-

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**Invitations Are Shaped by the Text**

How have you experienced invitations given at the end of sermons? Has an invitation ever touched your heart? Has an invitation ever made you uncomfortable? Discuss the connection between preaching and encouraging persons to engage in spiritual formation.
er, your invitation will probably be limited to a time of prayer at the end of the sermon. Whether you are visiting or the assigned leader in residence, be alert for opportunities to invite worshippers into deeper relationships with God and each other.

There are many ways to invite worshippers to respond to the sermon’s message. You may want to give them some quiet time to pray silently in the pews. Another way is to sing a hymn that reflects the message of your sermon, inviting the worshippers to begin singing while seated, but then to stand as the word or words are sung that most reflect their hearts at that moment. Other times, you may wish to provide pieces of paper on which worshippers can record their thoughts and prayers, perhaps bringing them forward to the Communion table or rails.

Be sure to plan how you will invite responses to your sermon, and know what you will do if some choose to respond. It takes good planning and a thorough understanding of your congregation to know which sermon-response styles work best. This is an excellent topic to discuss with your ministry planning team.

Delivery

How will you deliver your sermon? Options include a written manuscript, an outline, or from memory. A written manuscript allows you to perfect your thoughts before presenting the sermon. If you decide to preach directly from the manuscript, it should be double-spaced. Some preachers use larger print or color-coded areas of the presentation copy of their sermons. Practice reading your sermon several times before the worship service so that you may maintain some eye contact with your congregation. A general rule is that about five 8.5” x 11” sheets of double-spaced text will provide you with a fifteen- to twenty-minute sermon. One benefit of a written manuscript is that you can give a copy of it to a parishioner or a shut-in.

Some preachers prefer using sermon outlines. An outline lets you note key points and words without writing out each sentence. If you are comfortable with public speaking, an outline might be right for you. Some preachers perfect their thoughts in a manuscript and then prepare an outline for use at the pulpit.

It is becoming increasingly common to preach without notes.
Doing so does not mean that you do not carefully prepare your sermon. In fact, you will need more preparation to use this style well.

When you preach without notes, don’t worry about memorizing every word of your sermon. Think in terms of memorizing your sermon outline and briefing yourself on the main ideas that go with each part of the outline. Remember that you are not reciting a sermon, but interacting with members of your congregation. The benefits of this presentation style are increased non-verbal communication with the congregation and the ability to adjust the sermon as you watch for signs of understanding from your congregation.

There are three keys to delivering your sermon effectively: practice, practice, practice! Your congregation should not be the first to hear your sermon. Preach it to the birds in the woods, your dog in the family room, or the wall calendar in your office. Even better, if you live near the church, go into the sanctuary on Saturday, and preach it to the pews. Note passages that go well and those that need a little more refinement. Practice will help your presentation on Sunday morning sound much more polished.

When using a manuscript or notes, some preachers find it helpful to color-code various sections for emphasis. Using colors gives you an opportunity “to look ahead” and prepare yourself for areas that need special emphasis or for relevant illustrations like music or video.

Practice what you will do with your hands. Beginning preachers often clasp each side of the pulpit and simply hold on! You may want to practice in front of a mirror to find natural postures and gestures. Have a friend or relative videotape one of your sermons. Then privately review it, and evaluate your posture and gestures.

When the Unexpected Happens

Few things ever go as planned. There will be moments at the pulpit when your nose unexpectedly runs or a fly lands on your forehead. Keep tissues under the pulpit for such times. If something truly funny happens, acknowledge it to the congregation,