# FOUNDATIONS OF BIBLICAL PREACHING (ONLINE)

Designed by:
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Online Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Phil Ruge-Jones
The facilitator for this course, Phil Ruge-Jones, is a pastor, theologian, and biblical storyteller. He is the author of *The Word of the Cross in a World of Glory,* based on his doctoral dissertation.

## Schedule

Students will be enrolled into the class site Friday or Saturday before the orientation week.
Orientation week: Jan. 213-16, 2025
Orientation call: Monday Jan. 13 at 7:00 PM Central Time (Instructions for the call will be in the class website. We will be using the tool Zoom.)
Sessions: Jan. 17 – March 27, 2025

## Course Description

This course introduces the fundamentals of preaching with a goal toward developing in students the capacity for transformative proclamation for the sake of the life and mission of the church. With close attention given to biblical exegesis; theology; the sermon's language, imagery, and design; and the basics of effective delivery, this course helps students develop interpretive, theological, homiletical, and practical disciplines that will inform and shape their preaching and lay the groundwork for lifelong learning and improvement.

Course Objectives: In order to develop students' ability to craft and deliver transformative biblical sermons, the course pursues the following learning objectives:

1) Apprehending the Gospel as a distinct message with theological, relational, liturgical, and rhetorical dimensions.

2) Developing proficiency in the primary elements of preaching as a distinct genre of oral communication: a) exegetical study, b) development and preparation of the sermon, c) attending to congregational context, and d) oral execution.

3) Maturing in one's self-understanding as one called to proclaim and confess the faith publicly in the context of Christian worship by maintaining respect for the congregation, fidelity to the tradition, and integrity to one's own voice and identity.

## Procedure
The course is designed around six types of learning experiences:
1) Weekly presentations prepared by the Luther Seminary faculty that cover the primary elements of biblical preaching.
2) Readings assigned for each topic that prepare for and supplement the weekly presentation

3) Online discussion with other students and instructor on the readings and topics according to a posted schedule;

4) Group and individual exercises germane to the subject matter;

5) Two sermons to be preached in a congregational context. The course facilitator will receive both sermons in written form. The first sermon needs to be video recorded so that the student can review the sermon for delivery; and

6) Facilitation of a Parish Response Group (PRG) involving educational exercises and discussion of sermons.

**Weekly Course Guide** (Friday – Thursday)
- **Before** reading, watching, or listening to any of the course material, respond to the Opening Questions in the course site. This is in a journal form. No one but you and the instructor/facilitator can see the journal. Write your first response to the questions, including "I don't know." After you have read, seen, and heard the session material, go back to the Opening Questions and see if you would now respond the same or differently. Add these additional reflections.
- Sometime **Friday-Monday** read, view, and listen to the session material
- **Tuesday** post your session assignment
- **By Thursday** respond to at least 2 people in your class beginning with the person who has the fewest responses.

Additions: during sessions 4 and 8 there will be a live discussion with the whole class on Monday at 7:00 PM Central Time using the tool Zoom. Instructions will be in the class site.

## Expectations and Evaluation

This course is evaluated on a pass/fail basis. Those who pass are given a certificate of completion by Select Learning. The facilitator bases the evaluation of pass/fail on the student's participation in the online forums and the written sermons.

## Requirements

• Purchase required books.

• Arrange with a congregation to preach 2 sermons during the course. It will be very helpful to space these sermons about 3-4 weeks apart.

• Enlist 4-6 persons to serve on your Parish Response Group. This group will meet three times with you during the semester. (The pastor of the congregation in which you are preaching may, but does not need to, be on the PRG.)

• Participate in all discussions and completion of all assignments as specified in the syllabus (see "Schedule") and course program in a timely fashion.

• Preach 2 sermons in a congregational context.

• Facilitate the Parish Response Group.

Parish Response Group: You will invite four persons from your congregational context to serve as your Parish Response Group (PRG). The group will meet three times. They will meet with you the first time, before you preach to talk with you about preaching, this course, the process you will employ together to evaluate your sermons, and to study the text(s) together. Following the first sermon the group will meet again. In this meeting the PRG members will bring their sermon response forms and have a conversation with you about their responses. Someone in the group will need to take notes. After discussion of the first sermon, study together the texts for the second sermon. Following the 2nd sermon the group should meet again for a verbal discussion/feedback with you. This group should be committed to working with you to improve your preaching and should be somewhat diverse (in terms of age, gender, ethnic or vocational backgrounds, etc.). The pastor of your congregation may be very helpful in identifying persons and may, but does not have to, serve on the PRG.

Sermons: You will preach 2 sermons during the course (preferably about a month apart), one on a Gospel text, and one on a Hebrew Bible, Psalm, or Epistle reading. Sermons should be new material, written for this class and congregation, and should run between 8 and 16 minutes. The first sermon should be video recorded so that you can view your own delivery. You can also record the second sermon so that you can see if you have changed in your delivery. The sermon text and your exegetical notes should be sent to the course facilitator the day after you preach.

## Class Materials

- Holy Bible (NRSV recommended)
- Lewis, Karoline. *A Lay Preacher's Guide*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2020.
- Taylor, Barbara Brown. *The Preaching Life*. Boston: Cowley Publications, 1993.

**Recommended Books (good additions to the preacher's library; not required for class)**

- Sally Brown and Luke Powery, *Ways of the Word: Learning to Preach for Your Time and Place* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016)
- Frederick Buechner, *Telling the Truth* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1977).
- Jana Childers, ed., *Birthing the Sermon* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2001).
- Gerhard Forde, *Theology is for Proclamation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1991).
- Justo L. Gonzalez and Catherine G. Gonzalez, *The Liberating Pulpit* (Wipf & Stock, 2003).
- Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2005).
- Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1997).
- Paul Scott Wilson, *The Four Pages of the Sermon* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999).

**Topics, readings, presentations, and sermons**

**Session 1: Why Preach?**
Reading: Romans 10:13-17
Lewis, *A Lay Preacher's Guide*, Introduction
Taylor, *The Preaching Life*, chapters 1-2
Rogness & Lose, "The Marks of a Good Sermon" (link)
Video Presentations: "Introduction" & "Why Preach"
Sermon: Taylor

**Session 2: Preaching & the Word of God**
Reading: John 1:1-18
ELCA Constitution, Confession of Faith (link)
Lewis, *A Lay Preacher's Guide*, chapter 1
Taylor, *The Preaching Life*, chapter 3
Video Presentations: "John 1" & "The Word of God"
Sermon: Lose #1

**Session 3: Engaging the Biblical Text**
Reading: Luke 1:1-4, John 20:30-31
Lewis, *A Lay Preacher's Guide*, chapter 2
Taylor, *The Preaching Life* chapter 5
Video Presentations: "What Does This Mean?" & "Biblical Exegesis for Preaching"
Sermon: Skinner #1, Shore #1

**Session 4: Telling the Truth Twice: Preaching Law & Gospel**
Reading: Genesis 1:1-27, Hebrews 4:12, 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5
Taylor, *The Preaching Life*, sermon of your choice from Part Two
Video Presentation: "Preaching Law & Gospel"
Sermons: Jacobson #1, Lose #2

**Session 5: Focus & Function**
Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11
Lewis, *A Lay Preacher's Guide*, chapter 6
Taylor, *The Preaching Life*, sermon of your choice from Part Two
Video Presentation: "Focus and Function"
Sermon: Westermeyer

**Session 6: Sermon Design**
Reading: Psalm 100, 120, 51, 88
Lewis, *A Lay Preacher's Guide*, chapter 5
Taylor, *The Preaching Life*, sermon of your choice from Part Two
Video Presentation: "Sermon Design"
Sermons: Burtness, Shore #2

**Session 7: The Sanctified Imagination**
Reading: Luke 15
Lewis, *A Lay Preacher's Guide*, chapter 4
Taylor, *The Preaching Life*, chapter 4
Video Presentation: "Imagination in Preaching"
Sermons: Tiede, Limburg

**Session 8: Openings and Closings**
Reading: Acts 1
Lewis, *A Lay Preacher's Guide*, chapter 7
Taylor, *The Preaching Life*, sermon of your choice from Part Two
Video Presentation: "Openings and Closings"
Sermons: Lose #3, Finnegan

**Session 9: The Contexts of Our Preaching**
Reading: John 1:1-18, 1 Corinthians 13
Lewis, *A Lay Preacher's Guide*, chapter 3
Taylor, *The Preaching Life*, chapter 7
Video Presentation: Preaching & Context
Sermon: Rogness

**Session 10: Delivery**
Reading: Exodus 4:10-17
Lewis, *A Lay Preacher's Guide*, chapter 8
Taylor, *The Preaching Life*, sermon of your choice from Part Two
Video Presentation: Delivery & Closing Remarks

**Support Material: Preaching the Old Testament**
Reading: Hebrews 1
Video Presentation: "Preaching the Old Testament"
Sermons: Jacobson #2, Schifferdecker, Gaiser, Lewis

**Support Material: Preaching Biblical Genres**
Reading: Romans 3
Video Presentation: Preaching Biblical Genres
Sermons: Long,Thomas

**Support Material: Preaching & Worship**
Reading: Luke 24
Taylor, The Preaching Life, 63-75
Video Presentation: Preaching & Worship

**Grading:**

The grading for the Foundations of Biblical Preaching course is simply pass-fail. This grade is assigned after the sermons are completed and takes into account the way you used what you learned in the course to weave together the lectures, reading and discussions in your 2 sermons, having and using the Parish Response Group, whether you participated in the three Zoom discussions (Orientation and 2 session discussions), whether you posted all your Discussion Essays and Key Question Essays in a timely manner, and whether you responded to the Discussion and Key Question posts of two colleagues in a way reflective of our class covenant.

Passing = Participation in at least 2 of the 3 Zoom calls; posting of at least 12 of the 18 essays; at least 26 responses to the essays of your colleagues; submission of 2 sermons that you have written and preached in a local context and the use of a Parish Response Group.