

PREACHING

**IN YOUR PARISH OR
MINISTERING COMMUNITY**

**DOROTHY THORPE
DIOCESE OF WILLOCHRA
REVISED 2007**

The place of preaching in the Anglican Tradition

The Anglican Church maintains a balance between the Ministry of the Word and the Ministry of the Sacrament. Provision for preaching is made in our major public services of Holy Communion, Morning and Evening Prayer and *Prayer, Praise and Proclamation*.

In **A Prayer Book for Australia**, the latter three services are called Services of the Word. In the service for Holy Communion, the Sermon is in a section called The Ministry of the Word where the readings from the Bible and the sermon combine to bring God's word to us.

Maintaining high standards of preaching has always been an Anglican concern. Article 23 Of Ministering in the Congregation from **The Book of Common Prayer** says:

It is not lawful for any man to take upon him the office of publick preaching, or ministering the sacraments in the congregation, before he be lawfully called, and sent to execute the same....



Authorisation of preachers in the Diocese of Willochra

The Bishop issues licences to those who are authorised to preach. In order to maintain standards, he requires those seeking authorisation to submit for assessment

- ◇ four written sermons and
- ◇ two taped sermons

All Lay Ministers who are seeking a licence to preach must do this.

Lay Ministers who already have a licence to preach may consider submitting their sermons for appraisal and helpful comment as part of their ongoing training. This can be done through

Ministry Development Officer
PO Box 96
Gladstone, 5473

Your own congregation can be helpful as a source of feedback for the willing learner. A photocopyable evaluation sheet is provided in the centre fold to assist you with this.

Why do we preach?

- o Just as we break the bread, we “break open” the Word so that we may receive it.

- ◇ Preaching is more than exegesis of a Bible passage. It’s more than an essay.

- ◇ Preaching and lecturing are the most ineffective methods for adult learning; but preaching is much more than a means of learning. Sermons teach, persuade, disturb, encourage, reassure, challenge, inspire and stimulate.

- o “Jesus came proclaiming the good news of God” and so do we. Preaching is evangelistic. In our preaching we have the responsibility of proclaiming Christ, of offering hope, of giving an opportunity for repentance and turning to Christ and a new way of believing and living. We help people to understand about the Kingdom of God and what it means to live as disciples of Christ

- ◇ Preaching makes the Word heard in the readings more accessible to people so that they can begin to identify their stories in The Story — in the great themes of the Christian faith.

- o . Preachers aim to encourage people to grow more deeply in their faith, and to become more conscious of God’s will for them, their community and the world.

- ◇ Sermons are always about mission: God’s mission and our mission.

- ◇ The great need of many hearers today is to discover how to live fully human lives in the pattern of Jesus who became truly human.

- ◇ We preach because Jesus commanded us to preach.

o "... *the aim of the preacher is to secure acceptance of the message. That should be self-evident. To argue that the preacher's objective is to bear witness and leave the rest to God can be a dangerous cop-out. It can be an excuse for dullness. Faithfully to bear witness must mean to present, in the most winsome way possible, the God who seeks a response and his grace enables the hearer to respond. Anything less is wasting everyone's time.*" (Bodycomb, John, Excited to Speak, Exciting to Hear. The Art of Preaching, Openbook, 2003 p.10)

Bodycomb summarises other views:

Moltmann: preaching should always be a declaration about the deliverer and about deliverance; it should point the hearer towards freedom from whatever obstructs his/her fullest potential.

Elizabeth Achtemeier: preaching is a channel through which God works in the midst of his people

P.T. Forsyth: the task of the preacher is to re-establish a relationship of trust between creature and Creator.

Clyde Fant: the purpose of preaching is to send the church into a real world, a world of starving children and murderous competition, of lonely rooms and smug clubs, of shattered dreams and burned out hopes.

St. Augustine: there are three aims in preaching: *docere, delectare and flectere* (Latin for teach, delight and move).

Karl Barth: preaching is an attempt to give God's answers to the questions people raise in every generation.

What do you think preaching is?

How is it different from teaching?

How is it different from witnessing?

How is it different from reading someone else's sermon?

What to preach

The lectionary provides for four readings each Sunday: Old Testament, Psalm, New Testament and Gospel. It is a common practice to base Sunday sermons on the readings for the day. Preaching on the lectionary readings allows one, over a year, to cover the major themes of the Christian faith.

The readings may be linked in some thematic way, but that is not always so. It is unwise to try to force a theme on the readings and to draw on all of them for your sermon. It may be better to choose the one that speaks to you most strongly and use it as the basis of your preaching. Sometime the Prayer of the Day will help the preacher to decide on the theme.

Other Christian themes are appropriate.

Mission, Ministry, Discipleship, Prayer, Ministering Communities, Evangelism, Worship, Service, Pastoral Care, Reconciliation, Peace....

The beginning preacher, especially one with little formal theological education, is wise to draw on his or her experience for sermon content, rather than to try to give explanations of doctrine. E.g speak of your experience of the triune God rather than explain the Trinity. Similarly your experience of resurrection, incarnation, salvation, judgment and grace will provide ample content for sermons.

The best sermons are not just things we design and make; rather, they are things that grow in us and eventually are delivered by us, but (dare we say it!) are conceived by the Holy Spirit.

Ian Pitt—Watson. **A primer for preachers.** Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Book House, 1986, p. 56

Preparing to preach

Read

Take time to read all the readings ahead of time, perhaps even the week before you are due to preach.

Think.

What were the scriptures saying when they were written. What is the context of the writer? What did the writer intend to tell his audience? You might consult several resources at this stage. Useful resources are Bible commentaries on individual books or comprehensive Bible commentaries.

Listen.

Which reading is speaking to you most strongly? How is the Word breaking into your consciousness to challenge you? What idea do you find exciting in what you read?

Ponder.

Why is that so? Is the Word just speaking to you personally, or is it addressing a universal need, a common human problem or dilemma, or a situation in your own church or wider community?

Decide

Which reading or theme you will concentrate on.

Write

Try to do the first draft in one sitting. This may take you some time.

Cogitate

Let the sermon remain in your consciousness during the next few days. Talk it over with someone. New thoughts and refined ideas will come to you. The Holy Spirit will be your teacher and counsellor.

Revise

Go through your sermon. Check the length. Rewrite awkward phrases. Write it as an oral text, that is with pauses and stresses marked. Cut out repetitions and superfluous statements. Read it aloud to make sure it is fluent and that you are comfortable with it. Make sure it is genuine. Do not say anything you are not confident about or which you do not believe yourself

Some do's and dont's

DO

Be interesting.

The preacher must hold the attention of the hearers.

Be simple.

The preacher must give a clear and easily remembered Message

Be relevant

The preacher must bring good news for the ordinary lives of people and communities.

Preach, not read.

Be passionate.

DON'T

Judge and blame

Disparaging and diminishing people, is not helpful. Instead, be encouraging.

Overwhelm with words.

Theological jargon and too much formal language (big words and complicated sentences) can be off—putting. Instead speak the language of ordinary conversation. Two good paragraphs are better than two pages which ramble.

Impose pet opinions.

Preachers should not impose their theological, political or social views on a congregation. Instead, raise the questions in a thoughtful way to let people themselves listen to God's voice and decide on appropriate responses themselves. Use "I" statements when giving your own opinion.

SERMON EVALUATION

1. What is the message which you heard in the sermon?

2. Was the message 'good news'? How confidently and passionately was it preached?

3. Could you discern any structure in the sermon?

Beginning
Middle
Conclusion

Or

Contact with listeners
Text and context of text
Content
Illustration
Application

Or

Other pattern

Or

Not able to be followed easily

EVALUATION

4. How clearly was the Bible passage explained?

5. How relevant was the message for the congregation?
Were good illustrations used?

6. How well did it inspire you to new thoughts or actions?

7. How would you describe the sermon? You can choose one or more of these words

Boring

Inspiring

Challenging

Teaching

Encouraging

Giving good news

Forgettable

Other

Relevant

Confusing

Passionate

Powerful

Interesting

Disturbing

Food for thought

Ho-hum

8. How well was it presented?

Diction

Stress

Liveliness

Freedom from notes

Use of words

Sentence structure

Stance

Eye contact

Transitions in preaching

Prepared sermons are available for Licensed Lay Ministers to read. If you do make use of these from the Internet or from books of sermons, you still need to prepare so that your preaching is effective.

Be aware of the source of your prepared sermon. Use only recommended websites.

Preparation:

1 Read through the sermon so that you thoroughly understand the points the sermon is making and the structure of the sermon.

2 Make sure you can pronounce any proper nouns or theological jargon.

3 Look up any words you do not know so that you are comfortable with using it, or substitute if necessary

4 Look at how you can make this sermon more personally yours. Can you introduce it in a more personal way? Can you add examples which are more relevant to your community? Will you leave out some parts which don't seem to fit your situation?

5 Read it aloud to make sure that it reads fluently.

Change any phrases which you find difficult to say aloud.

6 Become comfortable with the message you are going to deliver so that the emphases and intonations will be correctly placed.

7 Believe in the sermon and your ability to deliver it in a genuine, confident and convincing manner.

Make progress

1 Read the sermon and observe how it is structured. Understand the purpose of the sermon and the points the writer is making.

2 Make notes from the preached sermon. Personalise it.

3 Preach from your notes, using your own words.

A 3-Point Approach (preaching on a Bible passage)

1. What is happening in this passage in the context in which it was written?
2. What is God saying to us today?
3. What does this mean for our Christian community?

*Third Sunday after Epiphany Year A
Matthew 4.12-25*

1. What is happening in this passage?
 - Who is in this story?
 - When does it happen?
 - Where did it happen?
 - What did Jesus say?
 - How did he say it?
 - Why did he say these things?
 - What is this passage really about?
2. What is God saying to us today?
 - What is the relevance of this passage for us today?
 - How does it speak to us?
 - What individual understanding and response might there be?
3. What is our church's response to God's vision? How can we apply it?
 - What vision is God putting before us?
 - How is God inviting us to change?
 - What does it mean for us as a Christian community?
 - How is our ministry and mission affirmed?
 - How are we challenged?

A 3— Point Approach (preaching on a theme)

I Introduction of the theme (eg reconciliation, resurrection, advent, lent,)

Today is Advent Sunday....

2. Develop the ideas

Advent is the season when...

Advent is a time of....

Advent gives us.....

3. Conclude

I 'd like to suggest that for Advent...

A 5-Point Approach (preaching from a theme or a Bible passage)

This pattern of reflection is based on Thomas Groome's understanding of Christian praxis

1 Story

Having decided on a theme, tell one or two interesting stories which are connected with the theme. They may be personal anecdotes or stories from the paper, the TV etc. These should be interesting enough to engage people and keep them interested, and perhaps wondering why you have told them. They might encourage the listeners to call to mind their own similar experiences

2 Critical reflection

Reflect a little on these stories and name the issue you are reflecting on. Engage with culture, personal experience, reason, history and imagination.

3. Dialogue with the Christian tradition

Enter into a dialogue with the Scripture passage.

- What does it have to say about the matter?
- What is the teaching of the church?
- What stories from church history, tradition, or current church life are concerned with this theme?

4. Vision

What vision of the Kingdom of God does God give us?

What does this require of us?

5. Action

How can we put this into practice? What can we do to be partners with God in this vision?

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost Year A
Matthew 14.13-21

Develop this approach by writing 5 topic sentences to introduce your 5 paragraphs, then expand them to form your sermon

1. *Story about hunger*

2. *Reflection on hunger*
(for food, for love, for recognition, this hungry world)

3. *Reflection on*
Feeding 5000
Other biblical material e.g. Lord's Prayer, manna
The Eucharist

4. *God's vision for meeting our hunger*

5. *What are we called to be or do?*

A 6 - point approach

(from The Rev'd David Williams in 'Please! No more boring sermons', Weller (ed), Acorn 2007.

1. Contact
2. Text
3. Context
4. Content
5. Illustration
6. Application

Contact: Tell a story, make a connection with your congregation, attract their attention

Text: Introduce the text or passage and give some exegesis

Context: What was the context of the text? What did it mean when it was written? To whom and when? Why did the gospel writer place that passage where it is?

Content: What does it mean today? How does the word speak to us in our context?

Illustration: Give an example from today or from the past.

Application: How can we apply this today—individually and as a community?

There is flexibility in the order in which these components are placed in your sermon.

Resources for preaching

Sunday Journal, Western Mount Publications,
Available from Western Mount Publications, PO Box
80, Laverton WA 6440. \$12.50 a quarter

This is a useful publication which focuses on the Church's year with a daily reading plan, comments on the scriptures and prayers and reflections. It links to *Sermon Structures* which are sent to you by email, one month in advance The Sermon Structures cost \$10 per month. Request a free appraisal package of the Sermon Structures from brian@westernmount.com.au

Living Stones, Year A, Year B and Year C , by Susan Sayers, Available from Open Book @ \$59.95 each. These English resource books are excellent because they give creative worship and sermon ideas, prayers, hymn suggestions and children's ideas for Sunday worship. The Australian Lectionary varies at times from the Common Lectionary.

Written sermons, Sermon Outlines and Breaking Open the Word (an alternative to the sermon) from the Diocese of Willochra are available on www.diowillochra.org.au/contents/downloads

The internet has a great variety of sermons available, however, the preacher needs to be careful to appreciate the theology of the material downloaded and not to use internet material without discretion and theological discernment.

Christian bookshops have other material available for the liturgical year and commentaries on books of the Bible. See, for example, www.mediacom.org.au/ Preaching and Worship