PREACHING EXCELLENCE CONNECTION: WORKSHOPS

Reaching Young People
The Rev. Whitney Z. Edwards, Chaplain of St. Christopher's Episcopal School for Boys in Richmond, VA.
This workshop is your opportunity to better prepare yourself for preaching to children (ages 5-20). Experience and studies show that families choose churches in which their children feel loved, supported and happy. And all of that begins with the preaching. Successful preaching to young people is not only essential to effective ministry and healthy churches but it is also wildly different than preaching to adult congregations. Unfortunately, seminary education rarely includes deliberate training in how to offer meaningful and prophetic sermons to children. Rev. Whitney Edwards, a parish priest of 13+ years and now Head Chaplain to 1000+ children, will facilitate this workshop to help you tap into your gifts for preaching to children to discover a whole other perspective on the craft and why Jesus so dearly loved his little congregations.

Four Funerals and a Wedding: Preaching Funerals and Weddings (with more emphasis on funerals because we preach more of them!)
Rev. Susan Ironside, Rector, Grace Episcopal Church, Madison, NJ
Preachers know the privilege and responsibility we embrace when stepping into the pulpit for occasions of passionate joy or poignant sorrow. We feel it on our skin as we step before a couple who are bravely beginning a new life together, or standing before a grieving family and a draped casket. In the life of any preacher, most will be tasked with proclaiming at more funerals than weddings, and each of these invitations to preach is a holy honor, if an intimidating one. This workshop will explore funeral and wedding sermons. What makes them unique? What are the goals of the preaching moment in a wedding or funeral liturgy? What makes these sermons challenging? We will explore particular human stories and case studies that invite us to imagine how we might offer faithful preaching in times of joy or sadness, and will draft potential sermons for weddings and funerals. Bring your best pastoral instincts, your imagination, and your desire to continue to grow as a pastor and preacher!

“Nice Sermon, Pastor”: Strategies for Getting Better Feedback (Thursday only)
The Rev. Kate Spelman has served churches of pastoral and program size in the dioceses of Connecticut, Pennsylvania and Chicago. She currently serves as the Aging with Pride Program Specialist for AgeOptions.
In the modern world, preachers receive "feedback" in a variety of ways - YouTube views, Instagram likes, and whatever new emoji Facebook is adding next. But how do we separate the wheat from the chaff - the trolls from the helpers? In this workshop, we will discuss a few ways to build the capacity for critical listening in your congregation and gain better feedback and more insightful input.
Preaching poetry; Sharpening the Preacher’s Perspective.

Preaching While Black
The Very Rev. Will Mebane is the rector at St. Barnabas Episcopal Church in Falmouth, MA.
Preachers bring all of themselves to the pulpit whenever they preach. That includes all the joys and disappointments of their lives. Seminaries teach that the sermon should never be primarily about the preacher. Then again, most practitioners will admit that they preach to themselves most of the time. These challenges of identity are especially tricky and burdensome for preachers of color. Every black and brown person is always keenly aware of systemic racism in society, including the Church, when they preach. The language one uses necessarily has to be different when a preacher of color appears before a predominantly white vs. black congregation. This is a mantle white preachers do not have to bear. There are unique challenges when preaching while black (PWB)! See how these obstacles are not that different from DWB, SWB, EWB, or jogging while black.

Livestreaming Jesus: Adapting to Preaching Online
Ms. Christine Parton Burkett is the lecturing fellow in speech at Duke Divinity School
In this webinar, Christine Parton Burkett will discuss the nature of online delivery in the time of COVID-19. We will look at what we keep from our old ways of preaching and what we leave behind. We will address the practical aspects of camera anxiety, staging, posture, and presence. And we will remember the ancient truth about preaching; God already has powerful plans for your worship.

Singing the Word
Rev. Brent Norris, Rector, St. Mary’s Episcopal Church, Asheville, NC
The words of a sermon are not the only words used in a liturgy. Besides the fixed texts of the prayer book and the appointed lectionary readings there are also the variable texts of hymns and anthems. The texts of hymns and anthems are a rich resource for the preacher both in sermon preparation and in setting the sermon in its liturgical context. They provide the preacher with a very effective tool to support and re-enforce the proclamation of the sermon and to draw the congregation into appropriating the message for themselves. They can also work in the opposite direction. This workshop offers some practical direction in using the lyrics of hymns and anthems as tools to strengthen the work of the preacher.

Prophetic Witness: Speaking the Truth in Love
Rev. Thelma (“Nikki”) Mathis, Rector St. Gregory Episcopal Church, Athens, GA
We will explore speaking truth to power about Injustice and oppression, when the holders of power and privilege are sitting in the pews.