

PREACHING IN A HURTING WORLD

*Preaching Excellence Program
For Practicing Preacher*

Via Zoom, October 17-19, 2023

When it feels like the whole world is traumatized, where does a preacher start? Between the economy...the environment...Ukraine... our divided country it's no wonder our parishioners are over-stressed...and what about the preacher?



This three-day preaching intensive will reflect on the unprecedented impact of these collective stresses and offer practical steps the preacher can take to be the source of hope and inspiration that parishioners are hungry for—and to administer the self-care that is a prerequisite for effective and sustainable ministry. Participants will learn from a select faculty of leading practitioners and thought leaders and participate in small, moderated groups preaching to peer feedback. The conference schedule accommodates all mainland time zones with adequate downtime to process.

Plenary Sessions

Resurrection by Degrees: Trauma-Responsive Preaching

Tuesday, October 17, Noon, Eastern

The Rev. Thelma (Nikki) Mathis

Trauma-Responsive preaching is not new....it's in the Hebrew Bible and the Epistles; the African-American preaching tradition and its treatment of theodicy; and almost anywhere among Christian marginalized populations and any place death and catastrophe have appeared, the whole world over. In our exploration of this tradition of sermon-as-pastoral-care, we'll define trauma, including individual/familial vs. communal, and then move to generative preaching response options. While there is no paint-by-numbers end-all, be-all healing approach in the pulpit, there are approaches and tools that have been historically helpful. Effective trauma-responsive sermons offer God's care to the soul(s) of those who have suffered deep and damaging distress in ways that often also require somatic and psychological responses for optimal outcomes. For the preacher's part in the healing process, trauma-responsive sermons approach preaching as witness, re-orientation, and a path to re-frame a world view previously destroyed by the experience(s) of evil. This workshop gives an overview of what this type of preaching is, why and when is it needed, and how it can be done.

Nikki Mathis is the Rector of St. Gregory the Great, Athens, GA

Preaching Mark as a Parable of Trauma

Wednesday, October 18, Noon, Eastern

O. Wesley Allen Jr.

Dr. Allen will first present a theo-narrative reading of Mark as a parable dealing with the destruction of the temple and persecution facing the second-generation church around the year 70 CE. Mark parabolically and pastorally twists the characterization of the disciples and of Jesus to offer a revised theological outlook to deal with questions of theodicy in light of the crises they are facing. Then, Allen will shift to the question of how to preach Mark's parabolic narrative cumulatively across Year B (2023–24) of the Revised Common Lectionary. He will offer homiletical insights and strategies for dealing with individual passages considering the whole of Mark to address trauma and crises facing our congregations today.

Wesley Allen is Lois Craddock Perkins Professor of Homiletics, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University

Communication for Connection: Preaching across the Divide(s)

Thursday, October 19, Noon, Eastern

Christine Parton Burkett

Aristotle's Greece in 360 was in an uproar of riot and discontent. The country suffered from political divisions, held a tenuous grip on democracy, and was rifted with cultural clashes. In that rancorous atmosphere of division and discord, Aristotle thought deeply about how we speak to one another effectively through three methods of persuasion: ethos, pathos, and logos. In this webinar, we will explore each of these three components as related to preaching today, to connect with the congregation and speak straight to the heart.

- **Ethos:** Presence is powerful. To be heard, the speaker must be perceived as to be genuine, credible, and to be “for” the listener. In this section we will discuss body language and the use of the voice to best connect with a wary world.
- **Logos:** Language leaks. Word choices can act as dog whistles that might muffle our message. Partisan vocabulary can unknowingly build walls where we hoped to build fences. In this section, we will experience and discuss specific red and blue language in the pulpit.
- **Pathos:** Preach to the heart. People remember and act on what they feel, not just what they know. Metaphors, image, and story are the keys to showing real humans behind the “isms” that saturate our world. In this section you will have the opportunity to craft “postcards” to create connection with your congregation.

Christine Parton Burkett is a professor and preaching coach at Duke Divinity School.

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Conference Co-Leaders



The Rev. Thelma (“Nikki”) Mathis (Conference Co-Chair and Preaching Group Leader) is the Rector of St. Gregory the Great Episcopal Church in Athens, GA. She holds a BA from Emory University, a Master of Social Work from the University of Georgia, and a Master of Divinity from the School of Theology, University of the South: Sewanee. Before entering the priesthood in 2008, Nikki worked for nearly 20 years as a Clinical Social Worker.

Rev. Mathis has authored articles and sermons in publications that include *The Sewanee Theological Review*, The Episcopal Preaching Foundation’s *Preaching the Beatitudes*, *Graymoor*, and *The Alban Weekly*. She recently served as a Trustee for Sewanee, University of the South.



The Rev. Dr. Stephen Smith (Conference co-chair and Preaching Group Leader) has a consistent record of providing Patrick’s Episcopal Church in Dublin, Ohio, where he successfully expanded programming and significantly increased congregational participation. Dr. Smith has led the Preaching Foundation’s annual Preaching Excellence Program (“PEP”) for seminarians, and currently leads the Foundation’s Lay Preacher Training Initiative.

His publications include *Saving Salvation: The Amazing Evolution of Grace* (Morehouse: 2005) and numerous articles and sermons for Forward Movement Publications and others. Dr. Smith holds a D.Min. in Preaching from the School of Theology at the University of the South, Sewanee, TN.

Plenary Speakers



The Rev. Dr. O. Wesley Allen, Jr. (Speaker) is Lois Craddock Perkins Professor of Homiletics at Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University Perkins, Dallas, Texas.

Wes received his B.A. from Birmingham-Southern College, his M.Div. from Yale Divinity School, and his Ph.D. in New Testament (with a minor in Preaching) from Emory University. As an ordained United Methodist, he has served in a number of parishes, campus ministry, and academic positions. In the arena of New

Testament, Allen has expertise in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts. In the arena of preaching and worship, Dr. Allen has special interest in rethinking the role of preaching and liturgy week in and week out in community in a shifting, postmodern world. Wes is the author of over a dozen books, and his most recent books include *The Sermon Without End: A Conversational Approach to*

Preaching (with Ronald J. Allen), *Preaching and the Human Condition*, and *Preaching in the Era of Trump*, with a preaching commentary on Matthew.



Ms. Christine Parton Burkett, Professor and Preaching Coach, Duke Divinity School (Speaker). Christine describes herself as a professional pew-sitter, and holds degrees in theater and speech-language pathology. Over the past 30 years, Christine has served as a professor and preaching coach at Duke Divinity School, and has led clergy preaching retreats across denominations throughout the US and Canada. She believes a life of preaching should be fully embodied, life-giving, and exhilarating many more times than it is infuriating, frustrating, or exhausting. She also believes that ANYONE, from seminarians to bishop to pope, anyone can be a better preacher next Sunday.

Preaching Group Leaders



The Rev. Kim L. Coleman has served as rector of Trinity Episcopal Church in Arlington, Virginia since November 2002. An Episcopalian since 1993, Rev. Kim graduated cum laude from Virginia Theological Seminary in May 2001 and was ordained to the priesthood in December 2001. In addition to a Master of Divinity degree, Kim holds Bachelor of Arts degrees (1980) in Political Science and Economics from The Pennsylvania State University in State College, Pennsylvania. Prior to entering the ordination track, Kim pursued a career in the association management and human resources. She currently serves as National President of the Union of Black Episcopalians and has served on both the Diocesan Standing and Executive Committees as well as an Adjunct Professor for VTS. Mother Kim believes in the therapeutic power of laughter and describes herself as a "committed, striving, often obedient yet still imperfect follower of Christ who loves sharing God's joy with others."



The Very Rev. Kate Moorehead Carroll has been an Episcopal priest for 25 years. In 2009 she was called to be the tenth dean of St. John's Episcopal Cathedral, and the first woman to be called as dean of a cathedral in the Southeastern United States. Her leadership and vision have led to the creation of the Cathedral District and exciting plans for the transformation of Jacksonville's urban core with over \$44 million invested in the development of multi-income housing, walkable neighborhoods, parks, recreational venues, and retail space that will provide all the elements needed for a thriving downtown neighborhood.

Dean Carroll is the author of eight books and produces a daily morning devotion of 4-6 minutes every day on YouTube.

Kate produces a weekly podcast called Find It. She is married to Dr. Chris Carroll, a pediatric intensive care doctor. Together, they have six children ranging in ages from 18-24.



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 Director of Programs and Communications for The Village Chicago, a membership organization helping people navigate life after 50, and as the Associate Rector of Emmanuel Episcopal Church in La Grange, Illinois. She has served as a deputy to General Convention (2018), member of the Bishop Search & Nominations Committee of the diocese of Chicago, and convenes the

women's clergy caucus for her diocese. Kate loves good books and bad TV. She and her wife have a very young son with a very big personality.



The Rev. Dr. Sylvia Sweeney is Professor of Homiletics and Liturgics at Bloy House, the Episcopal Theological School at Los Angeles. Her doctorate is in Liturgical Studies from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, and she is a graduate of Seabury-Western Theological Seminary. Before coming to Bloy House, she was a parish priest in congregations in Montana, Idaho, and California, and was the Ministry Development Officer for the Episcopal Diocese of California. She is the author of *Ecofeminist Perspectives on Ash Wednesday and Lent* (Peter Lang Publishing, 2009), *Winged with Longing For Better Things* (Church Publishing, 2019) and co-editor of *In Spirit and Truth:*

a Vision of Episcopal Worship (Church Publishing, 2020). She has written and collaborated on numerous publications and discussion guides published and used within the Episcopal Church focusing on the sacramental rites, their history, and meanings. These include several articles on marriage for the 2015 General Convention Task Force on Marriage and "Claiming the Vision: Baptismal Identity in the Episcopal Church," a video series on the development of the baptism rite in the 1979 Book of Common Prayer.

Liturgist



The Rev. Maureen Peitler-Lederman is a native Nutmegger and serves through the Episcopal Church in Connecticut. She is a graduate of Providence College, BA Theology and a Master of Divinity from Yale Divinity School. Ordained in 2004, she served as the Associate Rector and Chaplain of the Day School at St. Thomas's Episcopal Church in New Haven, CT for nine years. She became the Rector of St. John's Episcopal Church in Guilford, CT until June of 2021. She has served the diocese as a member of the Commission on Ministry, Chair of the

South Central Leadership Team, Chair of the Women's Ministry Network, a Camp Washington Chaplain and Retreat Leader, and Chair for the Committee for the Formation of All the Baptized. Currently she is a diocesan consultant, working with newly ordained clergy. She leads retreats for parish groups and vestries, and is working with the Ekklesia Ballet Company on their work, *Body and Land*. She is pursuing a Certificate in Communications and Digital Media through the Center for New Media at Middlesex College. When not serving parishes or taking classes she enjoys spending time with family, baking, singing in a community choir, and blending and drinking tea.

Distance Learning Specialist



Mrs. Meg Ruffing is the Executive Assistant for the Episcopal Preaching Foundation. She has over 10+ years as an administrator where her strength in organization and creativity grew throughout the years. She is likely the first person you hear from when you are in communication with the Preaching Foundation. She enjoys meeting new people every day and helping others deliver the word of the Lord. She has been known as the “know it all” guru, but if she doesn’t have an answer, she will work hard on finding it!

Mrs. Ruffing lives in New Jersey with her husband, Mike, and her four rescued feline children, Amber, Otto, Bruce, and Lawrence Taylor, and serves on the board for a local cat rescue. In her “spare” time she enjoys arts and crafts, going to the beach, and is a huge Disney nerd. Her goal is to visit every Disney Park in the world. Right now, she has Tokyo and Florida crossed off the list.