

august 2010 – planning the preaching year

some values

- + the value in being both systematic and balanced in our preaching
- + the value in working our way through books of the Bible, one after the other
 - this respects the way the Bible comes to us as a library of books
 - this trains people to read the Bible in its context
 - this helps people to grasp the full message of the Bible gradually
 - this forces us to preach the difficult passages in the Bible
- + the value in committing to preaching a series rather than a series of one-offs
- + the value in creating the space and time for the Holy Spirit to direct us in our preaching
- + the value in collaborating with a team in the planning and evaluating of our progress
- + the value in saving time and reducing stress in our preaching

some (biblical) observations

Paul's double focus in Acts 20.20, 27: preaching to the *whole* need of the people and from the *whole* Word of God.

In the New Testament there are 33+ words which relate to preaching. So there are many ministries of the word and a preaching team has the opportunity of reflecting this diversity. Peter Adam places these words into five categories:

- (a) words of *information*: teach, instruct, point out, make known, remind;
- (b) words of *declaration*: preach, proclaim, cry out, testify, bear witness, declare, write, read, pass on, set forth;
- (c) words of *exhortation*: call, denounce, warn, rebuke, command, give judgement, encourage, appeal, urge, ask;
- (d) words of *persuasion*: explain, make clear, prove, guard, debate, contend, refute, reason, persuade, convince, insist, defend, confirm, stress;
- (e) words of *conversation*: say, speak, talks, answer, reply, give answer.

Don't become attached to just one family

Encourage each other in your different strengths.

some (specific) strategies

At some point in the Spring . when the reminders of growth and creativity are all around us . let's take the preaching team away on a planning retreat for at least a day. We'll pray together. We'll build the team together and we'll plan a year of preaching together.

Something like this:

1. Decide who is on the preaching team and how many times they will be available to preach in the upcoming calendar year. If someone is in full-time employment elsewhere I would caution *against* preaching more than 3-4 times a year. For them preparation is always done after-hours and it is difficult to give the attention to preparation that they want to and need to...
2. Then start with the **52** Sundays of the year
 - Subtract the Sundays when you will be intentional about inviting specific guest preachers to come and address the church . what are the issues? where are the gaps?. As part of the planning process think about specific people, specific topics, specific dates for these guests. This would capture all the Sundays covered by people beyond the preaching team. I think **6** is about right...
 - [So... 52 - 6 = 46 Sundays remaining]

Decide together on THREE sermon series . with an average of eight sermons in each series . so **24** Sundays in all.

- + select one series from a section of the Gospels
- + select one series from the Epistles/Acts
- + select one series from a section of the Old Testament

Here is where you listen to each other and pray together about the ~~areas~~ areas of the Bible that need ~~picking~~ picking for your people. You probably want to be thinking a couple of years ahead on this one. ~~l~~ dip into the church budget and buy 3-4 of the best commentaries on these books, allow them to circulate around the preaching team before ending up in the Church Library. This is great site, updated each year ... but don't get bogged down with some of the scholarly options...

<http://www.denverseminary.edu/resources/the-denver-journal/>

(click on ~~Annotat~~ Annotated OT Bibliography or ~~New Testament Exegesis Bibliography~~ New Testament Exegesis Bibliography)

[So... 52 - 6 - 24 = 22 Sundays remaining]

Decide to linger with TWO sections of the Church Calendar each year and preach a series of 4 sermons on each event (**8** in total). While this will usually be Advent/Christmas and Lent/Easter, you may choose to vary this one year. For example, Pentecost etc

[So... 52 - 6 - 24 - 8 = 14 Sundays remaining]

Then there are other special days to consider . as ~~one-offs~~ one-offs the Church Calendar days for which you are not doing a full series; Family Services; Mother's Day etc ... Some of these can combine with existing series or special guests . but there is probably still a need to set aside another **4** Sundays for these occasions...

[So... 52 - 6 - 24 - 8 - 4 = 10 Sundays remaining]

3. Now some big decisions face you as a preaching team!

What do you do with these remaining ten Sundays each year? We have some strong series through biblical books in place. We have some good engagement with the Church Calendar, special days and special guests...

What else is there to do?

Ironically ~~l~~ save some of your best creativity for this final group of Sundays . and go for two topical series, one with a focus on the people within the church and the other with a focus on the people beyond the church. So, an equipping/maturity focus and then an evangelistic/mission focus. Maybe 4 + 6, or 5 + 5? Develop the theme. Draw in a graphic artist to create some brochures and spread them around. Put some extra energy into the creativity in the service. Maybe move away from the formal sermon-slot to something more interactive....

[So... 52 - 6 - 24 - 8 - 4 - 10 = 0 Sundays remaining]

A few other comments:

It is important to be ~~un~~ interruptable+ . and not miss the opportunity to speak into a situation of crisis in the church, community, nation, or world.

The sense of ~~team~~ team needs to be fostered. You need to be a tight group, supportive of each other and honest with each other. ~~l~~ look to meet for a meal and evening together bi-monthly, splitting the time between evaluating how things have been going with the preaching *and* anticipating how things need to be going on upcoming Sundays.

~~l~~ look at having people beyond the preaching team . like focus groups . join those meetings for a period of time. Engage them. Listen to them. What are their insights?

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