

<p style="text-align: center;">sixteen affirmations <i>teaching homiletics in the majority world</i></p>

preamble

In June 2010 a Consultation was held in Oxford for teachers of homiletics from around the majority world. It was coordinated by Langham Preaching in partnership with Wycliffe Hall. More than twenty people gathered to hear and to discuss presentations covering ten issues of relevance to this discipline. The sense of community established so quickly among people from such diverse countries is testimony to the power of the gospel and the fellowship which comes in the mutual commitment to a common calling.

A report on the event, together with its outcomes, is available. This document attempts to reflect on the significant affirmations that were made during the course of the week . without being a comprehensive statement on everything of importance to homiletics.

affirmations

1. Although homiletics is a discipline which attracts methodologies, *we affirm* that *theology* is more important than methodology ... (and that) the essential secret is not mastering certain techniques, but being mastered by certain convictions+(John Stott).
2. With its redemptive storyline, its perpetual relevance, and its christocentric focus, *we affirm* the authority and sufficiency of the Scripture on which homiletics is founded and which the preaching ministry helps the church to preserve.
3. Given the numerous sermons recorded in Scripture, as well as the wide variety of words used to describe preaching, *we affirm* the need for homiletics to linger longer in this biblical data on the way to creating a more spacious understanding of preaching and the role it plays in the various contexts in which it can be encountered today.
4. *We affirm* that the teaching of homiletics tends to thrive wherever it enjoys the advocacy of the leadership in a college . be it Boards, Principals, or Deans . and that the involvement of such people in the delivery of a course in homiletics can also be beneficial.
5. Learning to preach incorporates a mixture of the formal, or *taught* dimensions of preaching together with the informal, or *un-taught* dimensions. What happens in classrooms (right across the curriculum), in the chapel, and in the wider community all contribute to the shaping of preachers. And so *we affirm* that it takes an entire college, with a united faculty, to ensure the effectiveness of the homiletics course(s) within the training programme.
6. In the majority world anyone who graduates from a theological college is expected to be a preacher. Therefore *we affirm* that the teaching of homiletics needs to be an indispensable, inter-disciplinary, and integrating exercise at the core of the mission, vision and practise of the institution.
7. The preacher needs to be equipped to hold the Bible in one hand and a mirror in the other. *Truth through personality* still reigns. Homiletics is about the message *and* the messenger. *We affirm* the priority of growing in godliness and self-awareness so that *Paul*+(1 Timothy 4.15) can see the progress being made. This *all* includes students and teachers, parishioners and supervisors, family and friends, the surrounding world . and God.
8. The value of listening to great preachers is undeniable. And yet *we affirm* that not all that is inspirational is *aspirational* Many high profile preachers offer a model that is both unattainable and unsustainable for preachers in the majority world where resources can

be limited and where so few have the privilege of being able to give such a singular commitment to biblical preaching.

9. The homiletics classroom requires an atmosphere with a high level of respect, openness, honesty, patience, safety, authenticity and vulnerability. To create this atmosphere we *affirm* the place of a teacher who is both prayer-full and care-full with students whom they grow to understand on an individual basis. Then it will be possible for assessment to carry both the affirmation and the critique that is transformational.
10. The local church is the context which births the calling to preach, the community which nurtures the practise of preaching, and the lifelong partner in the development of preachers. *We affirm* that homiletics in the college is at its best when active and mature practitioners in the local church are involved in the training, supervision and mentoring of students. Without this partnership, a college will become static in the way it delivers homiletics as it drifts away from the requirements of the local church.
11. *We affirm* that with homiletics, the art of curriculum development is about affirming the things that ~~we~~ must teach+and distinguishing these elements from the things that ~~we~~ can't teach+(as they are ~~taught~~beyond the classroom) and the things that ~~we~~ don't teach+(as they are taught in other classrooms).
12. The task of exegesis begins with a thorough engagement with the biblical text. *We affirm* that this engagement provides the foundation for a similar engagement with culture where the local histories, religions, and socio-political issues conspire together with global realities to provide the context which informs the emerging sermon. This ensures that the task of preaching is an exercise in cultural exegesis as well as biblical exegesis.
13. The majority world can struggle to access the resources which homileticians in the rest of the world take for granted. *We affirm* that the internet will gradually ~~eliminate~~ geography+ and that with minimal cost, priority can be given to using electronic means to share one's own resources as well as access the resources of colleagues all around the world.
14. The possibility of a local theological college initiating a ~~School of Preaching~~ captured the imagination of participants. *We affirm* this strategy as a means of providing a greater intentionality to the training of preachers while they are students *within* college, as well as providing a means of resourcing ongoing training and encouragement for pastors *after* college.
15. Time and space was given to hear models of indigenous and grassroots training which often reach beyond where the college is able to travel with a course in homiletics. Be they church-based initiatives, or initiatives which serve alongside the local church, we *affirm* it to be important that colleges value these programmes by learning from them and partnering with them.
16. One way to impact a generation is to ensure there is a flow of scholars who are preachers, as well as a flow of preachers who are scholars. Postgraduate research in homiletics in the majority world is still in its infancy. *We affirm* the need not just to provide pathways by which scholars are enabled to develop as effective preachers, but also to make it possible for preachers, together with teachers of homiletics, to progress their understanding of their discipline through to postgraduate level . captive, as always, to the lordship of Christ, the authority of Scripture and the power of the Spirit.

We invite you to spark a discussion on the state of homiletics at some level within your college context by drawing on the following questions coming out of these affirmations...

Possible Questions for Discussion

- a. *What are the specific theological convictions which need to 'master' a course in homiletics?*
- b. *To what extent is your college producing biblical preachers? How is this assessed? To whom do you listen? How can it be done even more effectively?*
- c. *How might the attitude towards homiletics be further strengthened within the various layers of leadership in your college?*
- d. *Identify the 'taught' and 'caught' dimensions in the training of preachers that are happening currently in your college. How could they work in harmony with each other better?*
- e. *Within your curriculum assess the suitability and possibility of homiletics being an "indispensable, interdisciplinary, and integrating" exercise?*
- f. *Take the time to complete the exercise which identifies the things "we must teach", "we can't teach", and "we don't teach" in a course on homiletics?*
- g. *Where are the local church – and its effective pastor-preachers – involved in the training of preachers in your college?*
- h. *How is progress measured in the emerging preaching ministries of your students? How can it become more comprehensive?*
- i. *How can those most directly responsible for the course in homiletics be more "prayer-full and care-full" in the way they relate to individual students?*
- j. *What is happening beyond your college in the training of biblical preachers and how can you affirm it better and look for ways to partner with it?*
- k. *If your college has graduate and post-graduate options what would be involved in including homiletics as a part of that programme?*

On behalf of all those who gathered in Oxford from around the majority world in June 2010

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