

Ferrum College

*An Analysis of Sermon Styles in  
Franklin County, Virginia*

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Churchgoers attend church for many different reasons, for some the reason is to hear a great sermon that holds their interest, for others it may be to feel that a sermon touches their hearts, for others, it is to hear something that might help them grow as a person and gain salvation by following God's Word, or some may prefer communion or just the community in general. Whatever the reason, it is important to realize that all sermons should be well-written and should be presented in a manner that connects with their congregation.

The sermon content and delivery of four ministers from four different Christian denominations in Franklin County, Virginia, illustrates distinct approaches influenced by denominational differences, personal styles and the regions these ministers grew up in or have worked in, in the past. A brief history of each church: Episcopal, Methodist (College), Baptist and Non-denominational has also been included to define the particular rituals that each church must follow as defined by their denomination.

### **Preparing and Presenting a Sermon**

Three different styles of preaching are generally acknowledged: Expository, textual and topical. Ministers will write their sermons based on one of these styles or maybe a combination: Expository preaching involves research in the Bible and commentaries to define the passages. John MacArthur, an American pastor and author known for his internationally syndicated

Christian teaching radio program, *Grace to You*. He has been the pastor-teacher of Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, Ca since 1969. MacArthur, in his book, *Preaching: How to Preach Biblically* centers on expository preaching, which by his definition is “a form of preaching that details the meaning of a particular text or passage of scripture. It explains what the Bible means by what it says” (MacArthur 137). Some well-known expository preachers are John MacArthur, Charles Swindoll and Alistair Begg, these ministers all use the Bible to explain the passages within the Bible, along with commentaries.

Each of the above mentioned ministers, MacArthur, Swindoll and Begg, believe that it is their duty to expound on Scripture, to bring out of the text what is there and expose it. Biblically, this practice illustrates the advice in 2 Timothy 2:15 that Timothy was to “Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction.” Expository preaching is a necessary part of preaching from the Scriptures. The minister is to make God’s Word known and make it understandable. Passages that will be used for the seminary are chosen by methods that differ between denominations. Episcopal and Methodist ministers both use lectionaries, while Baptist ministers choose their passage(s) based on what God leads them to preach on a given Sunday and the Non-denominational minister interviewed admitted that he sometimes uses both methods.

Drew Goodmanson, a technology expert, church planter and pastor and co-founder of Kaleo Church in San Diego, CA, describes textual preaching as; pulling one text from the Bible and centering your sermon on that one scripture, not using other parts of the Bible to determine what the one scripture means. “It is a jumping off point to discuss a particular idea” (Goodmanson).

Timothy Warren, Senior Professor of Pastoral Ministries at Bowling Green State University and author of many journal articles that have appeared in *Preaching Today.com*, *Bibliotheca Sacra* and *Ministry*, states that “topical preaching is one that is centered on a topic and organized around a thought, with the sermon point being developed by the minister and supported by proof texts.” Many times only a single verse is selected to explain the topic and sometimes the verse(s) selected has a meaning that is entirely different from use of certain short passages, many times only a single verse, pulled from the Bible in support of a particular belief or doctrine. Sometimes the verse(s) selected has a meaning that is entirely different from what the writer intended” (Warren). In topical preaching, the speaker has the freedom to address issues being faced by his hearers and may use passages from the Bible, or other texts, such as poems, book or articles, that address the topic with none of the passages being studied in depth.

What are the differences in preparing sermons for each denomination or non-denominational church and how do congregations of each receive the sermon?

Reverend John Heck of Saint Peter’s Episcopal Church in Callaway, VA said he does not begin his sermons research with prayer, not that God is unimportant, but the RCL provides the passages from which all Episcopal ministers will preach on any given Sunday: one from the Old Testament, one from the New Testament and usually one from Psalm. He does use the time just before he delivers the sermon, while a song is being sung, to go to God in prayer and pray that his ability to speak will be that which God provides.

Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria, Virginia is where Heck obtained his post-graduate degree. He stated that his college background in seminary really does help him with his

sermon preparation. Heck said that they, “had three semesters of homiletics, which helped him to some degree. All we did was preach, get critiqued, listen to classmates preach and critique them, but all of the classes were equally helpful: Old Testament, New Testament, Systematic Theology, Church History, Ethics, Pastoral Care, etc. There was also a class called ‘The Bible and the New York Times,’ which was about current events and the Bible. This class helped with relating current events to the Bibles” (Heck).

Heck said all other Episcopal ministers do not rely on God to lead them to what they will speak on each Sunday, as do ministers from some of the other denominations. Beyond scripture references, the Episcopal ministers are free to interpret the passages and therefore preach on it as they see fit. Their styles and interpretation should fit with their congregations. They do rely on God to guide what they will say.

The Episcopal Church holds tightly to the RCL, because of this, Heck states that his sermons, “are limited to the RCL, but the theme of the Old Testament and the theme of the Gospel are linked together, so we read four lessons on Sunday, an Old Testament, a New Testament, A Psalm and a Gospel.” He also said that he “almost never preaches on the Epistle, because Paul is terribly contextual and completely taken out of context.”

Kevin Goodrich, an Anglican Dominican Priest and Pastor of Grace Episcopal Church in Jamestown, ND, in his article, *Preaching by Lectionary*, said that “most lectionary preachers prepare and present their sermons in a thematic way, drawing from the text, the Christian year and the particular time and circumstances of their congregation’s life” (Goodrich).

Heck is typically a textual minister as he pulls his information from the Word, per the lectionary, preaching on that text. He is then free to pull in outside sources: movies, poems, books, etc. to back up the passage(s). Lectionary preaching frees the minister from the job of deciding what to preach on. He does, on occasion, speak from a topical point-of-view, taking the theme of a movie, or public events and centering his message on that, as long as it fits with the RCL. Another benefit of speaking from the lectionary is that the minister has four passages of scripture to choose from and could form sermons from an expository, textual or topical approach depending on how the Spirit leads (Goodrich).

Some ministers keep their sermon notes, either recorded within PowerPoint presentations, or on paper to use again with either a different congregation or after time has lapsed. When asked if he kept his sermons for future reference or to preach again, he said, “No.” With the RCL, it is not really necessary. The RCL covers three years of planned biblical texts. While it is up to the minister whether they record their sermons on paper, PowerPoint, or not at all, it was found that while Heck does not keep his sermons, Nicholson-Angle, Harris and Banks do keep their sermons for future reference, or to use again. Each minister interviewed revealed that they keep notes or an outline of their sermons, but commit most of their sermons to memory and just glance at their notes to remind them of their next point.

Heck, dressed in a white robe, complete with a stole, entered the sanctuary and took his place at the pulpit. Heck, in the pulpit, is generally still, offering hand gestures for certain points of his sermon, but he is also somewhat subdued. Perhaps, “Be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10), is always in his heart. Heck exemplifies his love for the church and its people through his caring attitude. He “preaches from the Bible and does not often use commentaries,

but relies on what the Bible says, it meant one thing for people back then and something entirely different for people of today” (Heck). Heck said he “begins the process of writing a sermon by reading the lesson. He usually reads it every day of the week, living with it, carrying it with him in whatever he is doing. Just before the worship service, a hymn starts things and Heck takes “that opportunity to pray, regarding what is going to come from my mouth to their [the congregation’s] ears.”

One of Heck’s parishioners, Lana Whited, said that “his sermons do differ from the June 24, 2018 sermon, as he sometimes speaks on movies or public events. I’ve heard him talk about the movie, *The Mission*, featuring Robert DeNiro, on more than one occasion. His sermons hold my interest and he tends to close his sermons with a quote from Reverend Steven Charleston” (Whited). Reverend Steven Charleston was the President and Dean of Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and he is currently the Dean of St. Paul’s Cathedral in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Heck did not interject any illustrations or anecdotes during his sermons, which were textual, to-the-point and humble. The congregation, as a whole, seemed solemn during Heck’s sermon. Amid readings from *The Common Book of Prayer and the Administration of the Sacraments and other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church*, some knelt, others sat in the pews with their heads bowed. Generally, the service was quiet, with only a sneeze or the sound of a baby crying. Heck delivered his sermon without the aid of modern technology, there was no sound system, no band or orchestra, just a piano with the choir or congregation when singing, otherwise, simply the voice of the Minister.

Reverend Doctor, Jan Nicholson-Angle, Dean of Chapel and Religious Life at Ferrum College, in Ferrum, Virginia, said that she always begins her process of writing a sermon with prayer. “Prayer centers me in God’s will for the community and becomes self-emptying in order to hear God’s Word for God’s people.” Nicholson-Angle stated that while “some Methodist ministers are topical or textual preachers, she generally preaches from lectionary texts,” this is an example of textual preaching. Her sermons come from careful and concise reading of the supplied Biblical texts and commentaries.

When asked if she believed that ministers are a vessel that God uses to speak through, Nicholson-Angle stated “Yes, I believe ministers are called and set apart to preach God’s Word, administer the sacraments, and order the life of the Church.” She preaches from the entire Christian canon – no book is off limits and her end-goal is to be faithful to the Word that God is giving to her for God’s people.

Nicholson-Angle attended Duke University, and felt that many of the courses she took there prepared her for preaching. “We were required to take preaching courses: Preaching, Old Testament and New Testament” (Nicholson-Angle). These classes seemed to have benefited her greatly with her preaching style.

Ferrum College is a Methodist affiliated school, Nicholson-Angle said that her congregation changes each year with seniors leaving and new freshmen coming in. Although her congregation changes and she keeps her sermons on paper and on her computer, she “generally never preaches the same sermon twice. I do keep as reference when preaching from the same text” (Nicholson-Angle).

When a sermon was observed, it was noted that the process on campus was quite different than if she had a church off-campus. On-campus, Nicholson-Angle is dealing with interdenominational students, so there is less formality. The traditions and denominational guidelines that would apply in an off-campus church are adapted. Students attending these services are from all denominations and Nicholson-Angle tries to make her Methodist service acceptable to all.

When asked if she offered an altar call at the end of her services, Nicholson-Angle replied, “Not an “altar call” per se, every service, however there is some call to respond to God’s Word. “Altar call” as an invitation to accept Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior, that is not necessarily EVERY sermon, but if you mean some form of response to Christian discipleship, whether that is prayer, praise, self-examination, a move to service to others, etc., the answer is yes.”

Ferrum College has a Praise Band and uses electric guitars, drums and acoustic guitars. Nicholson-Angle uses drop-down screens and a PowerPoint presentation to display lyrics so the congregation can sing along. Her sermon points are also displayed. This allows the congregation to be included and feel that they are part of the service by participating. College students need this inclusion and the modern technology is one way of achieving this.

Reverend Melvin Harris, Pastor of Halesford Baptist Church in Wirtz, Virginia does not use a lectionary. He said that he begins the process of writing a sermon by first reading, and while reading through the Bible, he finds a passage of scripture that he cannot get away from.

“Then I begin to pray about it, Is this what You (God) want me to preach on? Is this what You (God) want me to say? My prayer would be is this what You (God) want me to take to the pulpit on Sunday and once I’m convinced, I pull from several, three or four, different commentaries” (Harris). He reads through the scripture that he will be focusing on. Harris said he tries to find himself in the scripture he plans to share, and he said he tries to “become one of the congregation” (Harris). Harris said that he usually puts twenty to twenty-five hours in each Sunday sermon.

Like many other Baptist ministers, Harris is primarily an expository preacher. He exposes the Word verse-by-verse, explaining the meaning and intent of biblical text, providing commentary and illustrations and anecdotes to make the passage clear and understandable. Like other expository preachers, Harris pulls from the Biblical texts, but also uses reliable commentaries to support the relevant passage in the Bible.

Liberty School of Lifelong Learning (LUSLL), a school-by-video program and Bible-study under LUSLL Program, at Liberty, in Lynchburg, is where Harris attended graduate school. Many of the classes Harris took at LUSLL do still apply to his sermons today: “Solid Study of Bible at Virginia Baptist Hospital and Pastoral Counseling which included How to Pastor a Church. I held the position of Student Chaplain for two years and when taking tests, had to have someone outside of the family to administer them and send them back to Liberty” (Harris).

As an expository preacher, Harris digs deep within the passage he will be preaching on and studies it extensively. He then creates an outline from the passage(s), careful not to dictate

what it will be, but pulls the outline from the Bible, allowing it to expose itself. Once the outline has been established, he then sets out to write or record his sermon. He may turn from one scripture to another, using the Old Testament to back up the New Testament, he then adds illustrations and anecdotes where they fit, tailoring his sermon to his congregation. He also adds topics or relative items from today's headlines. Ralph Ellis, a faithful parishioner, said that "the sermon he brought today is typical of how Harris preaches. He usually lets the Praise Team open the service, to get the congregation going and after the choir's special, will lead in prayer and then present his message."

As a topical minister, Harris derives interesting topics that both teach and engage his congregation "through prayer, most of the time you catch the congregation's attention within the first few minutes. If it's a dull sermon, you can make it dull. I like to keep the people's attention by drawing them in. I like flashy titles, it grabs them up front and makes them want to hear what's being said. Good illustrations keep them interested as well" (Harris). Harris pulls Biblical texts that back up his topics and uses these to preach his sermons.

When in the pulpit, Harris does not stand still. He moves around freely, from end-to-end of the stage, down the steps on the level of the congregation. He tends to memorize a great deal of his sermon on a given Sunday, so he does not have to go back to the podium. He also makes use of modern technology. He uses a lapel microphone, to deliver his voice all over the large building and microphones are also used when the Praise Band opens the service with song, complete with drums, electric guitars and keyboards. The lyrics for all of the songs are shown on screens that roll down from the ceiling and are projected through a PowerPoint slideshow that allows one to follow every word without opening a single book.

An invitation to accept Christ as your savior is always given at the end of the service. The Baptist belief is that one of the most important times of worship is invitation time. Dr. David Howell, Dean of Arts and Humanities, Professor of Religion and Director of Faculty Development at Ferrum College, stated that “Baptist churches (in the States anyway – not necessarily so in England) always close with an invitation.” Regardless of the method used, everyone wants to see the same thing happen, for God to have the freedom to move amongst His people.

Reverend Marshall Banks, Pastor of Open Door Community Church in Rocky Mount, Virginia, said that he begins his sermon search with prayer. He prays for his congregation, this particular Non-Denominational Church was formed from both Baptist and Methodist remnants, although people of all faiths are welcomed. Banks said that he “asks God to direct me concerning what to speak and what to share.” He also said he believes that “pastors are called by God to preach as He sees fit.”

Banks is an expository, textual and occasionally topical preacher. Much like Baptist minister, Melvin Harris, Banks reveals the Word verse-by-verse, explaining the meaning and intent of biblical text, providing commentary and examples to make the passage clear and understandable. He sometimes preaches using a topical style where he centers on a topic and locates Biblical texts to back up that topic. He did confess that, being a former Methodist minister, sometimes he does still fall back to the Lectionary, especially if he is hurried a

particular week. Banks is a bi-vocational minister, meaning that he holds another job in addition to Pastor.

When asked how he derives interesting subjects to both teach and keep his congregation engaged Banks said, “The Holy Spirit leads me. A lot of it is just life experience. The message is as much for me as it is for the congregation. John Wesley said: ‘To learn faith, you preach more faith,’ so the more I preach, the more it develops in me as well.”

When asked if he has had any issues with switching over from a Methodist minister to a Non-Denominational one, Banks said, “not as much as I would have thought I would. I do still, from time-to-time, use the RCL, but most of the time, I allow God to point me in the direction he wants me to go. If that means a sermon series, then I will do a sermon series, if it means week-to-week messages from different parts of the Bible, then that’s what I will do. I am here to serve Him.”

When in the pulpit, Banks is physically moving about, much like Harris. He mostly begins his sermons from behind the pulpit, gathering his notes. He then will take his Bible and eventually he paces the floor, level with the congregation. He will occasionally shake his closed, but marked with his finger, Bible at the congregation to emphasize a point. When he is at the podium, he will occasionally slap his hand down, again to emphasize a point. Banks is a relatively calm pastor, who will elicit an ‘amen’ from the congregation by asking for it with a, “Can I get an, amen?” or “Can I hear a, hallelujah?” The congregation, when observed, seemed to be well-engaged, nodding with affirmation at times and following along in their individual Bible’s as Banks read Biblical texts. There were shouts of “Amen” and/or “Hallelujah” as the

service progressed. This interaction with the congregation is energetic and keeps the minister “fired-up”.

One ritual that this particular Non-Denominational church has adopted, is to offer an invitation to come forward to accept Christ, re-dedicate your life to His service, or just to be prayed over. This is always offered at the end of the service, Banks feels this is necessary to “let the Spirit move freely among the congregation.” This is something that most Baptists believe.

These four denominations are only a small sampling of churches in Franklin County, Virginia. Under Baptist alone, there are many different church subcategories, (i.e. Missionary Baptist, Southern Baptist, Reformed Baptist and African-American, etc.) each of these have different ordinances, but their central belief is the same. Preaching in the south, especially in African-American folk churches and communities is an interactive event. “The African-American folk church places more emphasis on orality, so preachers in this tradition generally do not give sermons from written texts, instead presentation is informal, and congregational response is constant” (Andrews 1127 - 1128). The congregation responds to the Pastor’s, “Can I get an Amen?” The congregation may reply, “Amen, brother.” The African-American church is not the only place this occurred. Marshall Banks, requests congregational response, much in the way that the African-American folk church do. While Bank’s church does not engage in all Pentecostal practices, like speaking in tongues or dancing in the aisles, they do use the congregation response. It seems to energize the minister, it lets them know that you are listening.

## **Regional Preaching**

Does where one was born, raised and travel contribute to how ministers present their sermons? Heck was born in southern Ohio and really didn't attend church much while growing up, "not until I went to college in Sewanee, Tennessee, where I went to church every Sunday. "My preaching probably has more to do with growing up in a family of storytellers, as much as anything else" (Heck).

Nicholson-Angle was born and raised in Radford, Virginia, but traveled extensively throughout the United States. She also lived and served for one year in England. "I consider myself fairly well-traveled within the United States and abroad. I do not think the location, in which I was raised as a child, greatly impacts my preaching style. I do believe, however, that my overall life experiences, spiritual maturing, and theological education greatly impact how I preach" (Nicholson-Angle). Nicholson-Angle does have a bit of an accent that she would have picked-up in the Radford area, but this really doesn't affect her preaching. Her voice is quite clear and she does not display any of the dialect she could have picked-up, but has trained herself to speak more eloquently.

Harris was raised in Huddleston, Virginia and his upbringing had a significant bearing on his preaching, as does his travels. His accent and choice of words were impacted by where he was raised. He blends with his congregation, because he speaks in the Franklin County, Virginia and on a level his congregation can respect.

Banks was raised in Meadows of Dan, Virginia and he still speaks of his parents and how they helped to shape him and his style of preaching. His mother, in her 80s, still prays for him

and his ministry daily. Banks is very Southern with both his demeanor and his choice of vocabulary and his congregation appreciates it.

John K. Wall, in his article: *A Study of the Rhetoric of the Early Sermons of St. Augustine* noted that early sermons “included rhetoric that persuades a congregation to walk with Jesus.” St. Augustine (354 CE – 430 CE), was a Christian clergyman and renowned rhetorician who argued for the continued development of ideas that had originated during the Classical Period. He spoke in a time and place that still operated primarily as an oral culture. Few people ever learned to read or write, let alone developed the rhetorical presence of Augustine. “Rhetoric, since the early days of the written word, was valued by the Mesopotamians and Egyptians, who both valued the ability to speak with eloquence and wisdom. But, it wasn’t until the rise of Greek democracy that rhetoric became a high art that was studied and developed systematically” (Wall).

Rhetoric had a negative reputation at this time, as it was associated with the work of a group of people called the Sophists, who were orators in an oral culture. They were gifted with speech and skilled with what would later become known as Rhetoric. Sophists were respected, feared and hated because of their public speaking. There was no real paper available, no written contracts or deeds, and disputes that would be settled today through a contest of words, then it was one person’s word against another’s, and whoever presented the best oral case would often win. The Sophists held no values other than winning and succeeding. (Pecorino).

In the medieval period the church felt threatened by secular rhetorical works that they considered pagan. Their ideas were too valuable for the church to ignore. They focused on a

communication study to help them develop better preaching and letter writing skills to persuade and develop presentations, including sermons, both oral and written. Those in power chose to keep women's participation in communication studies non-existent, making them largely illiterate while men served as the overseers of the church.

Al Breitzkreuz, in his paper, *Rhetoric and the Art of Preaching* suggests that eloquent language and persuasive speech rule the power of the gospel that is preached. Biblical Paul did not preach "with eloquence or superior wisdom." Are today's minister supposed to? Paul was contrasting the wisdom of God with the wisdom of the Greeks, who believed in the "seductive power of rhetoric." Although Paul did not entice his hearers, he did seek to persuade them with carefully chosen words.

Each of the denominations, interviewed by the author of this paper, share the commonality of being exceptional preachers. Beyond that, we find that Heck, seemed to conduct a more formal service, held more to a formal theme, than the other three churches. Harris, and Banks, each deviates from the ritual observed in the Episcopal Church under Heck. Each is more relaxed and free.

Nicholson-Angle, Dean of the Chapel at Ferrum College (Methodist) has a unique situation, because her congregation is constantly changing from year-to-year and she has an on-campus ministry, so it is more relaxed. She does still have some rituals that she stands by and does perform, even on-campus, such as The Lord's Supper and an altar call.

## **History of the four denominations of the ministers interviewed**

Understanding something about the history of these denominations is important to defining how these churches function and what is ritualistic to them: The beginnings of the Church of England, from which The Episcopal Church derives, date to at least the second century, when merchants and other travelers first brought Christianity to England. In its modern form, the church dates from the English Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The first Episcopal Church was founded in the United States in 1784 and led by Bishop Samuel Seabury (History of The Episcopal Church). The church used and still uses, the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), a table of scripture readings that are appointed for worship. The RCL was originally contained in the Book of Common Prayer 1979 and was based on the lectionary developed by the Roman Catholic Church after Pope John Paul, II, which provided the three-year cycle of Sunday readings.

The primary belief among The Episcopal Church is the life and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The basic teachings of the church, or catechism, include; Jesus Christ is fully human and fully God. He died and was resurrected from the dead. Jesus provides the way of eternal life for those who believe. This is the common denominator of the four churches that were interviewed.

*The Book of Common Prayer* is full of devotional and teaching resources for individuals and congregations. It is the primary symbol of the unity of the Episcopal Church. *The Creeds* are statements of the basic beliefs about God. There are two foundational creeds that we use during worship: the Apostles' Creed, used at baptism and daily worship, and the Nicene Creed used at communion. When these Creeds are recited, faith is affirmed. *Catechism* is found at the back of

the Book of Common Prayer and helps teach the essential truths of the Christian faith and how Episcopalians live those truths and the *Sacraments*, which are outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace, given by Christ as sure and certain means for receiving God's grace.

“The people of the United Methodist Church (UMC) are part of the second largest Protestant denomination in the United States” (UMC.org). The Methodist Church was formed by the joining of the Methodist Church and the Evangelical Brethren Church which merged in 1968. John and Charles Wesley began a movement in England in 1729 that helped establish the Methodist Church of today.

The ministers of the UMC have the option of using their lectionary or they may choose to use a topical / textual preaching style. Most adhere to the lectionary, as this removes the step of searching for their message topic and is widely accepted among Methodist churches.

The purpose of the United Methodist Church is to create disciples for Christ through outreach, evangelism, and through seeking holiness, also called sanctification, by the power of the Holy Spirit. The flame in the church logo represents the work of the Holy Spirit in the world and the two parts of the flame also represent the predecessor denominations, the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren, united at the base symbolizing the 1968 merger. The more unique beliefs of the United Methodist Church, like many other denominations, include: *Sacraments, Sanctification, Free will, and Social Justice*.

Ferrum College, founded in 1913 as a liberal arts college is based on Christian beliefs and related to the United Methodist Church. Reverend Doctor Jan Nicholson-Angle is the current Dean of the Chapel and Religious Life. Ferrum College is a liberal arts institution founded in

Christian principles and related to the United Methodist Church, their Methodist heritage supports their mission to educate students in the disciplines of higher learning and to help them be thoughtful and perceptive, to be articulate and professionally capable, and to be caring and concerned citizens of their community, nation, and world.

Many English Christians were demanding reform in their churches by the sixteenth century. They sensed that the church had become corrupt and selfish, and that it had largely left the simple message of the Bible.

One group seeking reform was called “Separatists,” they separated from the Church of England and formed their own independent congregations. “By 1600, there were already several of these congregations in England, and they mushroomed by 1625. The Separatists included many groups holding a variety of views. Some of them later helped populate such diverse churches as Quakers, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and assorted independents and nonconformists. Some of these Separatists, studying the Bible, adopted believer’s baptism and became known as Baptists” (McBeth).

Membership policies vary due to the rules of the churches, but the traditional method by which an individual becomes a member of a church is through believer’s baptism, which is a public profession of faith in Jesus, followed by water baptism. Most Baptists do not believe that baptism is a requirement for salvation, but rather a public expression of one’s inner repentance and faith. Therefore, some churches will admit into membership persons who make a profession without believer’s baptism. Believer’s baptism requires that an individual be able to freely and

earnestly profess their faith, which is why Baptists do not believe in baptizing, or sprinkling infants, but will perform an infant dedication to the church.

Baptists observe the ordinance of The Lord's Supper, which is observed on the first Sunday of each quarter, beginning in January and must use the correct elements with a biblical understanding of each being important. "Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper as his last meal with his disciples as part of the Jewish Passover" (Matt. 26:26-30). Unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine were part of the meal. Jesus said that the bread was symbolic of his body and the wine was symbolic of his blood. The unleavened bread symbolizes the purity of Christ, for he was without sin and his body was an unblemished sacrifice for our sins. The wine from crushed grapes symbolizes the blood of Christ shed for us" (Heb. 4:15).

Christ's sacrifice for us on the cross as he gave his body and shed his blood for our sins. Baptists believe the Bible teaches that the elements used in the Lord's Supper are not literally the body and blood of Christ. These are symbols and eating the bread and drinking the cup is an outward symbols of obeying a command of Christ and to recall his sacrifice for us, his presence with us and his certain return.

Baptists "believe that salvation is by God's grace through faith in Christ alone, not by works or ritual" (Eph. 2:8-9). Because the Bible indicates that all believers in Christ are priests, there is no need for a priestly class to administer either baptism or the Lord's Supper (1 Peter 2:5), although normally the pastor of a church baptizes and presides at the Lord's Supper.

Non-denominational Christianity consists of churches which typically distance themselves from the confessionalism, "in a Christian sense, is the belief or importance of full and

unambiguous assent to the whole of a religious teaching,” (Webster) or creedalism, “any system, doctrine, or formula of religious belief, as of a denomination,” (Webster) of other Christian communities by calling themselves non-denominational. Often founded by individual pastors, they have little affiliation with other denominations, but typically adhere to evangelical Protestantism. There is no identifiable standard, congregations and leaders with commonly held doctrine, policy and worship.

Stephen Prothero, Boston University religion scholar, argues that “non-denominationalism hides the fundamental theological and spiritual issues that drove the division of Christianity into denominations behind a veneer of ‘Christian unity’. He argues that non-denominationalism encourages a descent of Christianity into comfortable ‘general moralism’ rather than being a focus for facing the complexities of churchgoers’ culture and spirituality” (Prothero).

A non-denominational Church is a church without denominational affiliation. Churches within non-denominational groups set up their own bylaws, mission statement, and establish structure of the church’s leadership. A Non-Denominational Church does not follow any historical creed (such as the Nicene Creed or the Apostle’s Creed), counsels, or other historically developed forms. Although they may not officially acknowledge the ancient creeds, the Nicene or Apostle’s creed is commonly representative of their basic beliefs. Usually these churches have roots in the Baptist movement, but may be either traditional Arminian / free will in theology, or reformed / Calvinistic.

**Preparing and Presenting a Sermon:**

What are the differences in preparing sermons for each denomination or non-denominational church, and how do congregations of each receive the sermons? The following will explore possible answers: Cheryl Wharry, in her paper, *Amen and Hallelujah Preaching: Discourse Functions in African-American Sermons*, states that, “Traditional West African-Americans have been described as having a strong oral culture. Traditional African-American sermons are typically not first written and do not command their value in the context of written literature” (Wharry). It is another aspect of African-American churches. Melvin Harris, while Caucasian, fits this category, as well as Banks, who is also Caucasian. They both tend to memorize much of their sermon content and need only to glance at their notes to go forward with their sermons. Orality being maintained in both the Baptist and Non-Denominational churches.

Some ministers find the passage(s) they will preach on, they research it, using Bible commentaries and the Word itself to reveal the meaning and help them to write their sermons, they then may add illustrations and anecdotes to grab the congregation and hold their attention until the end of the sermon. The pastor may then form an outline to go by when presenting his sermon, mostly using three or four basic points and will flesh them out.

Expository preaching uses scripture to reveal scripture, textual preaching take one or two Biblical texts and then explains them through the Bible, movies, poems, other literature, etc. and topical preaching settles on a topic and uses the Bible to back it up.

Research on sermons is key to a good presentation, to hold the attention of your congregation. A study method for expository preaching is a must. “Careful and diligent Bible study is the key to effective expository preaching. Because the Bible is God’s holy Word, it must be treated with respect, not expounded flippantly or carelessly” (MacArthur 171). A diligent pastor must be a diligent student of Scripture; knowing where to find passages that apply to their messages or simply that help bring out the subject of their messages.

To be precise in preaching is not enough. “Fruitful expository preaching demands great effort. Since nothing is as important as the Word, no energy expended by anyone in any other field should even equal the effort of the expositor seeking to ‘rightly divide the word’” (MacArthur 265). Preparing a sermon begins with Bible study and the three basic principles for Bible study are observation, structure and literary form of the passage, being systematic and persistent with your research.

After reading the Biblical passage and observing the details, the need to interpret the meaning of the passage comes next. MacArthur says, “One should interpret the Bible literally, in its normal and natural sense, seeking to understand its meaning and not to read his own into the text.” There are gaps, such as the language gap - The Bible was originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. To understand it correctly, one would need to understand the original languages. There are also reference books that interpret the original meaning of words.

Then there is the cultural gap – one must understand and acknowledge the culture of the passage’s time. What happened in Biblical times is not necessarily what is happening now. Heck said that he “preaches from the Bible, it meant one thing for people back then and something entirely different for people of today.”

The geographical gap – consulting a Bible atlas is helpful in understanding where places are and were. One example of the geographical gap is to consider that present day Iraq and Iran were once Biblical days Babylon.

The historical gap – Knowing the historical setting of a passage helps in understanding its meaning. An example would be understanding historical background of John 10:22 and why the Holy Spirit saw it important to add that the Feast of Dedication was in winter.

Application is the third principal. Applying what you have discovered in the scriptures to current, real-life situations and answers the question, how does this truth relate to me?

Just as observations of Pastors Heck, Nicholson-Angle, Harris and Banks, have revealed a desire to preach from The Holy Bible in expository, textual or topical style, MacArthur teaches how to comprehend what the Bible is trying to teach and how to pull from the Bible to create effective sermons that will reach the congregations.

Presentation is key and the ministers interviewed for this paper revealed his or her own unique style of presentation when observed by this author. Heck was quieter, Dr. Whited attests that, “he can get loud, if needed, however his volume seldom varies much.” He has little to no hand gestures and the reverence for The Holy Bible as well as the sacraments of The Lord’s Supper were evident. The church is smaller than some and Heck has no real need for a microphone. The high ceiling allows his voice to carry throughout the church.

Nicholson-Angle was also formal, but a little more relaxed than Heck. This may be because she is in a college setting. She is a bit animated during her sermon, her hand gestures are quite pronounced. She uses a microphone when speaking and her voice carries throughout the high vaulted ceiling of the chapel.

Harris physically moves about seamlessly from one end of the stage to the other, then down the steps and level with the congregation. He speaks forcefully through his lapel microphone and his voice

carries throughout the large, high ceilinged church. He tends to emphasize certain phrases or words by enunciating the Lord's name, or the last syllable of a word.

Banks, similar to Harris is physically all over the place. Open Door Community Church is considerably smaller than Halesford Baptist, so he doesn't have far to walk, but he does go from end-to-end of the stage and then down the steps to be level with his congregation. He will occasionally pound the pulpit for emphasis or shake his Bible at the congregation, but it is all done with love. His voice lilts and he sometimes stresses the last syllable of a word if it is something he wants you to remember. Open Door Community Church is a small church building, but it too has a high ceiling. Banks' voice, however, does not need the aid of a microphone.

## **Conclusion**

This thesis provided a brief history of each local denomination, Episcopal, Methodist (College), Baptist and Non-Denominational churches. Various sermon writing techniques and methods that each minister carried out while coming up with his or her weekly sermons, including their style of writing sermons and how their congregations receive their messages have been explored.

Expository preaching, along with textual preaching style seem to be the most used, as they convey what the Word means from the Word and how other texts may be used to emphasize a passage from the Bible. Some of the ministers interviewed do use textual preaching upon occasion, but they still pull from the Word. Topical preaching, while in use today, did not show up in the ministers of the churches interviewed.

We may have many different denominations and many different ways of carrying out the Word of God, but through this thesis it has been discovered that it all culminates into one basic need – our need to live a faithful life for Christ.

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## Appendices

Interview with Dr. David Howell:

1. There are many different methods and models to draw from when writing a sermon. Do you use any of these?

“I’m not sure what the methods and models you mean - 3 points and a poem :) - but I generally start by looking at lectionary readings for the week to see if I want to use these as the biblical texts for the sermon. I do always start with the biblical text and then may often bring it/them into conversation with other texts (including poetry, literature, news, etc.)”

2. Do you begin the process of writing a sermon with prayer? Why or why not?

“Usually - a short prayer that helps center me.”

3. Do you believe that ministers are a vessel that God uses to speak through? Why or why not?

“Yes - otherwise why have the sermon. But this isn't automatically and necessarily so as ministers are also human and thus fallible.”

4. Are there elements of a service that must follow certain rituals or customs? How does this direct the sermon?

“I have preached in a variety of different denominations and services always follow a structure and include rituals of some sort, so these can shape a sermon. Baptist churches (in the States anyway - not necessarily so in England) always close with an invitation. Some sermons may not be as evangelistic as others (e.g., maybe it is more educational addressing current Christians), but the structure of the service will have an invitation.”

5. How do you derive interesting topics to both teach your congregation and keep them Engaged?

“For topics, I read the newspaper, follow the liturgical calendar, look at biblical texts that are assigned in the lectionary. Principles of public speaking generally are used to help keep the parishioners attention.”

6. Do you keep your sermons on paper, recorded, etc. for future use and do you ever reuse a sermon with the same congregation or only when you speak at revivals and other events?

“I haven't served a single congregation since seminary so most of my preaching is pulpit supply. I haven't (and probably wouldn't) reuse the same sermon for the same

congregation. I have adapted sermons and reused them when I am a guest preacher somewhere in a one-off pulpit supply position. Even still, I try to take into consideration context though as preaching never happens in the abstract.”

7. Do you preach from the Old Testament, or only from the New?

“Both Testaments are included in the Scripture reading portion of the service typically. Depending on the sermon topic, I will often focus the sermon more on one text than the other.”

8. Do you use the Book of Revelation? Why or why not?

“Occasionally - it's not a go-to-book for me. But if the lectionary reading has Revelation or it is appropriate to the sermon topic, then I use it.”

9. What are your thoughts on the second coming of Christ?

“That he is returning and history as we know it is moving to an end or goal. The whens and hows are of little interest to me and ultimately unknowable and thus of little utility.”

10. When writing sermons, what is your end-goal?

“To communicate God's word at that place and time (delivered with a great deal of humility as I recognize my own fallibility). Depending on the occasion, sermons have different goals - to educate, inspire, to call to action or decision.”

11. Where, or did you attend seminary?

“Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, NC where I graduated with both an Master of Divinity and a Theological Masters (this was more of research degree). This was over 30 years ago, though in the early 80's when Southeastern was a different school than what it has become now.”

12. Did you take any classes that helped to prepare you to prepare sermons?

“On one level, the entire seminary curriculum provided perspectives and skills that are useful in sermon preparation. So, yes. There were specific courses on preaching and when I was at Southeastern, these weren't required courses and I used my electives in other ways.”

Interview with Dr. Eric Vanden Eykel:

1. There are many different methods and models to draw from when writing a sermon. Do you use any of these?

“My preaching class in seminary was taught by a Presbyterian minister named Tom Long, who wrote a book called *The Witness of Preaching*. In this book he outlines a model for sermon-writing that involves identifying your sermon’s FOCUS (what it’s about) and FUNCTION (what it’s supposed to do) before you write it. Every sermon I’ve written follows the model in this book.”

2. Do you begin the process of writing a sermon with prayer? Why or why not?

“Not generally. Why not? Probably because I’m bad about remembering to pray in general, but not because I have anything against prayer.”

3. Do you believe that ministers are a vessel that God uses to speak through? Why or why not?

“Yes I do! The function of Christian minister is to guide her/his parishioners as they seek to understand and practice their faith more effectively. Part of this function, in my mind, is preaching.”

4. Are there elements of a service that must follow certain rituals or customs? How does this direct the sermon?

“I myself am fairly “liturgical” when it comes to what Christian worship is supposed to look like. That is: I like for things to follow a script. The sermon stands out in the liturgy as the one thing that the minister writes her/himself. And it should stand out because the sermon (ideally) should be tailored to the audience hearing it.”

5. How do you derive interesting topics to both teach your congregation and keep them Engaged?

“When I used to give sermons, I used to try and find things that I found challenging. I find that people like to be challenged, and when they are challenged they are more likely to pay attention!”

6. Do you keep your sermons on paper, recorded, etc. for future use and do you ever reuse a sermon with the same congregation or only when you speak at revivals and other events?

“Always on paper. My preaching professor said the surest way to become a heretic is to try and deliver a sermon from memory or, worse, to try and make one up as you go. I would never reuse a sermon without changing something about it, but yes, I have reused sermons before.”

7. Do you preach from the Old Testament, or only from the New?

“Both, because both are scripture!”

8. Do you use the Book of Revelation? Why or why not?

“I preached on a passage from Revelation once, when it was in the lectionary for that week. I wouldn’t choose it voluntarily, however, because there’s too much symbolism that needs to be explained before you can get to the point, and you’ve only got so much time in a sermon.”

9. What are your thoughts on the second coming of Christ?

“Generally in favor of it. But more seriously, I consider the belief in the eventual return of Jesus to be a necessary pillar of the Christian faith. What precisely that process looks like, I’m not sure anyone is supposed to try and figure out.”

10. When writing sermons, what is your end-goal?

“Depends on the sermon. Some are meant to comfort, some to teach, and some to convict.”

11. Where, or did you attend seminary?

“The Candler School of Theology at Emory University.”

12. Did you take any classes that helped to prepare you to prepare sermons?

“Yes! Introduction to Preaching was amazing, as were my courses in Hebrew Bible and New Testament.”

Interview with Dr. Nicholson-Angle:

1. There are many different methods and models to draw from when writing a sermon. Do you use any of these?

“Yes.”

2. Do you begin the process of writing a sermon with prayer? Why or why not?

‘Always. Prayer centers me in God's will for the community and becomes a self-emptying in order to hear "God's Word for God's people.”

3. Do you believe that ministers are a vessel that God uses to speak through? Why or why not?

“Yes, I believe ministers are called and set apart to preach God's word, administer the sacraments, and order the life of the Church.”

4. Are there elements of a service that must follow certain rituals or customs? How does this direct the sermon?

“MUST is a difficult word. There are elements of the service that DO follow rituals/customs Sacraments of baptism and Lord's Supper are examples.

There are also times of the Christian year Advent, Lent that also direct the theme of the sermon.”

5. How do you derive interesting topics to both teach your congregation and keep them engaged?

“Some ministers are topical preachers. I will do this from time to time based on what is going on in the church and community. Generally I preach from the lectionary texts.”

6. Do you keep your sermons on paper, recorded, etc. for future use and do you ever reuse a sermons with the same congregation or only when you speak at revivals and other events?

“On paper and on my computer. I generally never preach the same sermon twice. I do keep as reference when preaching from the same text.”

7. Do you preach from the Old Testament, or only from the New?

“Both.”

8. Do you use the Book of Revelation? Why or why not?

“I preach from the entire Christian canon - no book or text is off limits.”

9. What are your thoughts on the second coming of Christ?

“Yes, according to scripture.”

10. When writing sermons, what is your end-goal?

“To be faithful to the Word that God is giving me for God's people.”

11. Where, or did you attend seminary?

“Duke.”

12. Did you take any classes that helped to prepare you to prepare sermons?

“Yes, we were required to take preaching courses: Preaching, Old Testament and New Testament.”

Interview with Reverend John Heck:

1. There are many different methods and models to draw from when writing a sermon. Do you use any of these?

“First off, I don’t write them. Ahm, so how do I prepare a sermon? In the Episcopal Church we follow the **Revised Common Lectionary**. I almost always preach on the gospel because it was God’s message then and God’s message now. I look at what’s going on in the world, I look at what the text says, what it meant to the people at the time it was written and what it means to people now. It’s radically different and where those things intersect, what it has to do with our lives today.”

2. Do you begin the process of writing a sermon with prayer? Why or why not?

“Mmm. Ah, I begin the process by reading the lesson. I usually read it every day of the week. I just kind of live with it, carry it with me in whatever I’m doing. It gets, the closest thing to answer your question would be every Sunday before our service, we have a hymn and during that hymn, I pray regarding whatever’s going to come out of my mouth next.”

3. Do you believe you are a vessel that God uses to speak through? Why or why not?

“Long pause . . . sort of, I look at it as more of, the word vessel doesn’t do much for me. I believe that God speaks through people, but I don’t believe that there’s a single message or a single thought or idea that God puts in me to give to everyone. I believe that I kind of throw it out there and depending upon where people are in the own particular life and journey and what’s going on in their world, influences how they hear what gets said and what connects with them and often what it is, is not what I have in mind.”

4. Are there elements of a service that must follow certain rituals or customs? How does this direct your sermons?

“**Book of Common Prayer** doesn’t really direct the sermon, or any of their other books.”

5. How do you derive interesting topics to both teach your congregation and keep them engaged?

“Long pause. Um, I’m not sure that I look at the sermon time as teaching time exactly. I mean in the broadest sense of that word, I guess that’s true. Um, I don’t think many people leave with a lot of factual stuff, I don’t believe that’s what their looking for. I think people are looking for how to make sense of their lives and their world, so the fact that I say . . . state a bunch of facts about Easter Sunday or how the celebration of Christmas landed on December 25th, I don’t think those things are of great meaning or of value to many people. My primary concern would be that people understand that they are loved and are called to love other people.”

6. Do you keep your sermons on paper, recorded, etc. for future use and do you ever reuse a sermon with the same congregations or only when you speak at revivals and other events?

Shakes his head. No

7. Do you preach from the Old Testament, or only the New Testament?

“Well, in the revised common lectionary, the theme of the Old Testament lesson and the theme of the Gospel are linked together, so we read four lessons on Sunday, an Old Testament, a New Testament, a Psalm and a Gospel, so the Gospel and the Old Testament lesson are thematically linked together. I often use something about that theme and connect it between the two. I almost never preach on the Epistle because Paul is terribly contextual and completely taken out of context.”

8. Do you use the Book of Revelation? Why?

“Almost never. The book has been so horribly distorted by so many people and faith groups. About the only time I use anything from Revelation is during a burial service. I am the Alpha and Omega.”

9. What are your thoughts on the second coming of Christ?

“Next to nothing.”

10. When writing sermons, what is your end-goal? Someone coming forward to make a decision, someone coming forward for rededication, someone wanting to join the mission field, etc?

“My end goal is to be faithful to God. I don’t care or have any control of what anyone gets out of the sermon. I try to just throw it out there and whatever sticks sticks and

whatever doesn't doesn't. Like I said, it's different for every person. What people hear. I've had people tell me things, 'That was the most wonderful sermon,' the whole idea of such and such. I'm like wow, that was nowhere near what I was thinking.

But, I mean, we do a Bible study that's based on a really a model that came out of African churches where you read the lesson, your silent for about a minute, everyone is asked to share a word or a phrase that jumps out at them. Then a different person reads it in a different translation, then take a minute, then everyone's asked to share where their life connects with the lesson. Read it again, another minute of reflection, everyone is asked how they are called to change. We do that with a group of 10 people and usually they pick something different. Unless the lesson is not overwhelmingly interesting. When you get to the part of how it affects their lives, almost no one says the same thing. When you ask how they are called to change, almost no one says the same thing. All of us are in different places so we all connect in different ways. There are some basic things, like love forgiveness and compassion. Like forgiveness that our pretty basic, but nobody connects in the same way. I have no idea where you are in your life or what's going on in your life. I may say something that hits you in a completely different way that someone who has just lost their spouse or have had a child die at some point in their lifetime. So people just connect in different ways and to me that's how the HS affects everything say and everything anyone hears. So that's how I look at it."

11. Where, or did you attend seminary?

"Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria, VA."

12. Did you take any classes that helped to prepare you to prepare sermons?

"We had three semesters of homiletics which helped to some degree. All we did was preach, get critiqued, listen to classmates preach and critique them. All of the classes were equally helpful, Old Testament, New Testament, Systematic Theology, Church History, Ethics, Pastoral Care, etc. There was also a class called the Bible and the New York Times. It was all about where the Bible and current events intersect."

Interview with Reverend Marshall Banks:

1. There are many different methods and models to draw from when writing a sermon. Do you use any of these?

“A lot of it is prayer for one thing. Thinking about where the congregation is. A lot of it is on the internet and I do pull from there pretty frequently. I make sure it’s Biblically correct.”

2. Do you begin the process of writing a sermon with prayer? Why or why not?

“Yes, asking God to direct me and what to speak and what to share.”

3. Do you believe you are a vessel that God uses to speak through? Why or why not?

“Yes. I believe that Pastors are called to be used by God as He sees fit.”

4. Are there elements of a service that must follow certain rituals or customs? How does this direct your sermons?

“I don’t know, just being in church all my life, the Methodists do have customs they must follow. What we do at Open Door Community Church (Non-Denominational) really doesn’t lead me in preaching.”

5. How do you derive interesting topics to both teach your congregation and keep them engaged?

“The Holy Spirit leads me. A lot of it is just life experience. The message is as much for me as it is for the congregation. John Wesley said: ‘To learn faith, you preach more faith,’ so the more I preach, the more it develops in me as well.”

6. Do you keep your sermons on paper, recorded, etc. for future use and do you ever reuse a sermon with the same congregations or only when you speak at revivals and other events?

“Yes, most are either on paper or on the computer. And yes, I have reused sermons, I think it speaks again. The same message at two different churches can be accepted differently by two different congregations, because the Holy Spirit leads.”

7. Do you preach from the Old Testament, or only the New Testament?

“Both.”

8. Do you use the Book of Revelation? Why?

“Yes, some. I must feel led to speak from it and I have not at Open Door Community Church, yet. I do not fully understand it, therefore it is difficult to speak on.”

9. What are your thoughts on the second coming of Christ?

“I look forward to it. It should be a point in a Christian’s life that they realize it is coming and should be ready for it. Part of my job is to help prepare the congregation for the second coming.”

10. When writing sermons, what is your end-goal? Someone coming forward to make a decision, someone coming forward for rededication, someone wanting to join the mission field, etc?

“In the churches I’ve pastored, I believe the majority of the congregation is saved, so my focus has been on strengthening the believers.”

11. Where, or did you attend seminary?

“I went, but didn’t finish. I attended Duke University.”

12. Did you take any classes that helped to prepare you to prepare sermons?

“Actually, they did not teach us a lot on preparing sermons. Maybe I didn’t get that far. They didn’t offer classes on how to prepare a sermon, but a lot of it comes from listening To other pastors and paying attention to how they convey them (the sermons).

Usually preparing 3 points and getting individuals to make a deeper commitment.”

Interview with Melvin Harris:

1. There are many different methods and models to draw from when writing a sermon. Do you use any of these?

“Yes, I do use the models. I get information from them, but I have my own methods and system that I use. My system is my system.”

2. Do you begin the process of writing a sermon with prayer? Why or why not?

“Yes, well really I begin by reading and while reading through my Bible, I slip up on a passage of scripture that sticks. Then I begin to pray about it, is this what You want me to preach on? Is this what You want me to say? My prayer would be is this what you want me to take to the pulpit on Sunday and once I’m convinced, I pull from several (3 or 4) different commentaries and I will do a lot of reading the scripture I will be focusing on. I try to find myself in the scripture I am going to share, I become one of the congregation. I usually put 20 to 25 hours in each Sunday sermon and continually ask, How is this speaking to me? What am I getting out of this passage?

An example would be Zaccheas, why did he want to see Jesus, why did he seek a good vantage point? Put yourself in a position to receive the message.”

3. Do you believe you are a vessel that God uses to speak through? Why or why not?

“Yes, I do believe this. My calling is probably like none other. There were other things I wanted to do. I worked a public job in Altavista, living in Huddleston. I “put out the fleece” I was happy where I was, but God’s calling was strong. First fleece, give me a church that is small and cannot afford a full-time pastor. He did. The second fleece, give me a church far enough away that people don’t know me, but close enough that I can commute. I was bargaining with God and he met every challenge. Again, God did and here I am 48 years later, still pastoring Halesford. The people are responsible for that. The growth of the church is not because of me, it’s because of the people.

If I’m allowed to stay here until I retire, I would hope God would give me another small church.”

4. Are there elements of a service that must follow certain rituals or customs? How does this direct your sermons?

“We follow an order of worship that lead up to the worship time and the song just before the message is a make or break song.

We have ordinances of Communion once a quarter, Baptisms, four or five per year. When we have several people who want to be baptized, we schedule it.”

5. How do you derive interesting topics to both teach your congregation and keep them engaged?

“Message comes through prayer, most of time you catch the congregation’s attention within the first few minutes. If it’s a dull sermon, you can make it dull. I like to keep the people’s attention by drawing them in. I like flashy titles, it grabs them up front and makes them want to hear what’s being said. Good illustrations keep them interested as well.”

6. Do you keep your sermons on paper, recorded, etc. for future use and do you ever reuse a sermon with the same congregations or only when you speak at revivals and other events?

“We’re told early on that you can use the same scripture every 2 years and the same congregation every 4 years. I use the PowerPoint and keep notes.”

7. Do you preach from the OT or only the NT?

“Both. I love the OT and will say something many ministers will not agree with. I believe that the OT is easier to preach from. NT you have to pull out what it’s saying.”

8. Do you use the Book of Revelation? Why or why not?

“I love the book of Revelation. I’ve taught it 5 or 6 times. I try to remind the people that it is not a scary book. It’s like a stop light, if you don’t follow it, you can get in trouble. It explains what’s coming and what we need to do.

It can be a scary book, if you don’t understand it. I don’t live in it, but try to teach the people about it.”

9. What are your thoughts on the second coming of Christ?

It is coming. Sooner than we think it’s coming. Even the disciples thought it would be in their time. We should prepare for it. The scripture says that it will not come until a falling away happens first. The big mega-churches are so big because they have adopted worldly policy instead of sticking with the Bible.

I believe the second coming is going to happen. I don’t believe you should put a timeline on it. Don’t try to pinpoint it. Only the Father knows the time.”

10. When writing sermons, what is your end-goal? Someone coming forward to make a decision, someone coming forward for rededication, someone wanting to join the mission field, etc.?

“I think the only goal I have is that the HS is stirred among the people and He does the convicting. When He does the convicting, it’s a real conviction. If someone is saved under my ministry, that’s great, but I didn’t do that, It was the HS.

Billy Graham said it’s the HS job to convict, God’s job to judge and it’s my job to love. I’ve always tried to stay with that.”

11. Where, or did you go to seminary?

“Yes and no. I attending Liberty School of Lifelong Learning (LUSLL), a school-by-video program and Bible-study under LUSLL Program at Liberty.”

12. Did you take any classes that helped to prepare you to prepare sermons?

“Yes, Solid Study of Bible at Virginia Baptist Hospital and Pastoral Counseling which included How to Pastor a Church. I held the position of Student Chaplain for two years and when taking tests, had to have someone outside of the family to administer them and send them back to Liberty.”

Introduction to Notes of the State of Virginia by Thomas Jefferson. The wide reputation and high value that have been accorded to the Notes on Virginia for over one hundred years make any attempt to praise it at this day little less than a work of supererogation. Its frequent republication is alone testimony sufficient to prove its unusual merit. Aside from its intrinsic value, it is of interest, as Jefferson's most serious piece of book-making, and the one on which the larger part of his philosophical reputation was based during his lifetime. Franklin County is a county located in the Blue Ridge foothills of the U.S. state of Virginia. As of the 2010 census, the population was 56,159. Its county seat is Rocky Mount. Franklin County is part of the Roanoke, VA Metropolitan Statistical Area and is located in the Roanoke Region of Virginia. The Roanoke River forms its northeast boundary with Bedford County. Best Neighborhoods In Franklin County, Virginia: Download the BestPlaces App. QUICK FACTS. Real Estate: For Sale Country: United States State: Virginia County: Franklin County Metro Area: No Metro Area Political Ideology: Moderately conservative. Members receive 10 FREE city profile downloads a month, unlimited access to our detailed cost of living calculator and analysis, unlimited access to our DataEngine, and more. Try Now. New listings in franklin.