

Recently Hired Faculty Step into (Virtual) Classrooms

Relational Formation for a Healthy Ministry Foundation

BY THE REV. MARK CHUNG HEARN, PhD

In my short time at CDSP, I have especially enjoyed the teaching aspect of my role. I've learned that our students are concerned about how the Church will remain responsive to the times and prophetic in its witness in the world.

Students are more aware today of our plurality, interdependence, and need for healthy religious leadership in public arenas than when I was a seminary student twenty-five years ago. They understand that the questions we hold must keep evolving and, in turn, keep our curiosities open and alive. A sedentary Church is one destined to become obsolete. Students face up to this challenge by finding ways to

bridge the sacred and secular in their contextual education internships and experiences.

For example, a residential student in our internship program is focusing one of her learning goals on community organizing, even though her site is a congregation. This focus has led her to participate in a community organization that is not faith-based. She gathers regularly with them and learns what it means to represent both the parish she serves and the Church as a whole. She is, for some in this non-profit, the closest, and sometimes only, link to organized religion.

We have a low-residence student who, for her internship, works on a racial justice initiative in her home diocese. She meets people seeking out opportunities to contribute to anti-racism initiatives. And then she brings to our class difficult questions about showing up as a white woman religious leader in collaboration with Black, Indigenous, and other Persons of Color (BIPOC).

Both students are continually reflecting on what these experiences and questions mean for their developing ministerial identity and vocation. It's a gift to accompany them as an instructor, partly because they keep my own vocation sharp and attentive. I seek to help creation flourish through teaching and forming the next

generation of religious and ministerial leaders.

One of my strengths as a professor is relational formation. I am effective because I know how to tell the truth. This truth-telling is built on a foundation of trust. The students believe in their gut that I am here for their growth and bring goodwill to my role.

Currently, I teach the first year of contextual education courses. I build these classes on four questions: (1) Who am I becoming as a minister? (2) Who is the person of the minister? (3) How do I theologically reflect upon this pastoral experience? (4) What professional skills and capacities am I learning, or do I need to learn?

Seminary is a wonderful place to consider these and other kinds of deep-seated questions. I would rather students begin asking them now rather than when the complexities of life have taken further hold, and when they are left to engage these questions in relative isolation. Sadly, we have all heard about ministerial scandals and abuses of power. I believe many of these leaders start out with good intentions but eventually are overcome by a lack of self-knowledge and self-awareness. Asking these questions earlier helps seminarians begin to build a healthy foundation.

What's the difference? Most ministry leaders can learn plenty of week-to-week techniques and skills relatively early in their careers. However, to know how to ministerially respond with accumulated skills and techniques takes practical wisdom born out of a lifetime of intentional reflection, habits,





and self-knowledge that protect us from self-deception.

Ministers who know their own selves truthfully, and are not threatened by what they know, can possess the kind of internal freedom and coherence leaders need today. This sensibility leads to less posturing, more curiosity, and lifelong learning.

One of my favorite assignments during the spring semester is an entry point to understanding personal myths, families of origin, and systems theory. Building on Edward Wimberly's *Recalling Our Own Stories: Spiritual Renewal for Religious Caregivers* and Murray Bowen's family systems theory, I ask students to write a short reflection on their earliest memory of justice or injustice. We then probe the experience to see if it has influenced their commitment to ministry or perhaps contributed to an unhealthy ministry habit.

Again, the aim is for students to know themselves and how they show up to others. It is a powerful exercise for many students. It may be the first time they speak about a significant narrative from their lives and the impact it may have on past and future selves. I am not a therapist, and I encourage students to seek out their own therapy. Still, there are therapeutic elements to this exercise, which integrate well with the rest of their seminary training and theological formation.

My vocational commitment is to be a part of a process that forms, as much as possible, a healthy and whole minister prepared to serve others well in the roles to which God leads them.

Preaching with Confidence

BY PROFESSOR PEACE PYUNGHWA LEE

There are days when it feels like a miracle, a prayer answered, that I get to teach preaching. I have been given an immense privilege and honor to accompany students in their holy vocation of proclamation.

Nearly a decade ago, I stopped running from my call and entered seminary. I was twenty-six years old and a first-year student at Princeton Theological Seminary when I finally saw someone who looked like me preach from a pulpit.

It wasn't until I saw a woman preacher that I could finally articulate what I had been feeling for a very long time: a deep, abiding grief for the silencing of certain voices in our church. I was deeply shaken by this experience, because my own call to preach had been suppressed when a pastor corrected me that God may have called me to a life of prayer and devotion, but certainly not to preaching.

I wish I could tell you that seeing someone who looked like me preach from the pulpit immediately set me free from all my fears and conditionings. It didn't. I tried to get out of the mandatory preaching course in my program and even considered switching from the MDiv to the MA. The fresh memory of seeing a woman in the pulpit kept me going. I was beginning to understand and feel the truth of the words of womanist

homiletician Teresa L. Fry Brown: "our presence in the pulpit alone is a visual for justice."

The terror of preaching my first sermon in the introductory course was ameliorated by the kind and loving faces of friends and professors who encouraged and affirmed me. I am so grateful for my friend Genciano "Vitto" Clotter for being the first person to call me a "preacher." He kept calling me a preacher every time he saw me, baptizing and blessing me with the word until the old story I had internalized melted away and I could start believing that I too was called to preach.

I give thanks as well for those first preaching professors—Yvette Joy Harris, Sally M. Brown, and



Jerusha M. Neal—all fearless and brave women who understood deeply the risk and courage it takes for someone, especially those minoritized and made invisible, to stand and preach. Our classrooms were transformed into a holy space where we encountered each other's testimonies and sightings of God's activity in the world. The music stands we would set before ourselves as makeshift pulpits became altars as we each rose up to offer a trembling prayer of our vision of God and the world.

This spring semester, I am blessed to accompany seven beautiful Episcopal seminarians on their formal introduction to the field of Homiletics. Each has their own unique call and story and path that God has ordained for them. As we gather on Zoom under the shadow of an unrelenting pandemic and a world bent on destruction

and despair, I pray and hope that these students will find true confidence, faith and trust in God and in the communities that have called on them to be preachers, to be bearers of the gospel.

In our opening class, I invited the students to name their fears, their hopes, as well as the persons and communities that have shaped and influenced their call as preachers. As we open our hearts and share these stories, I want us to remember that we are never alone, and to taste the joy of adding our own unique voices to the ever-expanding choir of witness.

I remind our students that it's okay to be afraid. For some of us, preaching is something we do, joyously, despite and even through our fear. I remind them that the birth of Christian preaching took place in deep

darkness, death, and despair. In the darkness, there was a whisper, a confession, a testimony. The first proclamation of resurrection came from none less than Mary Magdalene. In her beautiful book *Preaching as Testimony*, the Rev. Dr. Anna Carter Florence uncovers the lineage of women preachers in the likes of Jarena Lee, Anne Hutchinson, and Sarah Osborn, and reminds us that preaching "is the slow work of standing in one's own life and in the word of God and saying what one sees and believes, no matter the consequences."

With this reminder, I invite students to the holy task of standing in their own life and preaching with confidence. They are rooted in God and in community, fears notwithstanding. I am grateful I get to listen in.

'Attending' to Crisis Management, Racial Justice

BY THE REV. ALISON "ALI" LUTZ



The morning I was ordained to the priesthood in the Diocese of New York,

Bishop Mark Sisk gave my fellow ordinands and me a simple guide to being a priest: love the people, be kind to them, and pray for them.

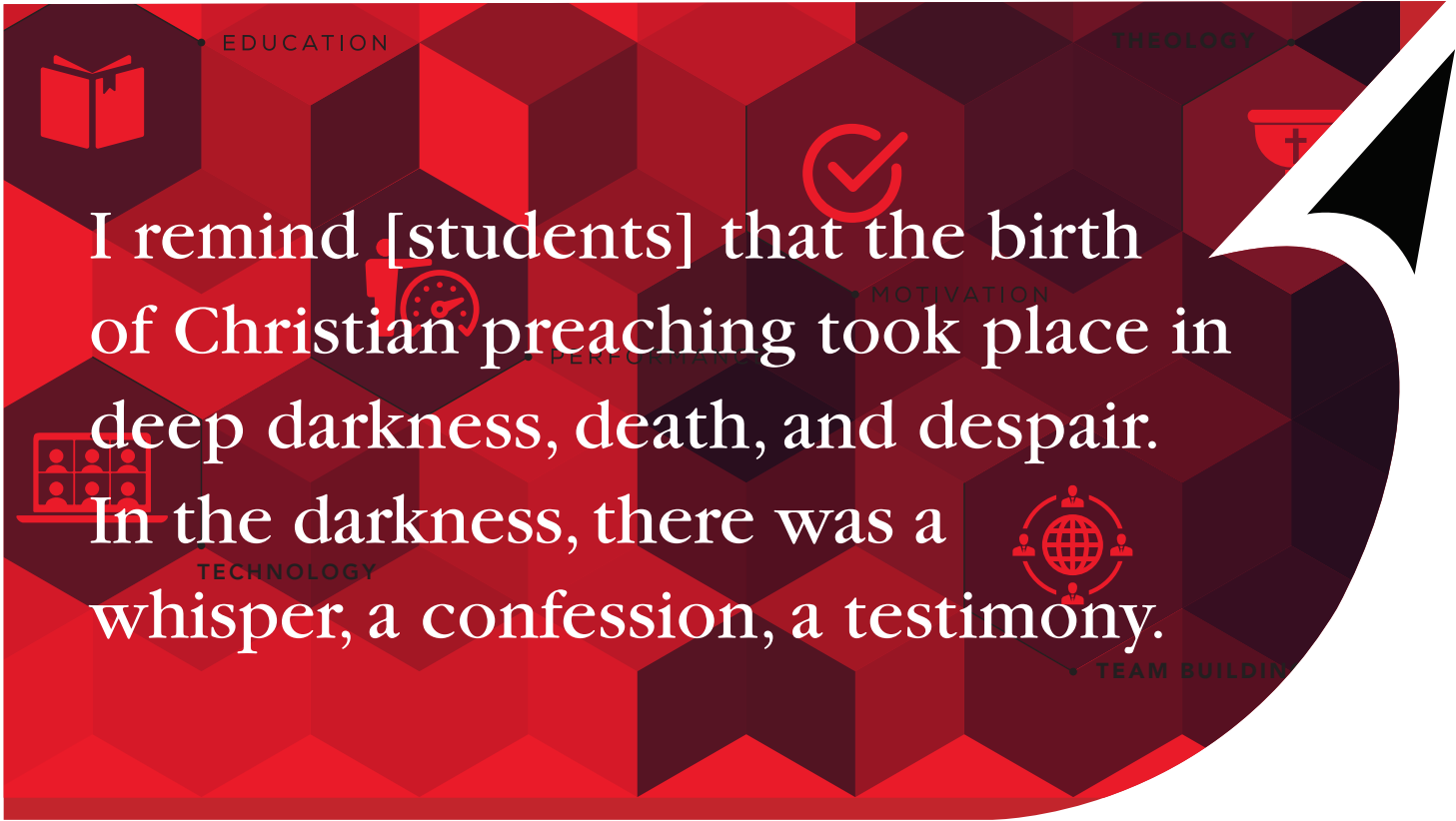
As I prepared to join the CDSP community last fall as instructor in ministerial leadership, I asked myself, "What does love look like when I am entering a new community as one of its teachers?" That question brought me back to Simone Weil's observation in "Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies with a View to the Love of God," which I read on my first day of seminary nineteen years ago. Weil writes that the substance of love is attention.

When I learned I would be teaching CDSP's yearlong capstone course, Leadership for Ministry (LFM), I started by attending carefully to the existing syllabus. I was moved by how thoughtfully it integrated with the rest of the CDSP curriculum. I decided not to make major changes in my first year.

I then gave my full attention to the details of our context, particularly the movement for racial justice that has pierced the nation's consciousness in ways we must not ignore. In response, I added to the LFM course adrienne maree brown's book *Emergent Strategy*, which has had a significant impact on community organizing work for racial justice in which I have participated.

As the semester got underway, I gave my full attention to students' questions and concerns. At their suggestion, I added a unit on disaster preparedness and crisis management to LFM for the spring semester. I was excited to welcome for this topic guest speaker Gerlene "GJ" Gordy, communications director for the Episcopal Church in Navajoland (ECN). Gordy organized ECN's distribution of food boxes to families hit hardest by Covid-19.

This spring, I have also been teaching a new course. It's called Episcopal Church Leaders and Racial Justice. The course aims to equip students to



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engage the Church in critical reflection and action in this area. Our challenge is to do so in a way that is brave, honest, loving, contextual, open, evolving, embodied, and spiritually grounded.

Our students will be prepared to meet the present moment. We want leaders who graduate from CDSP to draw on all their skills and wisdom to respond to the various questions, longings, ideas, approaches, pain, resistance, and momentum that arise in diverse contexts for the ongoing work of racial healing, justice, and reconciliation through the Church.

One of the assignments that meaningfully supported these learning goals was the Concepts and Terms Notebook. This activity helps students become aware of the assumptions they carry. The goal is to bring critical reflection to the patterns of thought students take for granted, which have been structured along racialized hierarchies of value with a disordered

preference for people and institutions that are perceived and treated as white.

Students first wrote an entry on their current thinking about ten concepts related to racial justice. Throughout the semester, they added to their entries as they encountered these terms in class materials, guest presentations, and discussions. By articulating at the outset what they assumed or took for granted initially, students could better engage new ideas without unconsciously filtering those ideas through their existing mindsets.

One of the themes of the course is that work for racial justice is not new. I was thrilled, honored, and frankly in awe that womanist theologian and ethicist Dr. Emilie Townes joined the class as a guest presenter. We studied her scholarship on counter-narrative and counter-memory to frame our attention to the untold history of racial justice initiatives in the Episcopal Church.

For example, the class learned together about the life and ministry of the Rev. Earl Neil, Episcopal priest and spiritual advisor to the Black Panther Party in Oakland, CA. Neil opened his church, St. Augustine's, to host the first Black Panther Free Breakfast for School Children Program in January 1969.

I first learned about Neil during the application process for my position, while doing research on courses I would propose to teach at CDSP. When I arrived as a new faculty member, I learned from Dean Richardson that CDSP students and their spouses were among the volunteers cooking and serving breakfast with the Black Panthers at St. Augustine's fifty years ago.

I could not be more pleased to be a part of the CDSP community. I am grateful for the opportunity to teach and to learn as we meet this moment together with love, kindness, and prayer.