



## Sermons to Remember: A Fall Clergy Class with Bishop Porter Taylor

Dear Clergy Colleagues,

A friend of mine who is a priest has two small children who dutifully if not happily go to church every Sunday. One day when he was driving them home, he asked his son—a five-year-old—what he thought of the sermon. The boy answered, “It was the same blah blah blah as last week.”

Perhaps a five-year-old is not the most reliable critic. However, as preachers we have to find the line between bearing the Good News and becoming an entertainer, or a boring reporter of past events, or an overbearing exhorter of moral expectations. We are called to translate the Gospel in the confusing context in which our people “live and move and have their being.”

No doubt there are many techniques for that translation, but I have found stories to be the most effective. My guess is that on Monday the primary things people remember are how long the preacher talked and what story was told. It is not accidental that narrative preaching has become a predominant way of telling the Good News.

This fall, I wish to offer a seminar for clergy that centers on stories as illustrations of the lectionary. We will be looking at the texts two weeks in advance and bringing in stories for illustrations. We then will discuss how they might connect with one of the readings for that Sunday. My intention for this is to offer a reservoir of sermon illustrations as well as to improve a specific homiletical method.

Some texts about narrative preaching will be suggested but not required. The requirement is to read, mark, inwardly digest the biblical text and to articulate story illustrations for specific lessons.

The class time will be structured in three sections. I will offer an exegesis and suggestions about story illustrations; we will go into small groups to share one another’s narratives; we will have a plenary. The hoped-for result will be a storehouse of illustrations for the fall lectionary. Most of my qualification comes from preaching week after week, but I have taught a preaching class at VTS, Wake Forest Divinity, and The School of Theology, Sewanee.

If you are interested in joining, please contact Anita Lisk ([alisk@thediocese.net](mailto:alisk@thediocese.net)). Because I am teaching lay classes as well, there is a limit to the number of participants. I hope to begin in mid-September and end in December. I wish you a blessed remainder of the summer.

+Porter Taylor  
Assisting Bishop, The Diocese of Virginia