

Editor's Foreword

This Pentecost issue of *Journal for Preachers* offers thoughtful resources for us all. We begin with “The End.” That sermon title, “The End,” marks the beginning of this issue and also profoundly marked another beginning, actually, of the new ministry of the Reverend Adrienne Thorne, who has only recently been installed as the new Senior Minister of The Riverside Church of New York City—one of the most venerable and prophetic churches in America. I had the privilege of meeting “Pastor Adrienne,” as her parishioners at First Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn fondly addressed her, when my wife Kay and I visited our daughter Shelby in Brooklyn a number of years ago now. We went to Shelby’s church together on Sunday, and we were mesmerized by the spirit and magnetism of her preaching. I hope you will read this sermon expectantly, and, for an additional delight, go to the website of the Riverside Church and watch that particular inaugural sermon, “The End.” Embodying pastoral empathy and grace and movement from the church’s spectacular cathedral-style gothic pulpit, Adrienne Thorne demonstrates how a preacher can tell the thunderous truth in a gentle style.

The Reverend Dean K. Thompson’s sermon, “Seek the Welfare of the City,” demonstrates what it is like to convey the gentle truth in a thunderous style! His sermon is a stirring meditation on the church’s role in the center of the city. A lifelong city pastor, whose last assignment before retirement was the presidency of Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Thompson has always argued “that the Cross be raised again at the center of the marketplace as well as on the steeple of the church.” As a longstanding admirer of Dean Thompson’s preaching, I enjoy the crackling energy of his prose and biblical sensemaking. I know you will, too.

The Reverend Susan Baller-Shepard’s offering, “Playing Out in A World on Fire,” focuses the power of Pentecost and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit on contemporary challenges. She encourages us “Sisters and Brothers and Others” to trust that the Spirit can change things. “We pray and pray some more,” she writes. “We go forward as hope-bearers as much as we possibly can,” she continues. “As we seek to live globally on a planet gasping, abounding with refugees, we look into others’ faces and know and understand we see the face of God.” The Reverend Halim Shukair, an Arab Christian and an Episcopal priest, describes how a union of two Episcopal congregations—one a primarily Anglo congregation and the other an Arabic-speaking congregation—have, over time, fleshed out the miracle of Pentecost through the sharing of different cultures and languages. “We have much to teach each other,” says Shukair, “about the world of the Bible, Christian community, and following Jesus.” The Reverend James Gertmenian’s offering, “Who Speaks for God?” muses on that question of who indeed speaks for God, and, against the backdrop of Pentecost, suggests this answer: “You do, and if you take that as both encouraging and terrifying news, then you have heard it correctly.” He concludes profoundly: “If... we have sought to discover the Eternal, the Transcendent, the one known as God,

then we will not find it at all unless we find it in ourselves.” The Reverend Adam Hearlson, pastor at Overbrook Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, contributes a fascinating meditation on the popular poem from decades ago entitled “Footprints.” I recommend his critique of this poem and commend to you a careful reading of how he discerns God’s presence in the midst of our struggles.

We are pleased as well to share with you a fascinating survey of the Reverend Peter M. Wallace’s twenty-two year legacy as Executive Producer and Host of “Day 1” (originally “The Protestant Hour”). An Episcopal priest who has worked with an interdenominational board of mainline Protestant communions, Wallace offers reflections on the legacy of preaching, the creativity of preaching in difficult settings (e.g., against the backdrop of the pandemic), the task of equipping preachers for new realities, new dynamics in preaching, and a beautiful meditation on “Jesus our Model for Peacemaking.” He extends to us a challenge to be confident in what we are called to do with respect to making peace. “Even when the world around you is going nuts,” he writes, “you know this is what you’re supposed to be doing. I think that’s how Jesus experienced peace—there was turmoil around him, but he knew what he was about.” So do we!

Three pieces in this edition of *JP* offer other angles on preaching. The Reverend Pamela Hosey Long (“Sermon Crafting for Intercultural Preaching”) shares thoughtful reflections for those of us called to practice such intercultural preaching. Her own experiences with Black and Latino congregations has encouraged her to apply intercultural worship to sermon crafting; and she prays “that the Spirit will guide us in choosing culturally appropriate images, stories, and illustrations that speak to the hearts of our diverse congregations, so that...God’s transcendent love be made manifest through our cultures.” The Reverend David Schlafer (“Preaching in Concert with Professional Companions”) analyzes the phenomenon of homiletical competition between preaching colleagues. “It is, perhaps, possible,” Schlafer writes, “for solo preachers to survive....But why should preachers go it alone, when the alternative can, for them and for God’s people, be so much more fruitful and so much more enjoyable?” And finally, the Reverend Barrett Payne offers a sermon in which he notes that “to be a Christian in the twenty-first century is to improvise between...the space of walking alongside the suffering of the world and the joy of God’s Kingdom. To put it in Easter terms, the suffering we encounter is the cross, and the joy we encounter is the resurrection. The space in between is our home on earth. This represents the pathos that some say is the end times and the joy that we call our heavenly home. It is in this space where we will find Jesus.”

Amen, I say! So, in this issue, we begin with “The End,” and we also end with the end. We hope that, from cover to cover, you will be blessed by the various voices in this issue of *JP*. Read and digest and be inspired. And, “preach with power and authority.”

Ted Wardlaw