

Planning One Year of Sermons: Why I Think Now Is the Time to for US to Try It

by Karen Booth

How many times has our worship planning team gone to a workshop and heard that we should be planning worship a year at a time? More times than we can count! As much as our worship planning team understands how important it is to look ahead, it is easy to get wrapped up preparing for the next worship service or series. The urgent gets in the way of important.

So why do I think that we are ready to start now? There are three main reasons. The first is a pair of articles from *Preaching Today* that came out in the fall of 2016. Dave Ferguson and Tammy Melchion offered a detailed explanation of how they do this at Community Christian Church in Naperville, Illinois. Although their church is substantially larger and has more paid staff, the process looks like it can be done in a church our size.

The second reason is that our church is in a pleasant lull. By that I mean that we accomplished most of our Vital Church Initiative (VCI) prescriptions; we aren't in the middle of a pastoral change; and just one year into a church merger, we are feeling more settled as a congregation. This is a good place to be.

The third reason relates to some things our VCI team learned five years ago. As a church grows and the average weekly attendance increases, its pastor's leadership style must change to be effective. The congregation must learn to embrace that new style to move forward. That can be tough for both the pastor and congregation; many congregations don't want to grow into a way of doing church. With an average weekly attendance of 200+, it is not reasonable to expect Pastor Mary to do everything. It is more fitting that she act as a team-leader pastor. I am very grateful that she is well-suited in that role and that we have competent leaders on the right teams.

VCI calls for collaborative worship planning, something we have been doing as a team for 12-13 years. Both Pastor Mary and our previous pastor, Mark Erbes, asked members for message series suggestions. Pastor Dave Selleck did this with Lakeside's worship team too. Planning for a whole year just takes this collaborative process to the next level, something we would like to try on a two day retreat in September.

Prior to that, you will be asked to recall the conversations they have had with people in and outside the church. What needs to be addressed? What needs are not being talked about, but should be? How can we approach seasonal series, like Lent and Advent, in a fresh way? What ideas can we glean from other churches and adapt them to Lake Harbor? By doing this prep work in advance, it is likely that we could have many different ideas for series before the retreat begins.

In the coming months, you will have an opportunity to learn more about worship planning at informational meetings and in the newsletter. In July's *Harbor Light*, we'll look at the "lectionary," a common tool pastors have used in deciding what scripture readings to use each week, and its strengths and weaknesses. In the meantime, I **strongly urge** you to read the articles from Community Christian Church, now posted on our website at <http://lakeharborumc.org/2017/05/planning-one-year-of-sermons/>.

- "Planning One Year of Big Ideas Sermons" by Dave Ferguson offers a specific process.
- "Developing a Big Idea Series and Sermon" by Tammy Melchion shows how that church develops each series and message; we do this with our brainstormings. We have one pastor, so the message development piece doesn't apply to us.

Feel free to contact me (231-798-8431 or kwbooth@comcast.net) if you are interested in participating in this process. **If you are not interested in participating, but have an idea that you would like to contribute, just jot it on a 3"x5" card and give it to me or one of the worship team members.**