

Eastern Ohio and Western Reserve Associations
United Church of Christ
Clergy Professional Development Day
Tuesday 17 October 2017
Scott Haldeman, presenter

Being (again) “Stewards of the Mysteries”: Pastor as Mediator of the Holy

In his elegant little book, *Pastor: A Spirituality*, Gordon Lathrop invites those who serve Christian assemblies as “elder and teacher,” as “minister,” as “preacher,” as “reverend” to return again to central things for renewal, for re-imagining the what and why and how of what they do. He meditates on the words we use to describe the role but even more on word and sacrament, on preaching and bread and wine, on words we inherit such as the Lord’s Prayer, the Apostle’s Creed and the Ten Commandments. He ends by recalling how, as pastor to a university congregation with no designated space for worship, he would tramp across campus with “a box full of bread and chalices and liturgy books and vestments, and, occasionally, a baptismal candle.” He continues: “Not uncommonly I would sing: ‘This is my box. This is my box. I never travel without my box!’ The students often laughed and sang with me.”

Our day together will focus not on Lathrop’s box but on our own boxes. I do not assume your box contains what mine does nor that all of you carry boxes full of the same things. I do suspect we all have a box—a box of words and symbols, tools of the craft of communicating grace, of nourishing hungers. Instead, this day may be a time to look at what is our own boxes—what we have neglected perhaps, or lost; what we cannot live without; what we might at this point in our ministries we should probably discard; and, what we might need to add—so that we can be, to borrow a phrase from another faithful pastor, Robert Hovda, “strong, loving and wise” with and among the people whom we are charged to serve, to empower, to heal, to usher into the presence of the Holy, and to share Holy food and drink.

Biographical Statement:

Dr. W. Scott Haldeman serves as Associate Professor of Worship at Chicago Theological Seminary, Chicago, Illinois, where he also directs the DMin degree programs. His primary research interest is in the history, theology and practice of US Protestant worship. But he is also interested in the less formal ways human beings ritualize themselves in relation to various categories of identity, such as race/ethnicity, gender and sexuality. My first book, *Towards Liturgies of Reconciliation: Race and Rites among African American and European American Protestants* (2007), analyzes the role of racism in the development of US Protestant worship. I also engage in queer religious studies work. Two of my articles in that area are “A Queer Fidelity: Reinventing Christian Marriage” in *Theology and Sexuality* (Spring 2007) and “Receptivity and Revelation: A Spirituality of Gay Male Sex” in the collection *Body and Soul: Rethinking Sexuality as Justice-Love* (2003). I live with my partner and our puppy in Forest Park, Illinois (just west of Chicago) and I have a daughter Sydney who is studying Public Health at Boston University.