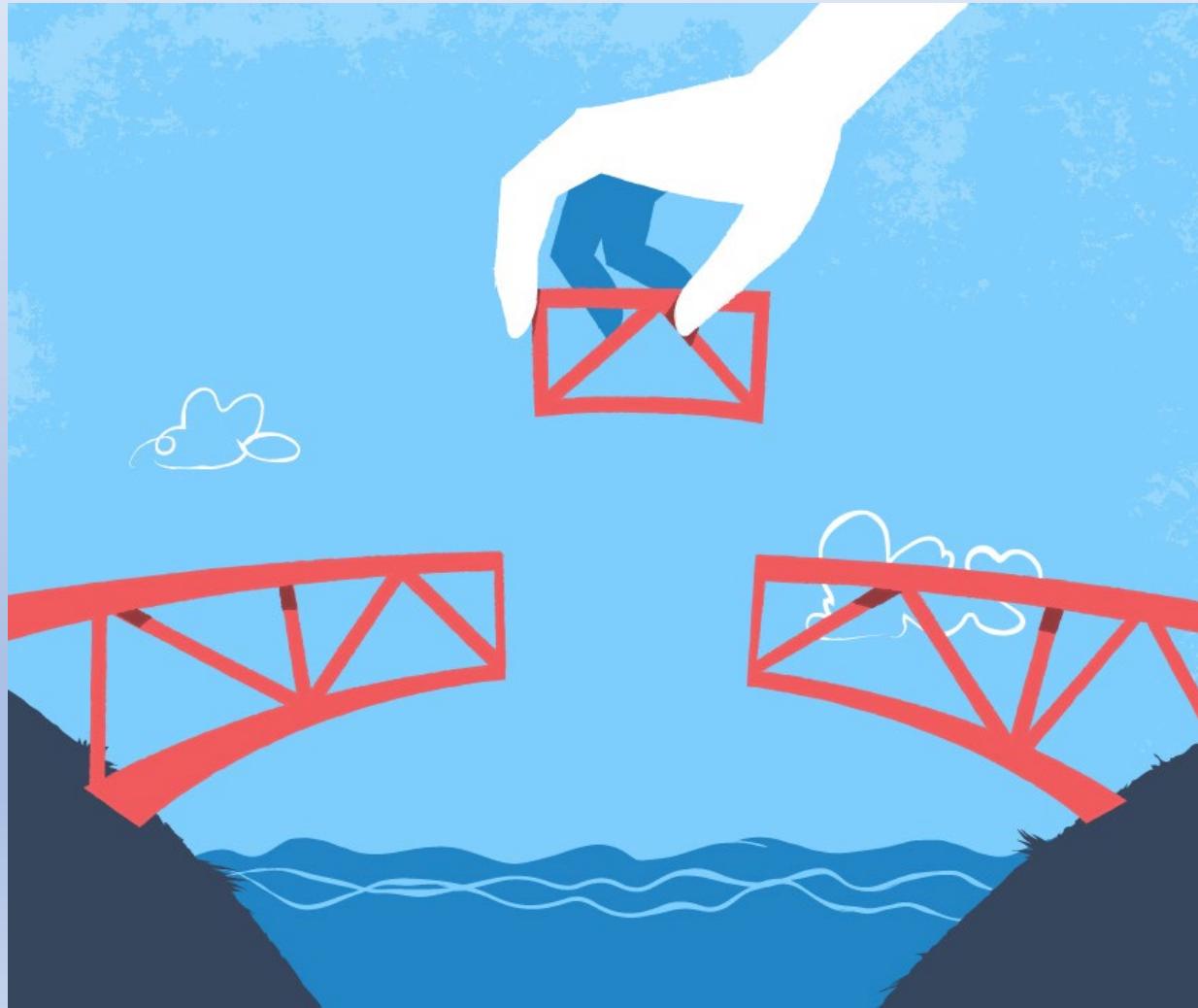


Tools for Bridging Divides in Your Congregation

Rev. Dr. Leah Schade
lschade@lextheo.edu



Assessing Risk and Capacity for Preaching that Addresses Social Issues

A TOOL TO PREPARE FOR PROPHETIC SERMONS

- Poll: What was your assessment score based on the “Tool to Prepare for Prophetic Sermons”?

Gentle Prophet (*30—45 points*)

Invitational Prophet (*46—60 points*)

Robust Prophet (*61 – 90 points*)

Comparing parishioners' perceptions in 10 DOC congregations about the volatility of terms heard in sermons, 2019 v. 2020. The "hotter" terms are at the top; the "cooler" terms at the bottom.

Theological framing makes a difference

2019



Which the following terms are “too political” to hear in a sermon?

	TERM	Weighted Average
1	Capitalism	4.44
2	Guns	4.28
3	Government	4.1
4	Corporations	3.89
5	Advocacy and/or activism	3.41
6	Sexuality	3.32
7	Immigration/refugees	3.13
8	Privilege	3.11
9	Climate change	3.07
10	Economy	3.02
11	Gender	2.67
12	Race/racism	2.37
13	Rights	2.35
14	Injustice	2.3
15	Environment	2.13
16	Dialogue	1.92
17	Equality	1.78
18	Community	1.43
19	God's Creation	1.28

	TERM	Weighted Average
1	Capitalism	4.7
2	Guns	4.59
3	Government	4.4
4	Corporations	4.02
5	Black Lives Matter	4.02
6	Advocacy and/or activism	3.5
7	Privilege	3.38
8	Sexuality	3.3
9	Economy	3.21
10	Climate change	3.13
11	Immigration/refugees	3.06
12	Race/racism	2.68
13	Injustice	2.57
14	Gender	2.5
15	Rights	2.5
16	Environment	2.44
17	Covid-19, coronavirus	2.01
18	Equality	1.89
19	Dialogue	1.77
20	Community	1.46
21	God's Creation	1.33

Stars indicate terms added for the 2020 survey.

Issues congregants most WANT pastor to address or incorporate into their preaching or otherwise discussed in congregation in next 6 months.

Disciples of Christ Churches in Mid-Central US (2019)

1	Interfaith relations/Hate crimes/Intolerance	33%
2	Race/Racism/White privilege/White supremacy	26%
3	Economic issues (debt/poverty/inequality/homelessness)	25%
4	Environment/Climate change/Pollution	24%
5	Mental and/or Emotional health/Suicide prevention	19%
6	Domestic abuse or violence/Bullying	16%
7	Black Lives Matter	13%
8	Immigration	12%
9	Substance abuse/Addictions/Opioid crisis	12%
10	Education issues	11%
11	Gun rights and/or Gun violence	10%
12	Covid-19 pandemic response	10%
13	Human trafficking/Slavery	9%
14	Gender/Sexuality/Sexual identity/LGBTQIA issues	9%
15	Healthcare	8%
16	Fiscal responsibility	6%
17	Crime/Victims' rights/Incarceration/Capital punishment	5%
18	Abortion/Reproductive health	3%
19	Physical disabilities	1%
20	War/Terrorism/Militarization/Veterans issues	1%
	None of the above	10%

United Methodist Churches in Great Plains Conf (2021)

1	Mental and/or Emotional health/Suicide prevention	33%
2	Interfaith relations/Hate crimes/Intolerance	27%
3	Economic issues (debt/poverty/inequality/homelessness)	24%
4	Race/Racism/White privilege/White supremacy	21%
5	Domestic abuse or violence/Bullying	19%
6	Covid-19 pandemic response	16%
7	Gender/Sexuality/Sexual identity/LGBTQIA issues	15%
8	Education issues	14%
9	Healthcare	11%
10	Human trafficking/Slavery	11%
11	Fiscal responsibility	11%
12	Substance abuse/Addictions/Opioid crisis	9%
13	Environment/Climate change/Pollution	8%
14	Black Lives Matter	7%
15	Crime/Victims' rights/Incarceration/Capital punishment	4%
16	Immigration	4%
17	Abortion/Reproductive health	3%
18	Physical disabilities	2%
19	Gun rights and/or Gun violence	1%
20	War/Terrorism/Militarization/Veterans issues	1%
	None of the above	10%

Issues congregants most WANT pastor to address or incorporate into their preaching or otherwise discussed in congregation in next 6 months.

Disciples of Christ Churches in Mid-Central US (2019)

1	Interfaith relations/Hate crimes/Intolerance	33%
2	Race/Racism/White privilege/White supremacy	26%
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10	Education issues	11%
11	Gun rights and/or Gun violence	10%
12	Covid-19 pandemic response	10%
13	Human trafficking/Slavery	9%
14	Gender/Sexuality/Sexual identity/LGBTQIA issues	9%
15	Healthcare	8%
16	Fiscal responsibility	6%
17	Crime/Victims' rights/Incarceration/Capital punishment	5%
18	Abortion/Reproductive health	3%
19	Physical disabilities	1%
20	War/Terrorism/Militarization/Veterans issues	1%
	None of the above	10%

United Methodist Churches in Great Plains Conf (2021)

1	Mental and/or Emotional health/Suicide prevention	33%
2	Interfaith relations/Hate crimes/Intolerance	27%
3	Economic issues (debt/poverty/inequality/homelessness)	24%
4	Race/Racism/White privilege/White supremacy	21%
5	Domestic abuse or violence/Bullying	19%
6	Covid-19 pandemic response	16%
7	Gender/Sexuality/Sexual identity/LGBTQIA issues	15%
8	Education issues	14%
9	Healthcare	11%
10	Human trafficking/Slavery	11%
11	Fiscal responsibility	11%
12	Substance abuse/Addictions/Opioid crisis	9%
13	Environment/Climate change/Pollution	8%
14	Black Lives Matter	7%
15	Crime/Victims' rights/Incarceration/Capital punishment	4%
16	Immigration	4%
17	Abortion/Reproductive health	3%
18	Physical disabilities	2%
19	Gun rights and/or Gun violence	1%
20	War/Terrorism/Militarization/Veterans issues	1%
	None of the above	10%

Issues congregants DO NOT WANT pastor to address or incorporate into their preaching or otherwise discussed in congregation in next 6 months.

Disciples of Christ Churches in Mid-Central US (2019)

1	Abortion/Reproductive health	31%
2	Black Lives Matter	22%
3	Gender/Sexuality/Sexual identity/LGBTQIA issues	20%
4	Gun rights and/or Gun violence	16%
5	Race/Racism/White privilege/White supremacy	13%
6	War/Terrorism/Militarization/Veterans issues	9%
7	Environment/Climate change/Pollution	8%
8	Immigration	4%
9	Crime/Victims' rights/Incarceration/Capital punishment	4%
10	Substance abuse/Addictions/Opioid crisis	4%
11	Fiscal responsibility	4%
12	Human trafficking/Slavery	3%
13	Covid-19 pandemic response	3%
14	Physical disabilities	3%
15	Education issues	2%
	Economic issues	
16	(debt/poverty//inequality/homelessness)	1%
17	Interfaith relations/Hate crimes/Intolerance	1%
18	Mental and/or Emotional health/Suicide prevention	1%
19	Domestic abuse or violence/Bullying	1%
20	Healthcare	0%
21	No problem with any of these issues	39%

United Methodist Churches in Great Plains Conf (2021)

1	Abortion/Reproductive health	27%
2	Gender/Sexuality/Sexual identity/LGBTQIA issues	26%
3	Black Lives Matter	26%
4	Gun rights and/or Gun violence	25%
5	Race/Racism/White privilege/White supremacy	18%
6	Environment/Climate change/Pollution	10%
7	War/Terrorism/Militarization/Veterans issues	10%
8	Crime/Victims' rights/Incarceration/Capital punishment	6%
9	Other (please specify)	5%
10	Immigration	4%
11	Economic issues (debt/poverty//inequality/homelessness)	2%
12	Human trafficking/Slavery	2%
13	Covid-19 pandemic response	2%
14	Physical disabilities	2%
15	Fiscal responsibility	2%
16	Education issues	1%
17	Healthcare	1%
18	Mental and/or Emotional health/Suicide prevention	1%
19	Substance abuse/Addictions/Opioid crisis	1%
20	Domestic abuse or violence/Bullying	0%
21	Interfaith relations/Hate crimes/Intolerance	0%
	No problem with hearing about any of these issues	33%

Ministry, Preaching, and Social Issues Survey, 2021

2099 U.S. clergy surveyed

What social issues did you address in your preaching in 2020?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Covid-19 pandemic	84.66% 1,777
▼ Economic issues (debt, poverty, homelessness, etc.)	74.37% 1,561
▼ Racism/White supremacy/Black Lives Matter	69.22% 1,453
▼ Hunger/food insecurity	59.65% 1,252
▼ Political divisions	59.46% 1,248
▼ Environment/climate change/pollution/extinction	46.64% 979
▼ Ethics/integrity/corruption	46.16% 969
▼ Immigration	44.69% 938
▼ Addictions/substance abuse	44.55% 935
▼ LGBTQIA+ issues	41.07% 862

Environment ranks #6 in the top ten!

MORAL FRAMEWORKS

CARE
V.
HARM

FAIRNESS
V.
CHEATING

LIBERTY
V.
OPPRESSION

LOYALTY
V.
BETRAYAL

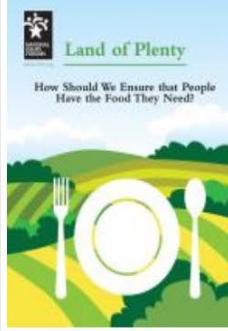
AUTHORITY
V.
SUBVERSION

SANCTITY
V.
DEGRADATION

National Issues Forums Institute & The Kettering Foundation



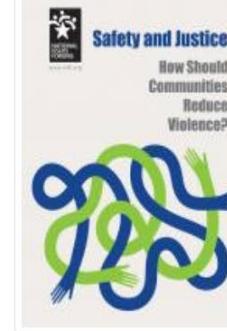
ISSUE ADVISORY -
What Should We Do
about the Opioid
Epidemic?



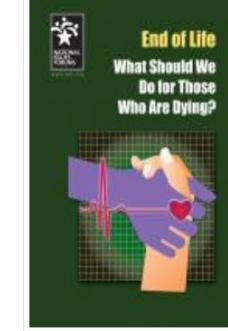
Land of Plenty



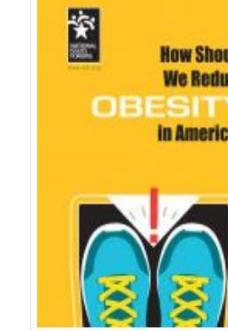
Energy Choices



Safety and Justice



End of Life



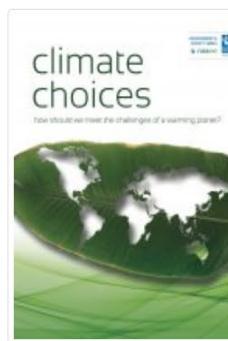
How Should We
Reduce Obesity in
America?



ISSUE ADVISORY - How
Can We Stop Mass
Shootings In Our
Communities? (2016)



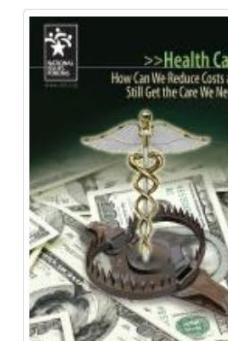
ISSUE ADVISORY -
Infectious Disease
Outbreaks: How
Should We Keep Our
Communities Safe?



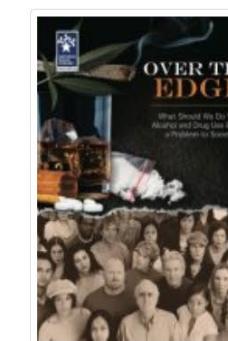
Climate Choices



Making Ends Meet:
How Should We
Spread Prosperity and
Improve Opportunity?

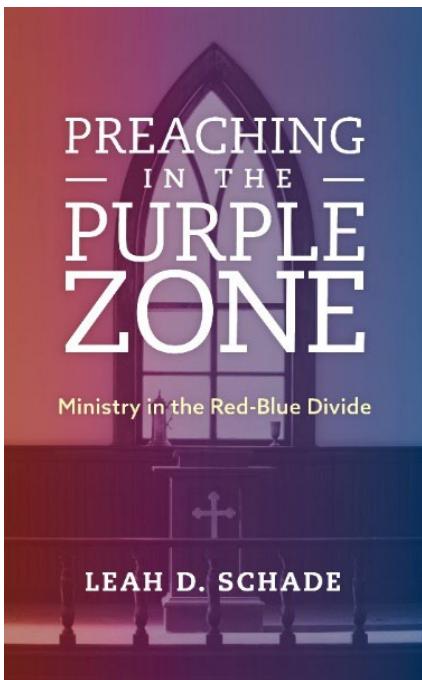


Health Care



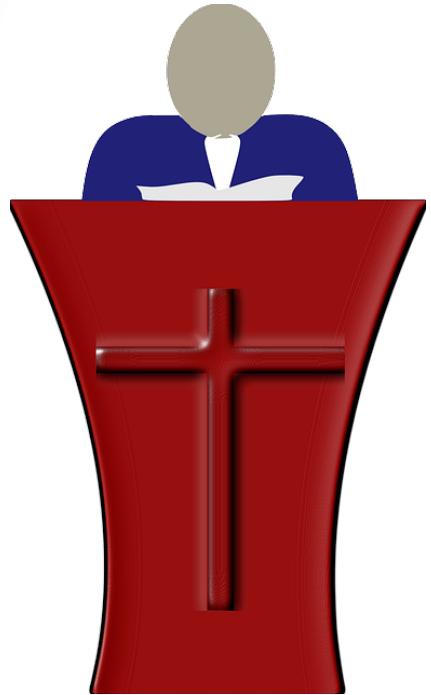
Over the Edge

SERMON – DIALOGUE – SERMON METHOD



Developed by the Rev. Dr. Leah D. Schade

SERMON – DIALOGUE – SERMON METHOD



Sermon #1 – “Prophetic Invitation to Dialogue”

(Introduces the controversial justice issue)

SUGGESTED GROUND RULES FOR DELIBERATIVE DIALOGUE

Choose for yourself when and how to participate

Participants are invited to join in the discussion, never required or pressured to do so. This is not a “share-or-die” event! Being fully present and listening with care is as important a contribution as speaking with care.



Listen to hear: listen with empathy

Remain respectful and remember that maintaining relationships is a priority.

Make space for silence and reflection

The discussion should not be fast and furious. Slow down and pay attention to the “inner teacher” that is trying to speak in you and in others. You can “press pause” to cool off, if needed.

No debating

Our views of reality may differ, but speaking one’s convictions does not mean interpreting, correcting, or debating what others say. Seek instead — through listening deeply and asking honest, open questions — to help each participant find their own clarity and resourcefulness.

Embrace differences

Speak from your experiences and viewpoints with “I statements,” not mountain-top declarations or overgeneralizations. Listen with an open mind to others’ experiences.

When the going gets rough, turn to wonder

Turn from reaction and judgment to wonder and compassionate inquiry: “I wonder why he or she feels/thinks this way?” “I wonder what pushed my buttons in what he or she just said?”

Learn to ask honest, open questions

Instead of judging or debating what people say or asking leading questions, ask questions that are free of judgment or advice, questions that come from a simple desire to help the speaker explore more deeply what he or she has said. “Is there a story from your life that helps explain why you feel or believe what you do?” is an honest, open question. “How could you believe something like that?” is not!

Be clear about what you would like to stay within the group

This is a public discussion, but if you are sharing personal information that you would like to stay within this forum, be clear about that. By the same token, if you hear a story or personal information that another shares in this discussion, ask permission first if you wish to talk about it outside the group.

SERMON – DIALOGUE – SERMON METHOD



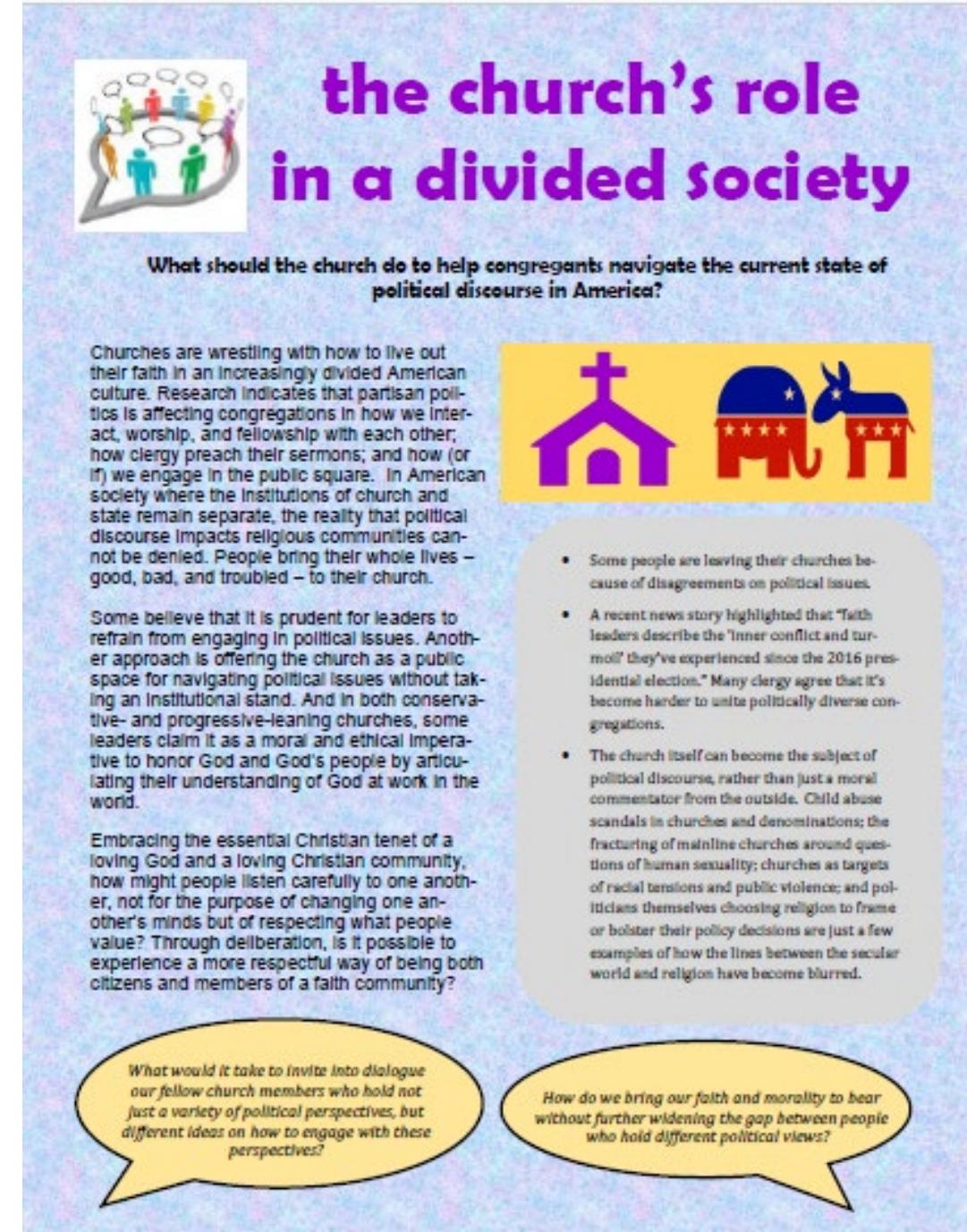
Deliberative Dialogue

A form of civil discourse that brings people together to:

1. Share their story of how the issue affects them
2. Deliberate about the benefits and drawbacks of three different approaches to the issue
3. Identify shared values and common ground
4. Brainstorm next steps about how to proceed

Issue guide: “The Church’s Role in a Divided Society” developed by a research team at the Kettering Foundation to help congregations look at three different approaches:

- * Church as Sanctuary
- * Church as Mediator
- * Church as Prophetic Voice



the church's role in a divided society

What should the church do to help congregants navigate the current state of political discourse in America?

Churches are wrestling with how to live out their faith in an increasingly divided American culture. Research indicates that partisan politics is affecting congregations in how we interact, worship, and fellowship with each other; how clergy preach their sermons; and how (or if) we engage in the public square. In American society where the institutions of church and state remain separate, the reality that political discourse impacts religious communities cannot be denied. People bring their whole lives – good, bad, and troubled – to their church.

Some believe that it is prudent for leaders to refrain from engaging in political issues. Another approach is offering the church as a public space for navigating political issues without taking an institutional stand. And in both conservative- and progressive-leaning churches, some leaders claim it as a moral and ethical imperative to honor God and God's people by articulating their understanding of God at work in the world.

Embracing the essential Christian tenet of a loving God and a loving Christian community, how might people listen carefully to one another, not for the purpose of changing one another's minds but of respecting what people value? Through deliberation, is it possible to experience a more respectful way of being both citizens and members of a faith community?

- Some people are leaving their churches because of disagreements on political issues.
- A recent news story highlighted that “faith leaders describe the ‘inner conflict and turmoil’ they’ve experienced since the 2016 presidential election.” Many clergy agree that it’s become harder to unite politically diverse congregations.
- The church itself can become the subject of political discourse, rather than just a moral commentator from the outside. Child abuse scandals in churches and denominations; the fracturing of mainline churches around questions of human sexuality; churches as targets of racial tensions and public violence; and politicians themselves choosing religion to frame or bolster their policy decisions are just a few examples of how the lines between the secular world and religion have become blurred.

What would it take to invite into dialogue our fellow church members who hold not just a variety of political perspectives, but different ideas on how to engage with these perspectives?

How do we bring our faith and morality to bear without further widening the gap between people who hold different political views?

SERMON – DIALOGUE – SERMON METHOD

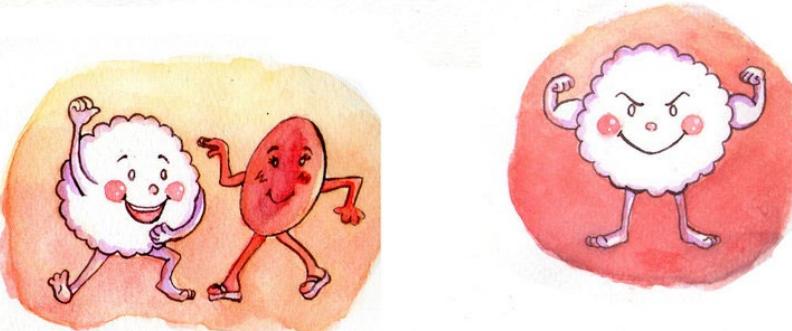
Sermon #2 – “Communal Prophetic Proclamation”

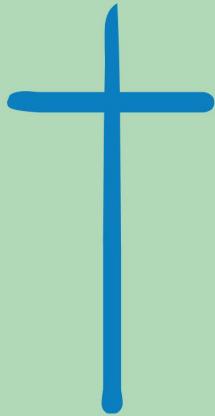
(Incorporates wisdom from Deliberative Dialogue
session into a more prophetic sermon)



Over 200 Clergy and Laity Trained in the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon Method

The leukocytes (“white blood cells”) in the Body of Christ.





CLERGY EMERGENCY LEAGUE

RESIST | RECLAIM | RENEW

Started in June 2020, The Clergy Emergency League (CEL) is a grassroots network of more than 2,500 clergy across the United States.

We provide support, accountability, resources, and networking for clergy to prophetically minister in their congregations and the public square in this time of political upheaval, social unrest, and partisan division.

Website: <https://www.clergyemergencyleague.com/>

Facebook group (be sure to answer vetting questions to gain admittance):

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/3268854966534981>

Join our email list: <https://mailchi.mp/476fe00380e8/clergy-emergency-league-email-list>

Like our public FB page: <https://www.facebook.com/ClergyEmergencyLeague>



ACTION ITEMS for the Clergy Emergency League 2022

