

# Preaching: The Heart & The Art





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**by Rev. Dr. David R. Schmitt**

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# Preaching: The Heart & The Art

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**T**his video, with workbook for group discussion, helps pastors reaffirm the law and Gospel heart of their preaching while also encouraging them to explore the art. By considering four different styles of preaching, pastors will reflect on their experiences as preachers and the nature of preaching within the congregational context.

### Discussion Questions

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#### **II. Session One: The Heart of Preaching**

*This video segment discusses how the Rev. Dr. C.F.W. Walther, the first president of the Missouri Synod, was able to hold on to the heart of preaching (Law and Gospel) while also exploring the art of preaching (confessional style) in his day.*

#### **III. Session Two: The Art of Preaching—Confessional**

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*This video segment defines the confessional style of preaching and discusses its values and challenges.*

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# INTRODUCTION

One way to see the tension between the heart and the art of preaching is to compare your preaching to the preaching you heard before you became a pastor. How is your preaching similar to the preaching you heard as you were formed in the faith? How is it different? Why?



## SESSION ONE

### The Heart of Preaching

**A.** Some pastors say, “All I need to do is preach Law and Gospel.” In what way is that statement helpful to you as the preacher? In what way can that statement be detrimental?

**B.** At the heart of preaching is the proclamation of the death and resurrection of Christ for the forgiveness of sins. This proclamation is both based on a text of Scripture and proclaimed in a way that relates to the lives of God’s people.

**I.** In terms of the **texts of Scripture**, consider a recent sermon you preached or reflect on an upcoming text. How do you move from the biblical text to the proclamation of the death and resurrection of Christ? How would that transition be artificial, shallow or model poor ways of reading the Scriptures? How would that transition model how to interpret the Scriptures?

**2.** In terms of **the lives of God’s people**, what challenges do you encounter in preaching the law? How do you face those challenges? What struggles do you encounter in preaching the Gospel? How do you face those struggles?

**C.** Complete the following sentence: “I would like my proclamation of Christ to be \_\_\_\_\_ but not \_\_\_\_\_.” Discuss the experiences and teachings that have shaped that answer.



## SESSION TWO

### **The Art of Preaching- Confessional**

**A.** Confessional preaching organizes the sermon on the basis of a logical unfolding of a teaching of the faith. What are your experiences with this form of preaching?

**B.** How would this form of preaching be received in your congregation? Why?

**C.** One value of this style of preaching is that it proclaims the whole counsel of God over time. Take time to reflect on that value in your congregational context. How is the whole counsel of God communicated among your people and how do you assess the effectiveness of that communication?

**D.** Can you think of other ways this style of preaching might be valuable for your people?

**E.** Difficulties with this style of preaching include a neglect of the text, logic and the proper distinction between law and Gospel. Can you think of other difficulties this preaching might pose for your people or preaching ministry? If you were to try this style of preaching, how would you address those difficulties?



## SESSION THREE

### The Art of Preaching-Kerygmatic

**A.** Kerygmatic preaching organizes the sermon on the basis of repentance and forgiveness of sins. For example, the preacher could organize the sermon by preaching Law and Gospel in the text and then proclaiming Law and Gospel. Or he could preach the Law (in the text and among those listening) and then the Gospel (in the text and among those listening). What are your experiences with this form of preaching?

**I.** How would this form of preaching be received in your congregation? Why?

**2.** One value of this style of preaching is that it clearly proclaims Law and Gospel. Can you think of other ways this style of preaching might be valuable for your congregation?

**3.** Most difficulties with this style of preaching involve oversimplification. The preacher can oversimplify the text, the teachings and life of Christ, the Scriptural metaphors of the Gospel, the whole counsel of God and/or the lives of God's people.

**a.** Choose a text you recently preached or an upcoming text and brainstorm what this oversimplification might look like. What would cause a preacher to oversimplify law and Gospel in this way?

**4.** Can you think of other difficulties this preaching might pose for your congregation or preaching ministry?

If you were to try this style of preaching, how would you address those difficulties?



## SESSION FOUR

### The Art of Preaching- Transformational and Conversational

**A.** Transformational and conversational preaching are two larger categories of preaching that embrace a variety of forms.

**I.** Transformational preaching might incorporate into the sermon the use of an image, the telling of a long-central story (either the story of the biblical text or a contemporary story), the performance of a chancel drama, the viewing of a video clip or the singing of a hymn.

**2.** Conversational preaching includes verbal interaction with congregational members as part of the sermon. The preacher could interview a congregational member during the sermon (for example, in a sermon considering God's call to love one another, the preacher could speak to a member who recently participated in a servant event). The preacher could ask particular questions of the congregation (for example, in a sermon on the fifth petition, the preacher could ask how the world encourages us to respond to sins against us). The preacher could guide worshippers to interact with one another (for example, in a sermon celebrating God's gift of prayer, the preacher could encourage members to share prayer petitions with one another).

**3.** What are your experiences with this form of preaching?

**B.** How would this form of preaching be received in your congregation? Why?

**C.** One value of this style of preaching is that it attends to the variety of ways in which God speaks in Scripture (for example, parables, proverbs, psalms, oracles, laments, diatribes, narratives, letters and prayers) and the variety of ways in which God's people speak to one another today (for example, the dramatic and poetic arts, interviews, multimedia presentations, small-group conversation, dialogue, and question and answer).

How might that scriptural and contemporary variety be helpful for the communication of God's Word, the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins and the spiritual formation of God's people?

**D.** What knowledge, skills or resources would a preacher need in order to embody these styles well?



**E.** Difficulties with this style of preaching include the loss of a Christ-centered focus to the sermon and a loss of the office of preaching, as the preacher becomes only a facilitator of small-group interactions or a provider of entertainment.

Can you think of other difficulties this preaching might pose for your people or your preaching ministry? If you were to try this style of preaching, how would you address those difficulties?



## RECENT WORK IN HOMILETICS

This handout offers an overview of various schools of thought in homiletics and a listing of the representative works for further reading.

### Overview

Allen, O Wesley Jr. *The Renewed Homiletic*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010.

Allen, Ronald J., ed. *Patterns of Preaching: A Sermon Sampler*. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1998.

Cosgrove, Charles H., and W. Dow Edgerton. "Preaching and Interpretation in Transition," *In Other Words: Incarnational Translation for Preaching*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007. 1-35.

Eslinger, Richard. *The Web of Preaching: New Options in Homiletic Method*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2002.

Wilson, Paul Scott. *Preaching and Homiletical Theory*. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004.

### Specific Works

**Confessional:** Calls for a careful return to the wisdom of the "old homiletic," recognizing that the sermon still functions as a means of educating those listening in the texts and teachings of the faith.

Allen, Ronald J. *The Teaching Sermon*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1995.

Allen, Ronald J. *Preaching the Topical Sermon*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992.

Allen, Ronald J. *Wholly Scripture: Preaching Biblical Themes*. St. Louis: Chalice, 2004.

Chapell, Bryan. *Christ-centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994.

Greidanus, Sidney. *The Modern Preaching and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988.

Hughes, Robert and Robert Kysar. *Preaching Doctrine for the Twenty-First Century*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997.

Long, Thomas. *The Witness of Preaching*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005.

Robinson, Haddon W. *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*. London: Hodden & Stoughton, 1983.

**Kerygmatic:** Uses the fundamental dynamics of the message of salvation to shape the basic experience of the sermon. The sermon progresses from an experience of judgment to forgiveness, from trouble to grace, from sin to salvation, from Law to Gospel.

Caemmerer, Richard. *Preaching for the Church*. St. Louis: Concordia, 1959.

Stuempfle, Herman G, Jr. *Preaching Law and Gospel*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978.

Brooks, Gennifer Benjamin. *Good News Preaching: Offering the Gospel in Every Sermon*. Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2009.

Jacobsen, David Schnasa, and Robert Allen Kelly. *Kairos Preaching: Speaking Gospel to the Situation*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009.

Peterson, Brian K., ed. *Proclaiming the Gospel: Preaching for the Life of the Church*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009.



Wilson, Paul Scott. *The Four Pages of the Sermon*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1999.

**Literary:** *Uses literary criticism to understand the form and function of a biblical text (proverb, parable, etc.) and demonstrates how the biblical form can influence the form and function of the sermon.*

Blomberg, Craig. *Preaching the Parables: From Responsible Interpretation to Powerful Proclamation*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004.

Graves, Mike. *The Sermon as Symphony: Preaching the Literary Forms of the New Testament*. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1997.

Jacobsen, David Schnassa. *Preaching in the New Creation: The Promise of New Testament Apocalyptic Texts*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999.

Jones, Larry Paul, and Jerry L. Sumney. *Preaching Apocalyptic Texts*. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1999.

Long, Thomas. *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989.

McKenzie, Alyce. *Preaching Proverbs: Wisdom for the Pulpit*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996.

Thompson, James W. *Preaching Like Paul: Homiletical Wisdom for Today*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000.

**Inductive:** *Uses a process of discovery to structure the experience of those listening to the sermon so that the preacher and the congregation interact in a gradual (and mutual) discernment of meaning.*

Craddock, Fred. *As One Without Authority*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1976.

Lewis, Ralph L. and Gregg Lewis. *Inductive Preaching: Helping People Listen*. Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1983.

**Phenomenological:** *Uses contemporary communication and educational theory regarding how thoughts are formed in the minds of those listening to consider ways of developing and sequencing the ideas and experiences of the sermon.*

Allen, Ronald, and Joseph R. Jeter, Jr. *One Gospel, Many Ears: Preaching for Different Listeners in the Congregation*. St. Louis: Chalice, 2002.

Buttrick, David. *Homiletic: Moves and Structures*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987.

Troeger, Thomas H., and Edward Everding. *So That All Might Know: Preaching to the Whole Congregation*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2008.

**Narrative:** *Uses the experience of narrative (for example, the standard plot form of conflict, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution) rather than the telling of stories to structure the experience of those listening during a sermon.*

Graves, Mike, and David J. Schlafter, eds. *What's the Shape of Narrative Preaching?* St. Louis: Chalice, 2008.

Green, Joel B., and Michael Pasquarello, III, eds. *Narrative Reading, Narrative Preaching*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003.

Lowry, Eugene. *Doing Time in the Pulpit: The Relationship Between Narrative and Preaching*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1985.

---. *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form*. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980.

---. *The Sermon: Dancing the Edge of Mystery*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1997.

Wright, John W. *Telling God's Story: Narrative Preaching for Christian Formation*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2007.

**Storied:** Recognizes the change from a literate culture to a post-literate culture and argues for "storied discourse" or sermons that use a series of stories to communicate with the contemporary listener.

Denison, Charles. *The Artist's Way of Preaching*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006.

Jensen, Richard A. *Telling the Story: Variety and Imagination in Preaching*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1980.

Jensen, Richard A. *Thinking in Story: Preaching in a Post-Literate Age*. Lima, Ohio: CSS Publishing, 1994.

Lowry, Eugene. *How to Preach a Parable: Designs for Narrative Sermons*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1989.

Mulder, David. *Narrative Preaching: Stories from the Pulpit*. St. Louis: Concordia, 1996.

Park, Sangyil. *Korean Preaching, Han, and Narrative*. New York: Peter Lang, 2008.

Steimle, Edmund, Morris Niedenthal, and Charles Rice. *Preaching the Story*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980.

Tucker, Austin B. *The Preacher as Storyteller: The Power of Narrative in the Pulpit*. Nashville: B&H, 2008.

**Imagistic:** Uses contemporary theory regarding imagination and the associative power of images and icons to incorporate images into the sermon and make them central to the communication.

Eslinger, Richard. *Narrative and Imagination: Preaching the Worlds that Shape Us*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995.

Jensen, Richard A. *Envisioning the Word: The Use of Visual Images in Preaching*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005.

Randolph, David J. *The Renewal of Preaching in the Twenty-First Century: The Next Homiletic, with commentary by Robert Stephen Reid*. Second Edition. Eugene, Ore.: Cascades Books, 2009.

Sample, Tex. *Powerful Persuasion: Multimedia Witness in Christian Worship*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2005.

Troeger, Thomas. *Creating Fresh Images for Preaching*. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1982.

---. *Imagining a Sermon*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1990.

**Formative:** Focuses upon spiritual formation and its implications for preaching, highlighting either the spiritual formation of the preacher and how that formation equips the preacher for preaching or the formative relationships between the preacher, the people and God that shape the sermon.

Edgerton, W. Dow. *Speak to Me That I May Speak: A Spirituality of Preaching*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2006.

Flynn, James T. *Words that Transform: Preaching as a Catalyst for Renewal*. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2010.





Mitchell, Henry H. *Celebration and Experience in Preaching*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1990.

Proctor, Samuel. *How Shall They Hear? Effective Preaching for Vital Faith*. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1992.

Proctor, Samuel. *The Certain Sound of the Trumpet: Crafting Sermons of Authority*. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1994.

Thomas, Frank A. *They Like to Never Quit Praisin' God: The Role of Celebration in Preaching*. Pilgrim Press, 1997.

**Post-Liberal:** Recognizes the church as a cultural-linguistic community and argues for the sermon as a use of biblical speech that forms those listening into God's holy people.

Brueggemann, Walter. *Cadences from Home: Preaching among Exiles*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997.

Campbell, Charles. *Preaching Jesus: New Directions for Homiletics in Hans Frei's Postliberal Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.

Willimon, William. *The Intrusive Word: Preaching to the Unbaptized*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994.

---. *Peculiar Speech: Preaching to the Baptized*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992.

---. *Undone by Easter: Keeping Preaching Fresh*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2009.

**Contextual:** Recognizes the congregation as a partner in the preaching task and argues for the identification of "local theology" and sometimes the use of congregational participation to form sermons that are conversational, reflecting both the lives of God's people and the spontaneous working of the Spirit through the people whom God has gathered.

Allen, O. Wesley, Jr. *The Homiletic of All Believers: A Conversational Approach*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005.

Kim, Eunjoo Mary. *Preaching in an Age of Globalization*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2010.

McClure, John S. *The Roundtable Pulpit: Where Leadership and Preaching Meet*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1995.

Rose, Lucy Atkinson. *Sharing the Word: Preaching in the Roundtable Church*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997.

Sweet, Leonard. *Postmodern Pilgrims*. Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2000.

Tisdale, Lenora Tubbs. *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997.



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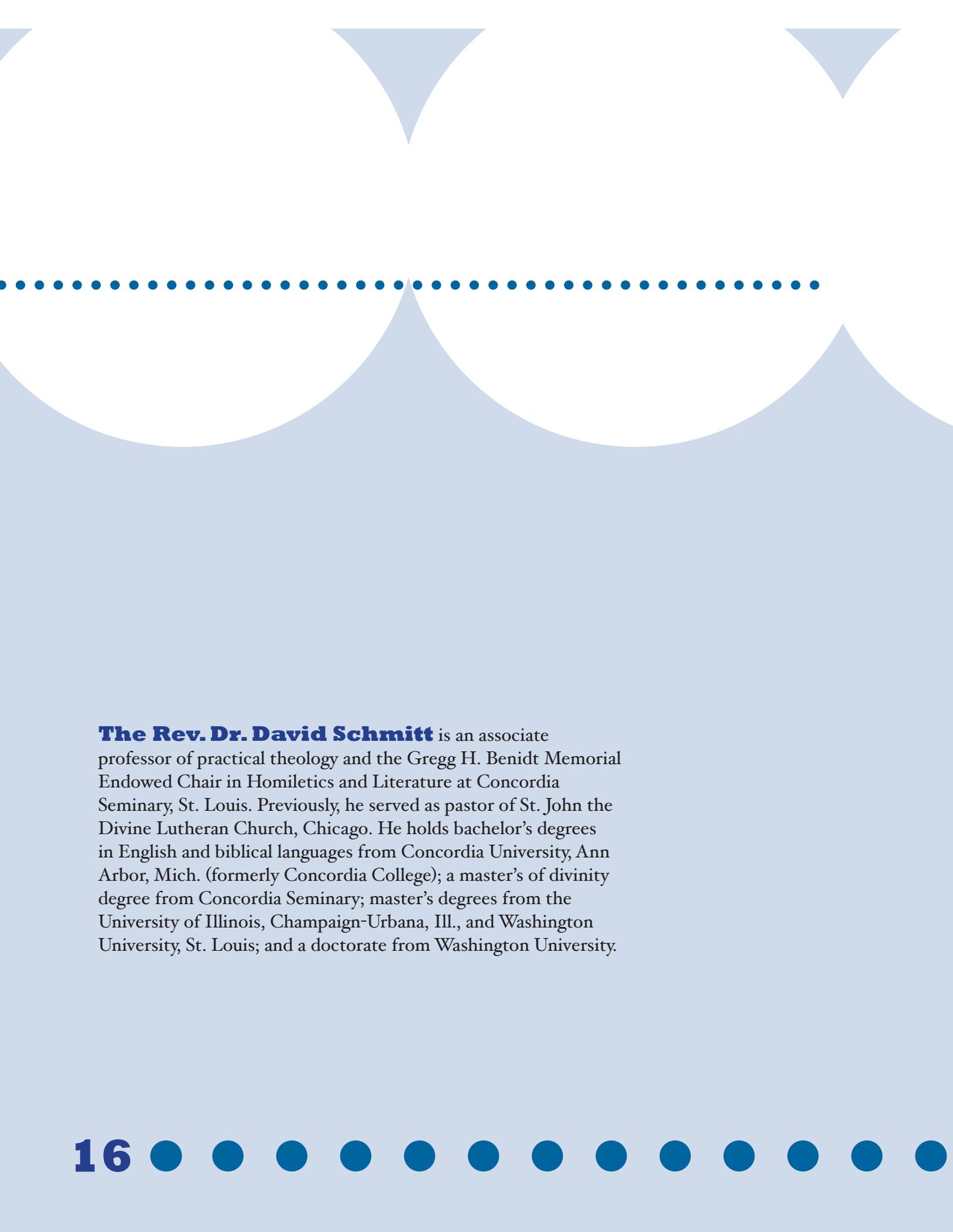
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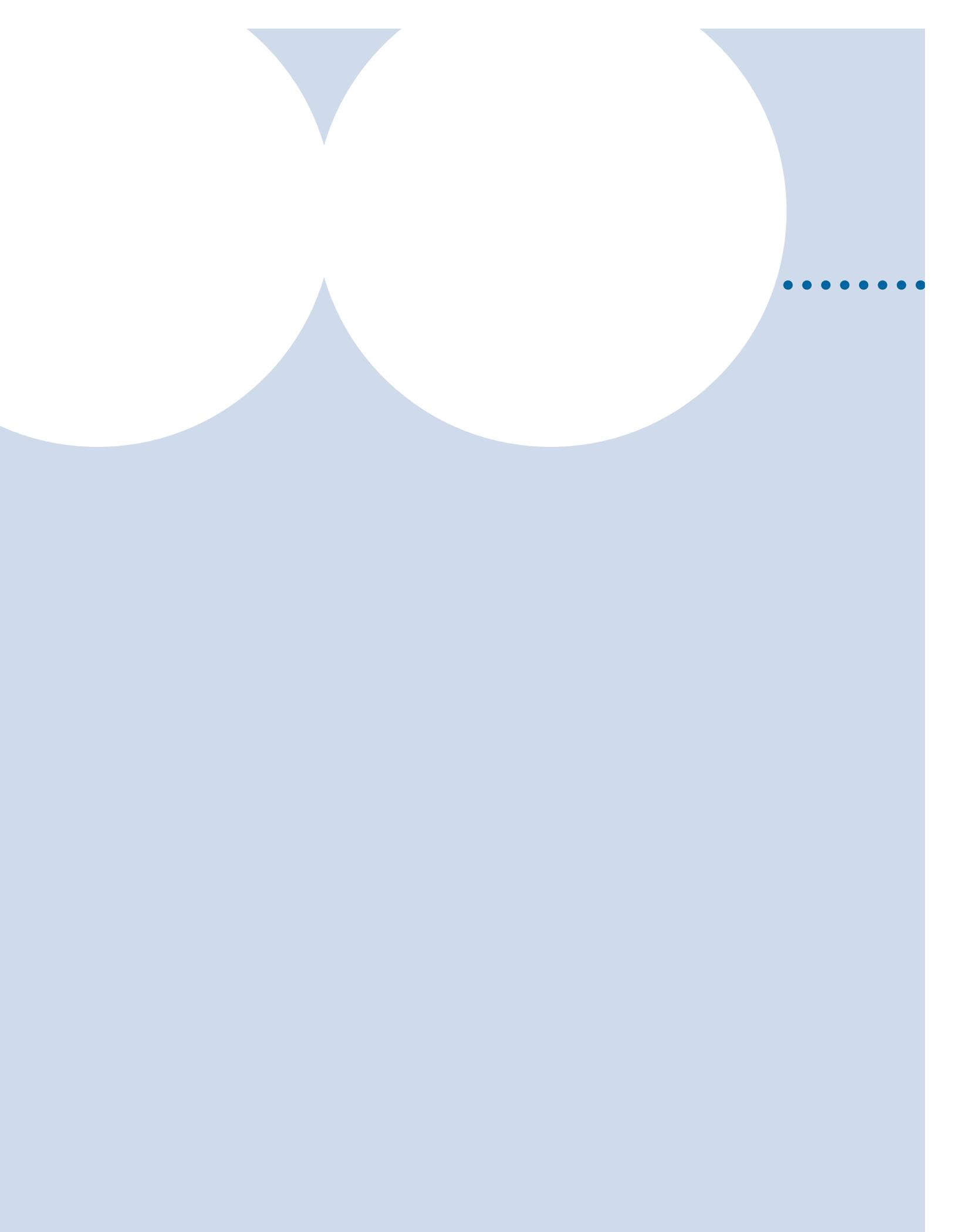
Schmitt, David. R. "Freedom of Form: Law/Gospel and Sermon Structure in Contemporary Lutheran Homiletics," *Concordia Journal* 25.1 (1999): 42-55.

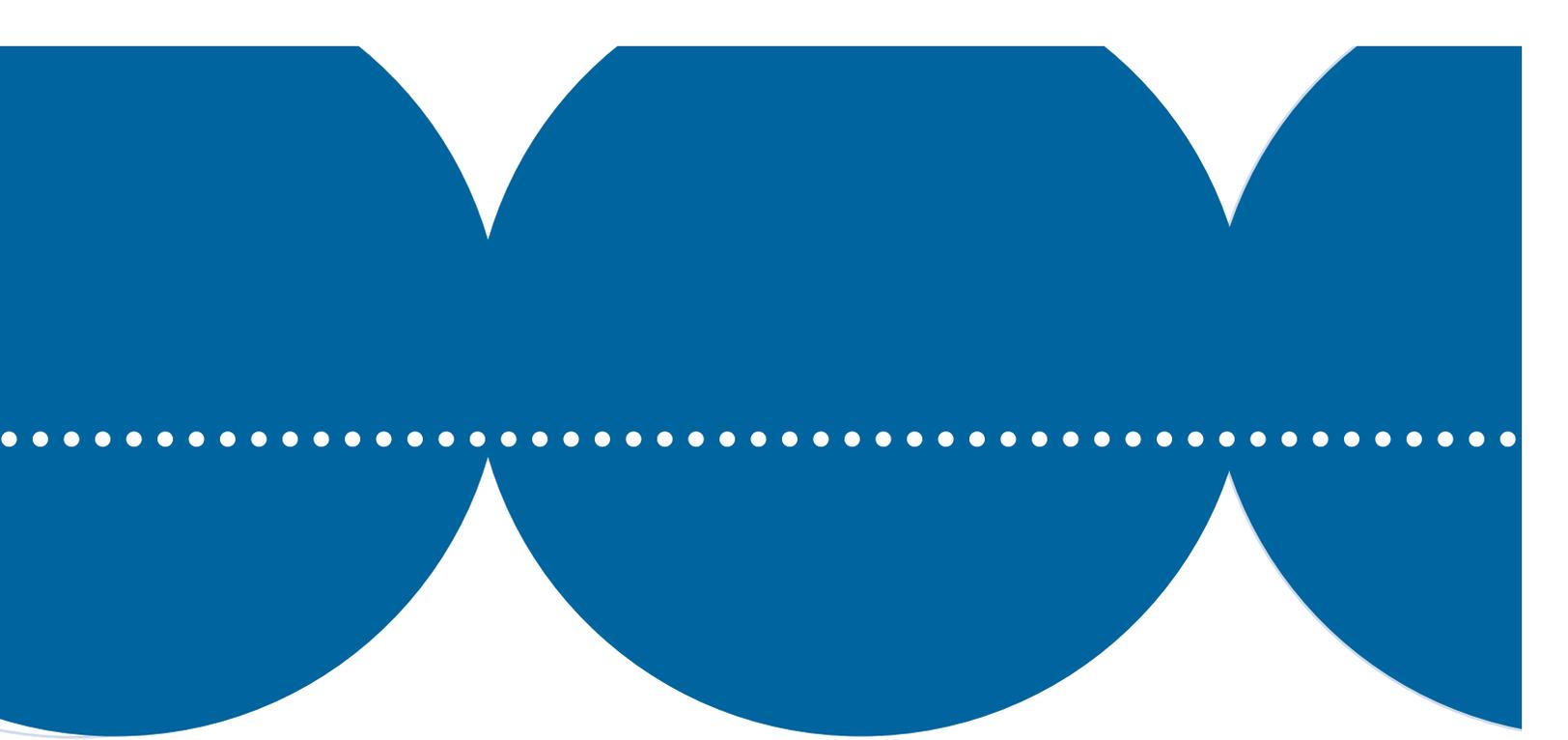
For resources organized according to various styles of preaching, see the bibliography, "Recent Work in Homiletics."





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