

Message from A Strathclyde Minister

It is always a great pleasure and honour to write the new preaching plan letter. It is like an opportunity to extend one's preaching. It is maybe why I am always very eager to write it; shouting: me, me, me when the superintendent asks whose turn it is. As a preacher, I always feel that we have not enough time on Sundays to explore our dominical message from the pulpit. I try to stick as much as I can to the time limit despite not having a watch.

Congregations have started to know me. Large clocks on the wall facing the preaching position have been cleverly added after few visits. I am sure it is purely a coincidence and nothing to do with the length of my sermons. Recently, I noticed in a church the clock was bigger than last time I preached there. I was only reassured it was because the previous clock broke down. I get concerned only when the stewards are repeatedly checking the clock batteries when I arrive. Even then I should graciously congratulate Strathclyde Church stewards for their commitment. Clocks are good and I am sure that my preaching colleagues from the circuit would agree they are a lot of better than the traffic light used for speakers during the Methodist Conference. Imagine, you can preach as long as the colour is green, rush to your conclusion when amber and go back to your seat when red or else ... after red there is no other colour, only the trap door under the pulpit.

I was reflecting how preaching seems to have evolved a lot over recent time meaning we have inevitably different styles. Training with other denominations I have also learned to appreciate the differences between a high Anglo-Catholic sermon and a pentecostalist one. I know which one I prefer: a good Methodist sermon. They should be inspired and inspiring, challenging and comforting, and uplifting and humbling. Each preacher shares her or his unique encounter with the divine when exploring a specific passage. This year a new scheme will be in place. Preachers will be able to test their preaching delivery within a local peer group. It is exciting. Preaching is a privilege not a right or a duty. I personally want to continuously progress my preaching; not because of competition or an egocentric pride of getting better but because the world changes and I change so it is only fair to share with brothers and sisters how we can maintain - or improve the way we preach. Not for our sake but for God's Good News.

Diversity in preaching is a blessing and something we must cherish. Integrity in our preaching is what unites us around God's message. I am deeply convinced that good sermons are one of the ways to be fully and joyfully in communion with God and our brothers and sisters. A real means of grace.

Thank you, God, for preachers, sermons and ... preaching plan letters and clocks.

Laurent