

**Thematic Preaching -- HM 4006**  
**Starr King School for the Ministry**  
**January Intersession 2014**  
**January 21-25, 2014**  
**Instructor: The Rev. Dr. Robert M. Hardies**  
**Contact: rhardies@allsouls.ws**

**Course Description**

This course is designed for preachers who take life as their sacred text for preaching and who seek to practice a ministry of non-lectionary thematic preaching in a congregational setting. We will explore the theological foundations of thematic preaching, learn how it fits into a larger vision of congregational ministry, identify resources and sustaining practices for the thematic preacher, and—of course!—preach. Each student will write three and deliver one original sermon for the class. (Sermons must be written and required reading completed in advance of class.) This course is designed especially for preachers in the Unitarian Universalist and other progressive theological traditions. All experience levels welcome.

**Hours**

The class will meet from 9 am to 5 pm daily from Tuesday, January 21<sup>st</sup> through Saturday, January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

**Class size**

Limit 15.

**Instructor**

The Rev. Dr. Robert Hardies has served for 13 years as senior minister of All Souls Church, Unitarian in Washington, DC, an historic multi-cultural congregation of over 1000 members in the nation's capital. He earned his Masters of Divinity degree from Starr King School for the Ministry and a Doctor of Ministry from Wesley Theological Seminary. He has served as adjunct faculty at Meadville Lombard Theological School, Wesley Theological Seminary, and Starr King School for the Ministry.

**Requirements**

## 1. Course Reading

Students must complete all course readings before the first day of class, and be prepared to thoughtfully discuss them in class.

### Required Reading

Arnason, Wayne, and Rolenz, Kathleen, *Worship that Works: Theory and Practice for Unitarian Universalists* (Boston: Skinner house, 2008) [available from the UUA Bookstore];

Rzepka, Jane, and Sawyer, Ken, *Thematic Preaching: An Introduction* (St. Louis, MO Chalice Press, 2001) [available from the UUA Bookstore];

Additional Readings posted to Course Reader/Website

## 2. Sermon Writing and Delivery

Each student must write manuscripts for **three original sermons** of approximately 15 minutes in length. Along with each manuscript, students should include the full text of their reading(s), at least two hymns that complement the sermon, and (optional) any prayers or other liturgical elements the student has crafted with the sermon.

**Two of the three sermons can be on any theme of your choosing. From these two, select one that you will preach in class.** On the day you are scheduled to preach, bring enough copies of your final sermon manuscript to share with each student and with the instructor.

**The third sermon must address the theme of hope.** You may approach this theme however you choose. This sermon will not be delivered, but will be shared with and read by your classmates in order to compare and contrast different approaches to the same theme. We will share these manuscripts and supporting materials with each other through the course website or by email.

You may not use sermons for this class that you have already preached or that you have written for another class.

**Completed manuscripts and supplementary worship materials for all three sermons must be e-mailed to the instructor at [rhardies@allsouls.ws](mailto:rhardies@allsouls.ws) in Word or PDF format no later than January 6, 2014.**

## 3. Attendance and Participation in Class Discussion

Students are expected to thoughtfully participate in class discussions and to provide constructive feedback to their colleagues on the content and style of their

preaching. Because of the intensive format, attendance is required for the entire week.

#### **4. Keep a sermon journal**

As preachers, we draw on our own lives for sermonic wisdom and material. One habit of a good preacher, then, is to reflect regularly on one's own experience. To develop this habit, select one 24-hour period in which you will keep a "sermon journal," observing and reflecting on your experience in the world from a preacher's point of view. Bring these journal reflections with you to class. In fact, bring your journal with you to class, as we will be doing some in-class journaling exercises.

#### **Grading**

Grading for this course is pass/no-pass, based upon evidence of thoughtful completion of required coursework.