Keep some room in your heart for the unimaginable.
~~Mary Oliver

Some words about a Webinar by Dr. Alyce McKenzie:
What Not To Say:
Avoiding the Common Mistakes
That Can Sink Your Sermon

Have you ever second guessed yourself on the drive home from church on Sunday? Does it ever sound something like this?

≈ I think maybe they got the wrong idea about God from my sermon. I didn’t mean that if you have enough faith, God will heal you, but maybe that illustration I used about the sick child who became well after the congregation prayed for her gave that impression.
≈ I didn’t mean to make it sound like people who take Prozac don’t have enough faith and should try prayer instead, but I looked out and saw Brenda’s face and realized that she felt like I was criticizing her.
≈ I think maybe starting with that joke was a bad idea. It was too funny and then when I moved to scripture I could tell people’s interest had dropped off. Maybe I made myself too hard an act to follow.
≈ And that story I told about meeting the people at Target and their telling me how much they liked my preaching- I think I came off as bragging. The point of the story was the importance of attending no matter who is preaching, but I made it point to me. I need to kick that hero/heroin habit.

Sometimes I know I use stories that don’t really make the point of the sermon. But they’re all I have, so I use them anyway. I’m afraid maybe I did that this week.
≈ This week, the sermon only had one point. Sometimes, I think maybe there are 2 or 3; and people get confused and don’t know which one to take home, ending up leaving them all at church.
≈ When I came to the end, why did I keep on explaining my point after the closing story? Why can’t I ever leave well enough alone, and just sit down?
≈ But the sermon wasn’t that bad. Other than theological misguidance, denigrating people who take medication for depression, losing people when I moved from joke to scripture, making myself the hero of the central story, telling another story that was entertaining but beside the point, having too many points and over explaining at the end, it was a pretty good message.
≈ And there is always next week.

Maybe if I could identify pitfalls I could stop falling into them on Sundays. And I could replace them with positive preaching practices.

If you have ever had conversations like this on the way home from church, *What Not To Say: Avoiding the Common Mistakes That Can Sink Your Sermon* offers helpful suggestions.

Written by Alyce M. McKenzie and John C. Holbert, the authors hasten to admit their “what not to do’s” are based in part on autobiographical experience!

**Is this a subject you would like to explore?**

*Read on....*

**Webinar offered by**

*The Center for Pastoral Excellence,
Louisiana Conference, UMC*

facilitated by

*Dr. Alyce M. McKenzie*

Le Van Professor of Preaching and Worship,
Perkins School of Theology

Dr. McKenzie will lead a 4-week webinar based on the book she has recently co-authored, *What Not To Say: Avoiding the Common Mistakes that Can Sink Your Sermon*. This is a humorous look at common pitfalls in preaching with a serious payoff in perfecting our preaching skills. The book’s eight chapters cover all the basic concerns of the sermon: What not to say (and what to say) about God, the Bible, your people and yourself. It also includes chapters on the craft of preaching: what not to say (and what to say) at the beginning, in the middle and at the end. It includes a chapter on what not to say (and what to say) in stories. Join Dr. McKenzie in this webinar which will be helpful to novice and seasoned preachers alike.

*Limited space is available. RSVP as soon as possible!*

**Dates:** March 6, 13, 20, & 27, 2013

**Time:** 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM

.6 CEU’s

**Cost:** $80

**Suggested Reading:** *What Not To Say: Avoiding the Common Mistakes that Can Sink Your Sermon*

By Alyce M. McKenzie and Dr. John C. Holbert

**Participate in comfort from your home or office.**

All you need is your computer and headset or telephone!

The Rev. Dr. Alyce M. McKenzie is George W. and Nell Ayers LeVan Professor of Preaching and Worship at Perkins School of Theology. Ordained as an elder 1981, Dr. McKenzie is a member of


She is a frequently featured speaker at events for both laity and clergy throughout the country.

For additional information, contact:
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Poetic Words for Reflection

The Mockingbird
By Mary Oliver

All summer
the mockingbird
in his pearl-gray coat
and his white-windowed wings

flies
from the hedge to the top of the pine
and begins to sing, but it’s neither
lilting nor lovely,
for he is the thief of other sounds—
whistles and truck brakes and dry hinges
plus all the songs
of other birds in his neighborhood;

mimicking and elaborating,
he sings with humor and bravado,
so I have to wait a long time
for the softer voice of his own life
to come through. He begins
by giving up all his usual flutter
and settling down on the pine’s forelock
then looking around
as though to make sure he’s alone;
then he slaps each wing against his breast,
where his heart is,
and, copying nothing, begins

easing into it
as though it was not half so easy
as rollicking,
as though his subject now

was his true self,
which of course was as dark and secret
as anyone else’s,
and it was too hard—

perhaps you understand—
to speak or to sing it
to anything or anyone
but the sky.