

January 1, 2018

Dear Pastors and Congregational Chairpersons:

This letter is to announce the fourth MNO Lay Preaching Academy! This is an opportunity for lay leaders across our synod to receive some support, encouragement and direction as they gain experience preparing sermons in our congregations.

There is some urgency in getting this invitation to potential registrants. Registration is limited to ten participants. The deadline for registration is February 5. The course starts February 20 and runs to April 24. This letter summarizes the course. An attachment gives details for objectives, scheduling, and registration.

This Year's Format As in the past three series, lay people will be given study guidelines for gospel lessons from the New Revised Common Lectionary. Approximately two hours of study is required each week. Participants gather as a cohort for eight ninety-minute conversations, Tuesday evenings, 7:30-9:00 p.m. CST. Attention is given to studying the lesson, its text and context; understanding the particular context of the local congregation at this time; possible applications of the lesson to this context; and varied approaches to sermon delivery.

New This Year After an orientation to practical matters for the course, and discussion of the nature and effectiveness of preaching, participants will take a little more time with the first two lessons, developing their study and interpretive skills. No sermons will be required. With the next three lessons, each participant will be asked to prepare a written sermon, based on their individual study and the shared interpretations of the class. Three sermons will be prepared, based on the gospel for Easter Sunday (April 1) as well as April 22 and 29. Participants are encouraged to deliver their sermons, but this is not a requirement. It may be, however, that these three dates, April 1, 22 and 29 may be covered by your lay leadership!

Why Are We Doing This? Every congregation has opportunities when lay people may need to be available. Many of our congregations are dependent upon lay leadership because a pastoral presence is not available, either by a resident pastor or pulpit supply. Every lay leader asked to bear the responsibility of proclamation should have access to resources and support, as well as assistance in preparation. Whether filling vacancies or not, our congregations benefit from leadership strengthened in interpretation and preparation. Training like this develops networks of lay colleagues who can support one another long-term. Participants learn well from one another. Our LTS Seminary and the four western synods continue to develop a curriculum for lay development. This workshop series is offered alongside these essential plans as an interim measure. The need is immediate.

I am confident that your congregation would benefit from this workshop series. Please give this prayerful consideration and take time to encourage a member or two to enroll. Having trained resources can be a valuable return on your financial investment. Please consider supporting your lay leader with a grant for full or partial enrollment.

For further information, please contact me soon,

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