

OPEN FORUM

In his article, "Thinking Like Disciples," (May/June/July) William Obalil's unintentional relegation of most laity to ineffective discipleship reminded me of how many lay men and women I have known who have worked hard in limited circumstances to be good disciples. Through more than forty years of ministry, I have been inspired, encouraged, and trained to be a better pastor by the lay men and women with whom I have been privileged to work. As a "preacher in the pew" now, I still see it at work.

Ann A. Michel's "Laity as Theological Decision Makers" sought equality between the theologically trained and the laity as they all wrestle daily with theological issues and serve as ministers of Jesus Christ. Maybe what Michel is looking for is found in I Peter 2:9-10. We are "a royal priesthood" sent to proclaim the "mighty acts of him who called [us] out of darkness into his marvelous light." The idea reflects one of the "Five Pillars of Protestantism"—the priesthood of all believers.

Robert D. Simison

Retired Elder, Kansas West Conference

I am writing in response to "Lectionary vs. Sermon Series: Does it Have to Be One or the Other?" (August/September/October). I've met very few who preach the Revised Common Lectionary well, and several things about the RCL irritate me. First, most mainline churches treat it as a sacred cow stamped with apostolic authority. Second, RCL preachers often look down their noses at non-RCL preachers with a hint of arrogance. Third, the presumption that the RCL covers all Scripture or even gives a sense of the broad biblical story is nonsense. Fourth, though the RCL lifts up a lot of Scripture to be read, it does not endorse good interpretation. Many RCL preachers seem to think it their job to harmonize the readings. That's not exegesis. Adam Hamilton and Tom Bandy have both suggested creative and thoughtful alternatives to the RCL.

I'm not saying the RCL is worthless. The Christian calendar still has value and

some RCL texts work well in particular seasons. But the RCL needs to be removed from its sacred pedestal in the United Methodist Church.

Casey Taylor

Pastor, Lacon-Sparland UMC and Assistant Pastor, First UMC Chillicothe (Illinois Great Rivers Conference)

The emphasis on preaching in the August/September/October issue was a godsend for me. I seldom get to preach in my role as Administrative Assistant to the Bishop, but I am currently in the process of preparing for two preaching opportunities! This issue of *Circuit Rider* was very helpful as it helped to stir my homiletic juices.

However, I did note one item that I wanted to bring to your attention. That is a reference in the article titled "Grace after the Storm" to the "travail then unfolding in Jena, Mississippi." Of course this tragic story is not from Mississippi but from Jena, Louisiana. I wanted to bring this to your attention.

Embra Jackson

Administrative Assistant to the Bishop, Mississippi Annual Conference

Editor's Note: Thank you for the correction. The incident referenced occurred in Jena, Louisiana, not Mississippi. We apologize for the error.

The quality and timeliness of your August/September/October issue was striking. Regardless of where we are in ministry, they bring us a broadening view of our God-given task of preaching. It is amazing how, in one issue, you have brought together such a wide spectrum to consider. The district superintendents should make this informational and inspirational outpouring required reading!

Donald Charles Lacy

Retired Elder

I am still astonished. How could an issue be done on preaching (August/September/October) and have only one female pastor's voice? (There is one sidebar by a female pastoral counselor.) The crowning moment came for me with the last article on *shopping* by the only female pastor in the issue.

Louise Stowe-Johns

Pastor, First UMC, Amityville, New York

Thanks for the thoughtful articles on preaching resources in the August/September/October issue. Let's not forget the Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary Listserv as well. We discuss each week's readings, make suggestions for effective preaching, and post both complete and in-progress sermons for comment. To sign up, e-mail listserv@listserv.louisville.edu with the text: SUBSCRIBE PRCL-L and your name.

Bill Olewiler, O.S.I.

Retired Pastor, Fleming Island/Orange Park, FL

CLERGY ROUNDTABLE

Circuit Rider wants to include your ideas for effective ministry! In each issue, we'll ask a question relevant to the theme of the next issue. Answer the question below, and we'll include as many ideas as possible in the February/March/April 2009 issue.

How has your church reached out to a certain age demographic in a special way?

Send your ideas to jkelly@umpublishing.org. Responses may be edited for brevity and clarity.