

NOW & NEXT

HOW THE CHURCH IS CHANGING FOR GOOD

presented by  AMPLIFY MEDIA

Episode 3 – Preaching to an Empty Room

Watch this episode on demand and download related resources at AmplifyMedia.com/NowandNext/preaching-to-an-empty-room/.

Host – Rev. Lisa Yebuah, Lead Pastor, Southeast Raleigh Table, Raleigh, NC

Panelists –

- Rev. Dr. Charley Reeb

Senior Pastor, Johns Creek United Methodist Church, Johns Creek, GA

- Rev. Dr. Bruce Reyes-Chow

Pastor and Head of Staff, First Presbyterian Church, Palo Alto, CA

- Rev. Dr. Lisa L. Thompson

Associate Professor and the Cornelius Vanderbilt Chancellor Faculty Fellow of Black Homiletics and Liturgics, The Divinity School and Graduate Department of Religion, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN

Later in this episode, Bruce mentions a Facebook group for faith leaders using Zoom. You may join that group at: Facebook.com/groups/zoomfaith/.

In this episode, homiletics teachers and pastors with years of experience with digital worship shared their advice and support for preaching meaningfully to what feels like an empty room.

In addition to the spiritual encouragement and discussion that happened throughout the webinar, Lisa Thompson shared some practical advice she gives her preaching students when presenting online:

- It's harder to interpret emotions online, so you will want to over-gesture and make an effort to look directly into the camera as much as possible.
- Check your computer audio beforehand and buy a mic, if possible, so you're easily heard.
- Your camera should be at a good height for your posture, not too low, which causes you to look down.
- You need good lighting – all your lamps! – in front of you, not behind you.
- You should slow down your speech to help people have the time to process what you said.
- Use shorter sentences and imagery to also help with understanding.
- No digital backgrounds!

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Many experiences of spiritual and practical encouragement were shared during this webinar, including:

- If you are having trouble connecting emotionally in front of a camera, imagine the people you are teaching.
- Visualize the human experience of the lesson you're sharing. Ground yourself in your five senses so you can be fully present in the moment while preaching.
- Don't worry about feeling like you are performing. As preachers, we all have multiple personas, and they are all authentic to their context.
- Now is not the time to try and be perfect. We are living with an overabundance of grace right now, so it's okay to make mistakes and take risks to be more creative and authentic with your teaching. Now is the time to develop your online style of preaching because virtual services aren't going away.
- Find a buddy, someone you can work with and hold you accountable as you work in this (perhaps new-to-you) medium. Preaching online has a very different rhythm to Sunday-morning in-person preaching. You must prepare earlier in the week for recording and other technical considerations.
- Everyone is suffering to a degree right now, but suffering is not new for many people. Invite these people as conversation partners in your services, to share their stories of lament to help others who are hurting and grieving.
- Find the preacher God is calling you to be in this time, which may look different than before.
- Every Sunday is a risk. You are making an offering to God and an offering to the people you serve.

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