

1) Pray

I will spend Monday - Friday from 8:00 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. in prayer, contemplation, and prayerful work: listening to, reading, or writing things to support my life of faith (not be related to sermon preparation).

I will spend the last ~30 minutes of each day practicing the Examen as a review of the day and closing prayer.

2) Engage Scripture

Using something from that time, I will write/journal/sketch/doodle/mindmap whatever has caught my attention that morning.

3) Cultivate Wonder, Curiosity, Awe, and Gratitude

Journal gratitude daily. Actively seek new information from the sciences about things we are learning about the universe, the human mind, life, etc. Try to find out things that I didn't even know I didn't know.

Find art/poetry which I can appreciate and which speak to me & inspire me.

4) Seek Respite in Sermon Prep

Knowing that my surroundings affect me, I will try to maintain a place for sermon preparation that is conducive to minimizing distractions, focusing attention, and anything else that helps it be where I enjoy being in and where I want to be.

Begin sermon prep *no later than* Monday of each week and spread work out over the entire week so that by the end of the week, the sermon is 'finished' on Friday and can be 'mulled over' and polished on Saturday as needed.

5) Trust You're Loved

Continue to work on accepting the grace, forgiveness, and love that I preach to others. Find a spiritual director and continue to work with a therapist to help me navigate the rocky shorelines of my own spiritual life and emotional/mental health.

6) Craft Effective Sermons

Listen to good sermons at least twice a month. Use the grid and the appraisal form as guides to help me evaluate sermons before and after preaching them. Ask for specific feedback from specific people regularly. Read at least 2-3 books on preaching each year. Look for a group interested in doing peer appraisals.

7) Proclaim the Gospel No Matter What

I commit to preaching what I believe I am called to preach, not just rant about whatever topic has recently been through the news cycle. I will not force “pet issues” into the pulpit, but I will also not shy away from issues of injustice, even when they may make people uncomfortable or unhappy. I will accept and embrace “the prophetic role” when appropriate.

8) Preach Ethically

I pledge to investigate claims and issues well enough to trust what I will say to be accurate to the best of my knowledge and ability. I make it clear to my congregation when I share stories or ideas that are not my own. I will consciously seek to avoid emotional manipulation or spiritual bullying of any kind. When I know that my words may be challenging to hear, I will weigh them extra carefully and seek the advice of trusted colleagues whenever possible.

9) Keep Learning

Continually seek ways to improve my ability to communicate, not just in the pulpit but especially in the pulpit. Read about preaching, public speaking, and communicating in general. Try new/different (*to me!*) ways of preaching so that sermons are not always of the same kind or type. Experiment and allow the Spirit to blow where it will, even (*especially!*) when it makes me uncomfortable.

10) Be Accountable

Carefully review this Trust every September 20th, on the anniversary of my ordination. I will share it with my spiritual director, my Backstory Preaching colleagues, and track it in my journal.