

Full-Interactive Online Education:

Advent: Preaching Texts from the Hebrew Bible and Gospels

Featuring Dr. Richard H. Lowery, Ph.D.

With additional commentary and discussion by Pastor Linda McCrae

Fee is \$79.99 per person

Registration is open NOW!

Register online at www.transformingthechurch.org

This course takes an in-depth look at this year's lectionary texts for Advent from the Hebrew Bible and asks how they relate to the gospel texts from Luke. Lectures provide an overview of the historical context of the biblical passages and some of the cultural and economic influences that shaped them. Conversations explore sermon ideas and how the biblical texts relate to the weekly themes of Advent.

Rick Lowery provides social-historical, literary, and theological commentary and talks with experienced Indianapolis pastor Linda McCrae about how these texts speak to the church as it engages its mission of justice, healing, and reconciliation today.

Christian College and TransformingTheChurch.org have endeavored to make this course as RELEVANT and as ACCESSIBLE to as many Pastors as possible. Our pricing is set in order to ensure that even those on a "lean" professional development or educational budget can participate. This is not only fresh, new content for Advent preparation, but affords several hours of direct interaction with the instructor. We believe that the VALUE is unsurpassed, and we offer this course to the Church and Its Servants with hopes that you can participate.

Fully-Interactive Online Education

Using TransformingTheChurch.org's "Watch – Discuss – Do!" approach to online education, the course consists of five video-on-demand sessions of Dr. Lowery's lecture and the discussions between Dr. Lowery and Pastor McCrae and five fully-interactive live online sessions with Dr. Lowery for questions and further discussion among the participants of the class. The course is for five weeks. Each week, online students will view one video-on-demand session and participate in one fully-interactive live online session with Dr. Lowery.

Best-practices for transformation through online learning and consultation processes ... resources you can use!



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About the Course

The course consists of five 45-minute video-on-demand sessions and five 60-minute live online discussions with Dr. Lowery that will be paced throughout the sermon preparation period for the Advent season. As with all of our distance learning courses, participants can join the Virtual Classroom for this course from anywhere with nothing more than a browser and a broadband Internet connection. Registration for this course is available NOW and its Virtual Classroom will open October 27, 2012.

Session 1:

This session introduces the dual emphases of Advent: preparation for the birth of Jesus and for the “end of the world as we know it” because the “reign of God” is dawning in our midst. We look at the idea of the “reign of God” in Jesus’s teaching and place it in its ancient cultural context. Roman imperial ideology was the air that everyone breathed in the ancient Mediterranean world. It said that peace and security came through military victory and strength. But Jesus taught that an alternative “kingdom” or “reign” is erupting in our very midst. In this “reign of God,” justice and equality lead to community and peace.

Session 2:

Through most of the book, Jeremiah offers a relentlessly negative assessment of Jerusalem’s behavior and its chances of survival. Its leaders have sinned, failing to support the vulnerable poor. God’s judgment, the prophet thought, came in the form of an invasion by Babylonian imperial forces in 597 BCE and the deportation of the Judean royal house. The mood of the book shifts radically in chapter 30, after Jerusalem is finally destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BCE. Today’s lectionary passage continues the word of hope, promising a restored Davidic monarchy. In a word play on the name of Zedekiah (“YHWH is my righteousness”), the last Davidic king to occupy the throne, Jeremiah envisions a restored Jerusalem that will be called “YHWH is our righteousness.”

The discussion between Rick and Pastor Linda McRae emphasizes the importance of truth telling as a prerequisite to the word of hope in today’s passage.

Session 3:

Malachi is a priest and prophet, upset about people refusing to care for the poor. In today’s passage, Malachi describes a “messenger of the covenant” who will come to purify the priests and the people. The lectionary cuts off verse 5 -- which should be included for preaching because it describes the corruption Malachi condemns: people worshiping the “gods” of economic-political imperialism, employers keeping their workers’ wages low, the well-to-do refusing to help the economically vulnerable, religious leaders failing to challenge the political and economic elites to care for the poor.

Rick and Linda discuss the importance of telling the truth about economic injustice. This text calls us to honestly examine our own complicity and to critique ideologies that tell us that we alone are the authors of our success or failure.

Session 4:

Zephaniah prophesied during the time of King Josiah (740-609 BCE) who carried out a massive religious-political-economic reform. In the temple, people worshiped the gods of other nations, including the Assyrian empire. Josiah purged the temple and instituted an anti-imperialist YHWH-alone policy. Zephaniah supports this part of Josiah's program. After a series of judgment oracles, the prophet calls for a new song of joy. God will now save the "lame" and embrace the "outcast" in a new day of justice for all.

Rick and Linda focus on beneficial things we turn into "idols," false gods. Advent calls us to enjoy the good things of life without becoming addicted and enslaved by them, a particular challenge at the height of Christmas shopping season.

Session 5:

Micah is from a village outside Jerusalem in the last decades of the 700s BCE. Families face the devastating effects of Judah's first encounter with foreign imperialism. The rich are getting richer and the poor, poorer. Micah condemns this growing inequality. The book shifts tone and timeframe in chapter 5, from late 700s to mid 500s. Jerusalem is now destroyed by a new imperial lord Babylon. The Davidic monarchy is crushed. Our passage dreams of a day when Jerusalem will be restored, free from the oppressive demands of empire. The bleak days of the present are like labor pangs that precede birth, "pain with a purpose." By God's power, a just and peaceful world is being born.

Rick and Linda discuss Micah's word of hope in light of the gospel text, a meeting of two marginal women whose miraculous pregnancies are signs of a new world being born. Mary sings of a transformed world where the poor become rich, the powerless gain power, and peace and justice reign.

Online Course:

Distance Learning

For Anyone, From Anywhere, At Anytime

Clergy interested in this Advent sermon preparation will be encouraged to take this course which has been produced to assist as many pastors as possible.

Anyone with a broadband Internet connection and a web browser capable of running Adobe Flash will be able to participate and interact from their homes or offices at any time.

In addition, participants are provided with an interactive online learning community to discuss classes and application topics with other students under the supervision of Dr. Lowery.

About Rick Lowery

Richard H. Lowery, Ph.D. Yale, is adjunct professor of Hebrew Bible at Lexington Theological Seminary in Kentucky, where he served as dean, and Phillips Theological Seminary in Oklahoma, where he served 17 years as a tenured professor. He also teaches in the commissioned and licensed ministers program at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis and in the M.Div. program at Methodist Theological School in Ohio. He has also taught at Phillips University, Valparaiso University, Yale University, and Yale Divinity School. Rick recently moved to Indianapolis to live full-time with his wife, the Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins, General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). He blogs for Huffington Post, speaks at church gatherings throughout the US and Canada, and has written articles and lessons for scholarly and popular publications, including The Chalice Introduction to the Old Testament and journals of preaching and stewardship. He is the author of three books, including Sabbath and Jubilee, and wrote the Bible commentary for the Storyteller's Companion: Daniel and Revelation. He's currently working on a book, Genesis and Human Rights. Rick is a past president of the Society of Biblical Literature Southwest Region and serves on the executive committee of the World Council of Churches Faith and Order Commission where he is a member of the study group on moral discernment in the churches. He also serves on a Lutheran-Reformed Church dialogue on biblical authority in moral discernment.

About Linda McCrae

Linda McCrae is Senior Pastor of Central Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indianapolis, Indiana, where she has served since 2002. Previous to her present position, she worked with Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ and a missionary in Guatemala and a Global Mission Intern in Mexico. She also served as pastor of Wood Memorial Christian Church in Van Buren, Arkansas from 1997-2002. Linda is a graduate of Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut and Union Theological Seminary in New York, New York.

Registration

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Additional Information

Additional information can be found on our website at www.transformingthechurch.org.