

PREACHING AND CHANGE

- The parish is the front line. Pastors are the people who work things out, who do theology. So what is your style as an agent of change? What are the implications of that style for preaching?
- Distinguish between Tradition and traditions, what is essential from what is adiaphora. In order to change “traditions,” you must demonstrate understanding of and respect for them. Also, be clear about the difference between your preferences and what is essential to the Gospel.
- Who is the Sunday assembly for? We cannot do everything in an hour on Sunday.
- Unity does not mean uniformity—or 100% agreement.
- Just because we’ve always done it this way does not mean that we have to do it this way.
- As pastors, associates in ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers (What roster am I missing?), we are leaders of the ELCA.
- Decide which hill you’re willing to be crucified on.
- Learn from the past—the congregation’s, the denomination’s, and the Church’s. Demonstrate that you understand people before criticizing them.
- To be a prophet you must be a pastor. Your people must trust that you have experienced and can articulate grace before they will receive law from you. They must also know that you love them.
- Biblical prophets don’t seek that call; if you are anxious to be prophetic, it may be your word rather than God’s Word. Most prophets end up dead—be prepared to suffer the consequences.
- Recognize that sometimes believing the Gospel is hard to do.
- Walk in the other’s shoes.
- Guard against compartmentalizing your ministry—for example, prophet in the pulpit and pastor at the council meeting.
- Whenever possible, allow issues to grow out of the Scriptures. Stand with your people under God’s Word rather than with God’s Word against your people.

- Always talk to rather than about people from the pulpit, even when they are not there.
- Images and stories work better than concepts and statistics.
- Always give people who disagree with you or the church a place to stand.
- Weigh the historical, theological and pastoral implications.
- It is often easier to get forgiveness than permission.
- It is easier to add something new than to change something old.
- Good ideas are generally not received the first time they are presented.
- Take the long view. The church moves slowly.
- The church was there before you arrived and will probably be there long after you're gone.
- Our calling is to preach the Gospel and not any issue.