

# Better Preaching: Evaluating the Sermon

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At the time this was written, Lowell Erdahl was pastor of University Lutheran Church of Hope, Minneapolis (the congregation is currently a part of the ELCA). At present, Erdahl is the retired bishop emeritus of the St. Paul Area Synod of the ELCA, an office he held for 12 years. His service as bishop followed 20 years of service as a parish pastor and five years as a professor at Luther Seminary.

While some of Rev. Erdahl's more recent writings and statements on the ELCA's position on sexuality will trouble Confessional Lutherans, in this booklet he offers much helpful and practical encouragement for gaining feedback on our sermons.

This brief booklet (47 pages) is part of a series of nine booklets published by Concordia to assist pastors in various specific tasks of preaching. While this booklet is over 30 years old, it still has much to offer when it comes to strengthening our preaching. Here is a brief summary of each chapter.

- Chapter 1 (Renewal Through Self-Evaluation) gives direction to pastors for how to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their own preaching.
- Chapter 2 (Renewal Through Spouse Evaluation) offers a wealth of specific advice to pastors' wives for how they can give more constructive feedback on their husbands' preaching.
- Chapter 3 (Renewal Through Congregational Evaluation) provides ideas and several templates that a pastor could use to seek more formal feedback from the members of his flock.
- Chapter 4 (Renewal Through Pastoral-Professional Evaluation) presents options for partnering with ministry peers to provide mutual encouragement toward growth in preaching.
- Chapter 5 (When the Well Runs Dry) offers suggestions for growth in ways that may not immediately or obviously impact preaching, but in the long run can provide significant encouragement. Here he speaks of our devotional life (prayer and study of the Word) as well as suggesting taking time away from the press of duties. He also urges us to consider broadening our reading so that we enjoy good literature that is not directly theological.

This book is broader in focus than the other book reviewed for this edition of *Preach the Word* (Reuel Howe's *Partners in Preaching*). Unlike Howe, Erdahl is not focused only on partnering with the flock to improve preaching. So, while Erdahl doesn't go as much in depth about partnering with the pew, yet he still offers multiple ideas for strengthening our preaching partnership with our hearers.

With the permission of the author (the publisher has relinquished their rights), you will find the complete booklet in PDF form at the [Grow in Grace website](#).