

PROFESSOR THOMPSON RESEARCHES ART AND PREACHING

This summer Lisa Thompson, assistant professor of homiletics at PTS, got her hands dirty, viewed masterpieces, meditated, and did improv all in the name of teaching.

Lisa's research fellowship with the Wabash Center, titled "Recovering and Modeling Theological Imagination for Proclamation," looks at how to include mindfulness and creativity in writing sermons. "To proclaim something faithfully within contemporary contexts requires one to move simultaneously between ancient texts and worlds and her current contexts; preaching requires the ability to help listeners imagine and experience a message's possibilities here and now," she says.



"To this end, mindfulness and creativity are not secondary requirements for preaching but central. At times the academic process creates false bifurcations between critical thinking and creativity. Therefore, my aim is to intentionally engage aspects of the arts as one avenue to think through fostering creativity as a critical faculty in the learning environment."

Lisa believes that to learn is to experiment. Students learn the ins and outs of preaching by both observing preaching and experimenting with the practice. These movements between the two help students develop wisdom and the ability to make both calculated and in-the-moment decisions about message development. "The more diverse our approach to teaching methods of preaching is, the more adequately we can attend to the diversity of preaching practices within ministry settings," she says.

Often, however, we find it hard to experiment for fear of getting it wrong. "But that's how we learn!" So Lisa reconnected with her own novice learner and experimented with different forms of art including pottery wheel throwing and improv. She also visited a local art museum and meditation class. "The arts are significant because these creative practices provide one avenue for helping individuals liberate their imaginal and intellectual framework," she says.

Lisa comes back to the classroom this fall with empathy and more conviction about the opportunity in 'risky' learning.

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