



## CALL / INTERVIEW COMMITTEE

One of the most basic rhythms of parish life is saying goodbye to one pastor and welcoming another. Pastors come and pastors go. Congregations remain. A common refrain of Christians during transitions in pastoral leadership is this:

**"We would like our next pastor to be a strong preacher."**

People responsible for helping to shepherd this "call process" regularly say that almost every congregation in this normal period of transition identifies "strong preaching" as an important quality in their next pastor.

As someone who is responsible for helping to form good, solid preachers for ministry in Christ's church I say, Great! We Christians should all expect to hear good, solid preaching when we come to worship. This is not too much to expect.

At the same time, it is particularly important for call / interview committees to step back from this expectation for a moment to consider what it means to expect a pastor or priest to be a "strong preacher."

Cutting to the chase, it is very important to understand that "strong preaching" is not the same thing as being a gifted public speaker. Of course there are some commonalities between strong preaching and gifted public speaking. However, there are two essential elements of preaching that are not necessarily present in public speaking.

The first of these is Jesus Christ and him crucified (1 Corinthians 2.1-2). Without Jesus Christ and him crucified, a sermon becomes a speech. Such a Jesus-less thing could be a very good speech. It could be motivational, educational, entertaining, even inspiring. But without Jesus Christ and him crucified, it remains just a speech. So, when considering what it means to desire your next pastor or priest to be a "strong preacher" make sure to consider this central content. Ponder [the banner image](#) for this website as a means for imagining what strong preaching looks and sounds like.

A second essential element of strong preaching is that sermons be informed and formed by the Bible. When a pastor or priest is called to preach, he/she does not have the freedom to say whatever comes to mind, whatever is fashionable, etc... Strong preaching is necessarily faithful to and normed by the text of the Bible.

So, in short, the desire to have your next pastor/priest be a "strong preacher" is a wonderful thing. When you step back to consider what this means, remember these two things that make strong preaching distinct from gifted public speaking:

- (1) Jesus Christ and him crucified at the center, and
- (2) the Bible as that which informs and forms the sermon.

As your evaluating the preaching of pastors/priests who may be the next person called to lead your parish, consider the basic questions provided in the [Listening from Week to Week](#) page.

Last but certainly not least, it is very important to be in conversation with those called to serve your local judicatories - synods, dioceses, presbyteries - throughout the call process.

