

John S. McClure and Allie Utley, eds. *Learning Together to Preach: How to Become an Effective Preaching Coach*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2023. 222 pages. \$29.00.

Learning Together to Preach begins from a shared conviction that preachers seldom experience ongoing mentoring or coaching after seminary, even when conferences, lectionary study groups, and ad hoc sermon feedback remain available to them (1). In response, the volume presents collaborative homiletical peer-coaching as a form of collaborative mentoring in which preachers enter a shared process of discernment, learn from each other, and mentor one another into deeper forms of preaching (2). John McClure describes the book as written both for readers interested in homiletical pedagogy and for those who want to see how peer-coaching works in practice and whether it might serve their own contexts (4). Collaborative peer-coaching emerges here as a shared practice of formation, accountability, and mutual learning.

Part One develops collaborative peer-coaching through eight dimensions. McClure's chapter is especially important because it locates coaching within the longer work of formation by way of three models: Preacher Formation, Sermon Formation, and Individual Peer-coaching (23–24). In this sense, preaching is learned through sustained reflection on lived experience, practice, and learning goals rather than through occasional correction from outside (38). Geoffrey Schoonmaker's chapter on parallel-learning shows that participants do not remain in a single role. They learn as presenting preachers, as peer-coaches, and as lead coaches, so that the work of coaching itself becomes part of homiletical formation (76).

Part One also shows that collaborative peer-coaching cannot be reduced to any single dimension of preaching. In these chapters, communication, embodiment, and moral formation appear as integral dimensions of the practice. Marianne Gaarden presents communication as a disciplined practice within peer-coaching, one that some participants experience as less intimidating than directive teaching, while others find it restrictive and artificial (72). Lisa Thompson treats embodiment as part of coaching itself, understanding the body as more than a vessel and as a conduit of meaning-making in both preaching and its reception (106). Amy Steele locates moral formation within peer-coaching, showing that it must reckon with liberation, Whiteness, racism, sexism, nationalism, and anti-Judaism as forces that shape preaching and its communities (118–19).

Part One does not leave collaborative peer-coaching at the level of communication, embodiment, and moral formation. The remaining chapters suggest that the practice also requires spiritual discernment, the supervision of coaches, and analytic attentiveness to sermon language. Dawn Ottoni-Wilhelm attends to the preacher's search for God's presence in preaching and in the life of the group (39); Ann Deibert to the structures of accountability that sustain the work of supervision (92–93); and John McClure to the scriptural, semantic, theosymbolic, and cultural dimensions through which sermons may be read more closely (132–33).

Part Two shows collaborative peer-coaching in practice across five settings—M.Div. education, denominational peer-learning, intensive or retreat contexts, seminary-based continuing education, and non-traditional preacher training—but the chapters do more than demonstrate contextual flexibility. These chapters show how the values and practices named earlier in the book are tested, adapted, and embodied in actual communities of preaching. Again and again, peer-coaching appears not as the delivery of expert answers but as a form of mutual learning marked by listening, questioning, reflection, and support. Allie Utley argues that, in the classroom, this can make preaching feedback more “generative and gentle” without removing its demands (151–52). Carolyn Coleman's denominational case study suggests that the process can

lessen competition and renew confidence in one's calling (170). Monica Hall's intensive setting clarifies the model's ethos in especially concise terms: "The peer group learns to ask questions—not provide answers" (172). Katie Shaw Thompson brings seminary-based continuing education into the discussion, placing collaborative peer-coaching within an institutional setting (183), and Kelley Hudlow shows how such groups can function as a "network of support" that helps "combat that isolation" in non-traditional settings (198–99). Part Two shows that collaborative peer-coaching is sustained not by a single program or technique, but by practices of mutual learning that can take shape across very different settings.

This book is worth recommending not because it offers a transferable formula, but because it opens a demanding and hopeful vision of how preachers might continue to be formed. Its invitation is to risk forms of shared attention through which preaching itself may become more answerable, reflective, and alive.

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