

Editorial

It was on March 11, 2020, that the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic. Very soon, all of us were affected by the crisis – and way too many people all over the world were and are infected. Writing these lines in July 2021, we count more than 190.000.000 cases and more than four million deaths worldwide. Whereas the vaccination rate increases rapidly in the ‘global North,’ there are way too few vaccines in the ‘global South.’ This is just one aspect showing how the health crisis is interwoven with many other crises in our global societies. In March 2020, Christian congregations worldwide had to go digital or find other ways of praying and preaching. But the crisis was not only a challenge for the forms of preaching but also its content. What could and should be said? How can people be comforted and strengthened without preaching weak and banal ‘good news’? And again and again the question: How can we speak of God amid a worldwide crisis? For *Societas Homiletica* it became clear quite soon that the Budapest Conference would have to be postponed (and – God willing – we will meet in Budapest from August 12 to 17, 2022!). But our International Secretary, Prof. Dr. Theo Pleizier, came up with the idea of organizing an Online Conference on “Preaching in Time of Crisis.” The International Board of Societas Homiletica supported this idea, and on August 10–12, 2020, the first Online Conference in the history of Societas Homiletica ‘took place.’

We are glad and honored to present five outstanding papers delivered at the Online Conference in this Special Volume of our International Journal of Homiletics, two from Europe and three from North America (Canada and the USA).

Clara Nystrand from Lund (Sweden) compares sermons delivered in Sweden in the time of the Spanish flu 1918 with sermons delivered in the first phase of the Corona pandemic. Especially the way preachers talk about God and his:her actions differs – showing theological shifts in the past 100 years and asking questions about preaching today.

André Verweij, pastor and researcher in the Netherlands, analyzes five Easter sermons delivered in the Netherlands during the first wave of the Covid-19-pandemic and discovers a lamenting mode in preaching, which steers away from interpreting the pandemic’s possible ‘meaning’ or ‘message.’

Joseph H. Clarke and *David Csinos* from the Atlantic School of Theology in Halifax, Canada, show how fruitful dialogue between psychotherapy and homiletics can be. They offer insight into “Intensive Short-Term Dynamic Psychotherapy” (ISTDP) and – knowing that preaching is *not* psychotherapy – present fruitful aspects of a conversation with this school and practice of psychotherapy for homiletics, especially in times of crisis.

David M. Stark, teaching and doing homiletical research at the University of the South in Sewanee (USA), speaks about a *dual pandemic* of COVID-19 and systemic racism. By exploring sermons from a high-church tradition to a virtual congregation Stark suggests to speak about *Eucharistic Preaching* thus connecting the sermon to its surrounding liturgy. The paper develops this notion further and discovers Eucharistic embodiment as a perspective for preaching and homiletics.

In the final article, *Edgar “Trey” Clark III* from Fuller Theology Seminary in Pasadena (USA), examines protests in support of “Black Lives Matter” and sees these protests as a form of Spirit-inspired proclamation – connecting lament and celebration, particularity and universality, word and deed.

Obviously, the COVID-19-pandemic changed not only the forms and media of preaching, but also its contents – and will have an impact also in the time ‘after’ the pandemic.

We are grateful to the authors, to our peer reviewers, to our Managing Editor Dr. Ferenc Herzig – and we hope that this Special Volume will prove to be a step in the ongoing reform and transformation of our preaching (and that many of us will meet in Budapest next year!).

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