

# GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATING STUDENT PREACHERS

*Revised June 2023*

**As of August 2021, it is Marquand Chapel's policy that graduating student preachers are selected by the Dean of Chapel, in collaboration with the Marquand staff.**

Marquand Chapel serves many different roles at YDS; however, it is first and foremost a place of worship. Therefore, special attention is given to those equipped to serve this community in the context of corporate worship through preaching. Priority is given to students who have engaged with YDS's worship life in Marquand, Berkeley, Emmaus, or other campus contexts; students who are sensitive to the range of traditions, political, and social positionalities within Marquand Chapel; and students who have shown a commitment to serve the YDS community. Our hope is that over the course of a year, a variety of perspectives and voices might be represented.

Though Marquand Chapel is fundamentally a worshipping community, it is also a place of learning. Graduating student preachers are required to meet with a mentor for **one 30-minute session** about their sermon at least one week before their scheduled date.

During this session, the preacher is expected to present a draft of their sermon to discuss. You are welcome to ask any YDS faculty member to mentor you through your senior sermon. In addition to faculty, you might also consider YDS staff or affiliates (Directors of Denominational Studies Programs, Lecturers in Homiletics, University Chaplains, ISM faculty, etc.) If you're not sure whom to ask, please contact chapel staff who can help you connect to a mentor.

Student preachers are responsible for arranging a meeting with their mentor. (Marquand staff will not arrange this meeting for you, though mentoring is a prerequisite to preach in chapel).

Please note: many faculty members are limiting their mentoring to a select number of students each semester, and they might agree to mentoring on either a "first come, first serve" basis or prioritizing students they've taught before. In order to draw on the wide breadth of faculty/staff wisdom regarding proclamation, as well as to share the joy that is mentoring broadly, individual faculty/staff members will not advise more than three students each semester. Some might opt to further restrict their mentoring according to their availability, taking on only one student each semester or prioritize students they've taught before.

For these reasons, you are encouraged to reach out to your chosen mentor **as soon as possible** to arrange a time to meet during their regular office hours or according to their availability. You are also encouraged to consider multiple faculty/staff mentors in the event your first-choice declines. Mentors may request a sermon draft a week in advance.

**When applying for the opportunity to give a senior sermon, students are asked to submit responses to the following questions via YaleConnect:**

1. Describe your relationship with the worshipping community of Marquand Chapel. (If you do not come to Marquand/YDS regularly, please explain your circumstances/why.) Respond in no more than 250 words.
2. How do you understand the role of the preacher in Marquand Chapel worship and in the world? Respond in no more than 250 words.
3. Name two YDS faculty or affiliates you are considering asking to mentor you through your senior sermon. Not sure who to ask? Contact chapel staff to help you find a mentor.

# GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATING STUDENT PREACHERS

*Revised June 2023*

Feeling shy and not sure what to say when contacting a potential preaching mentor? See sample email below:

*Dear Professor [name],*

*I am reaching out to ask if you would be willing to mentor me through my senior sermon in Marquand Chapel, which I will be delivering on [this date]. This would involve us meeting for thirty minutes during your office hours to go over a draft/outline of my sermon.*

*I am considering preaching on the text/theme....*

*Is this something you would be willing to help me with? I would so appreciate your guidance as I prepare.*

*Thank you for your consideration,*

*[Signature]*

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**1. Is REL 812 – Principles and Practices of Preaching – a prerequisite for preaching in Marquand Chapel?** Students are not required to take an introductory homiletics course in order to preach in Marquand Chapel. However, we strongly encourage students – MAR and MDiv alike – to enroll in REL 812. It is best to take it before or during the first semester of your senior year, if possible, so that you can implement what you have learned about the theologies and practices of preaching in your senior sermon. Students in REL 812 explore a range of approaches to preaching, learn skills for exegeting listening communities, develop a personal theology of preaching, and more. Attention is given to biblical exposition, the appropriate use of experience, development of a homiletical imagination, the preacher's spirituality, and ways to engage all of the preacher's gifts for communication. These are useful skills for both novice and experienced preachers to develop, and will not only enhance your ministry at Marquand but will enrich all your preaching and public speaking at and beyond YDS.

**2. Can I choose my own readings/themes?** Yes, you may, in collaboration with chapel staff. Do you normally work from the lectionary or choose your own reading? Or will you preach from a hymn, or take your theme from another starting point? We will work with you to create a service that reflects the style you are used to. Talk to chapel staff in advance – firstly in order to plan the service, but also so that we can avoid having repeat readings/themes on consecutive days.

**3. How long should my sermon be?** At 30 minutes, our entire service is shorter than some Sunday sermons! We ask you for a sermon lasting **8 minutes**. That time is yours alone if you are doing a solo sermon, or yours to share if you are doing a dialogue or shared sermon with someone else.

**4. How many words is eight minutes?** The average rate of speech in public is 100-120 words per minute. White House speechwriters work to 100 words per minute. So a 8 minute sermon is around 800-960 words. Practice out loud, bearing in mind that you speak more slowly in public. (Remember that less is more! There were many speeches made at Gettysburg, some very long, but the only one anybody remembers is the shortest one: 277 words, delivered in under four minutes.)

# GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATING STUDENT PREACHERS

*Revised June 2023*

**5. Can I invite my friends to read and lead music?** Preachers are invited to offer a sermon, but not to plan the whole service. A student Chapel Minister is assigned to work with you on the service. Talk to them about your ideas for readings, music, and participants **before** inviting anyone to take part. To make the entire Chapel program as inclusive and varied as possible, we want to ensure that we don't send out repeat invitations and miss others who want to participate. Your Chapel Minister will collaborate with you, and also knows the process for coordinating with musicians, etc., and creating bulletins.

**6. Recording your sermon:** There are restrictions on recording in Chapel, some of which have legal implications. Student preachers frequently request to have their sermons recorded in order to share the experience with loved ones or for professional purposes. As of Fall 2021, Chapel Staff will record Senior Sermons and distribute them to students following their preaching date.

**7. Can I choose my own preaching date?** Unfortunately, due to the logistical challenges that come with accommodating student, faculty, staff, and guest preachers, we cannot accommodate requests to preach on particular dates or occasions. If you are unable to preach on the date you are invited, you will go on a waitlist.

**Please invite** your friends and relatives to attend Marquand on the day—or at any other time. Visitors are always welcome.