

Marquand Reader

Volume 2, Issue 23: April 3-9, 2005

Important People, Important Discussions

This coming week of chapel features several people who have become rather famous in their respective fields for the work they are doing there. Join us this whole week for a sort of “Who’s Who” of theological concerns:

On Monday, Dean Harry Attridge will preach as part of the seventh Marquand Chapel Difficult Texts Series service. He will be preaching on John 8, a chapter that includes many words from Jesus against the Jewish authorities: “Jesus said to them, ‘If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now I am here. I did not come on my own, but he sent me. Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot accept my word. You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father’s desires.’” This passage has been used to justify Christian atrocities toward Jews for centuries, and remains a difficult and important passage for theological consideration.

On Tuesday, Sister Helen Prejean, the author of *Dead Man Walking* (in the movie version of which she was portrayed by Susan Sarandon), will preach. Sister Prejean began a prison ministry in the early 1980s and has—like Dean Attridge—done extensive study and reflection on the death penalty. A board member of the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty from 1985-1995, she is an outspoken opponent of the death penalty. Sister Prejean is visiting New Haven as a guest of the Attridges, speaking at St. Thomas More Catholic Church in downtown New Haven in addition to preaching in Marquand.

On Thursday, Methodist Minister and gay rights advocate Beth Stroud will preach in chapel. In April 2003, Reverend Stroud preached a sermon during which she came out to her congregation as a lesbian. A little over one year later, in May 2004, an official complaint was brought against Reverend Stroud. In December of 2004, Reverend Stroud was defrocked of her ordination. Within one week, she was rehired to the position she had previously served—at the First United Methodist Church of Germantown (Philadelphia)—now serving officially as a lay minister. She has since announced her decision to appeal her defrocking. Reverend Stroud’s case has become an important case study for denominations struggling with the issue of the acceptance of gay and lesbian clergy.

Finally, on Friday, Professor Emerita Letty Russell will lead our community Eucharist service. Professor Russell, ordained in the Presbyterian Church (USA), has—like Reverend Stroud—been an active voice for gay rights in the church. Most recently, she has focused her efforts on the AIDS epidemic in Africa, working with scholars worldwide to create theological and practical responses to the crisis. On Friday she will preach about “Missing Persons” and as we come to the table we will be especially mindful of those persons often not present at the church’s Eucharistic feast.

Anti-Semitism, the death penalty, gay rights, and AIDS in African are all current societal and global issues with which Christians must struggle. Please join us this week as our chapel services address these important issues of Christian concern.

A Look Ahead: The Next Two Weeks' Services

Please join over the next two weeks for the following services at 10:30 a.m.:

Monday, April 4: the seventh Difficult Texts Series service will feature Dean Harry Attridge preaching on John 8, with musical offerings from the Bible Belters.

Tuesday, April 5: Sr. Helen Prejean, author of *Dead Man Walking*, will be our preacher, and the gospel choir will lead us in song.

Wednesday, April 6: the new service of sung morning prayer, led by Patrick Evans, continues!

Thursday, April 7: Methodist minister and gay rights activist Beth Stroud will offer the homily, and the gospel choir will provide special music.

Friday, April 8: our community Eucharist will be led by YDS Professor Emerita Letty M. Russell.

All who gather for worship are welcome at the communion table in Marquand Chapel.

Monday, April 11: Professor David Kelsey will preach, as we welcome prospective students for spring visitation day.

Tuesday, April 12: graduating student Rob Fisher will preach, and the gospel choir will provide much music for the service.

Wednesday, April 13: the new service of sung morning prayer, led by Patrick Evans, continues!

Thursday, April 14: the eighth Difficult Texts Series service will feature graduating student Leslie Woods preaching on Song of Solomon 5.

Friday, April 15: graduating student Jinny Smanik will preach, and Reverend Martha Highsmith will preside, at our weekly community Eucharist in the Presbyterian Church (USA) tradition.

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The *Marquand Reader* is written by Siobhán Garrigan and Ian Doescher.