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Born in 1974, grew up in Hamburg, studied Protestant Theology in Hamburg, Prague and Halle, worked as trainee pastor on the North Sea island Föhr, married, no children.
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How do I prepare for my sermons?

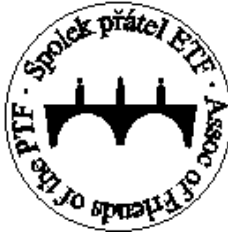
Basic principle: preaching is a form of existence that involves the whole of one's life.

This means concretely:

- At the beginning of the week I note the text for the sermon for the coming Sunday and I take it with me throughout the week, which means that I confront it with what I encounter in conversations with people in and outside the congregation, with the whole of life in the congregation, and also with art, literature, theatre or politics. An idea for the sermon does not always have to emerge from this search process at first.
- During the week I clear up exegetical questions about the text by consulting reference books.
- An idea for the sermon usually comes unexpectedly when I am out walking, during a conversation, or when I am washing the dishes.
- I then bring the idea for the sermon into dialogue with the text, the situation of those who will be listening to it, my own life, and the location of the service in the church year, and so test it to see if it is suitable.
- Formulating the sermon should then ideally be done on Friday or Saturday morning, though often it is not till late on Saturday evening.
- In line with my homiletic approach, work on the form is at the same time work on the content. The aim is not to quickly transfer ready-made ideas into a form. This requires more time when actually writing out the sermon.

The Bible and exegesis in sermon preparation

- The Bible as partner in a dialogue. Text as opposing protagonist with which I enter into a dialogue that transcends time.
- Not trying to minimise the foreign nature of the text, but discussing this. In the sermon, too, the text must be recognisable as a protagonist that stands opposite us.
- The word of the Bible is not the word of God per se. It will become the word of God for me and potentially for my listeners too when the text touches me in the depths of my being as I struggle to understand it, and when it gives me something of truth, freedom, hope, and what I need for my life. This struggle to understand has no end; the circle has to be brought into motion over and over again if the message of the Bible is to remain a living one.
- With exegesis it helps me to know that I have learned this during my studies. For reasons of time it is not possible for me to work with background literature on the specific text for the sermon. So far it has worked well that I have read literature on the Old and New Testaments during the course of my work and in



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this way acquired a knowledge base that I can draw on for work with a specific sermon.

How practical theology helps me in preparing a sermon

Practical theology forms for me the framework within which I can be aware of and reflect on the entire sermon process.

Practical theology leads me to a more exact consideration of the individual elements and raises questions for me, on which I can work out my own position as preacher. In terms of homiletics, the following have become important for me: Ernst Lange (Predigt als Rede mit dem Hörer), Rudolf Bohren (Die Schönheit Gottes) und Anne Steinmeier (Schöpfungsräume, Theologie als Kunst der Hoffnung).

I find aesthetically oriented homiletics to be very enriching.

What is different in practice to what I expected it to be

- I did not realise the importance of how I speak from the pulpit and of the impact I make as a person. In these areas, too, messages are sent out which can reinforce, or also weaken, what is said.
- I find that the linguistic and other codes used in preaching have a special character of their own. I realise that in my sermons I use expressions that as a listener I find to be clichés.
- Unusual forms in the sermon (such as narrative or poetic forms) are often difficult for listeners. Overcoming force of habit in such cases requires more courage and readiness to enter into discussion about it than I expected.