

Wabash Center Approves AOH Grant to Study Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in Homiletics

May 10, 2022 – The Academy of Homiletics has been awarded a grant to study its efforts to deconstruct whiteness and embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion in teaching preaching. Union Presbyterian Seminary Associate Professor of Preaching and Worship Richard W. Voelz and Lexington Theological Seminary Associate Professor of Preaching and Worship Leah D. Schade are co-directors of the project, "Assessing Pedagogical Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Academy of Homiletics (AOH)" funded by The Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion.

Through both qualitative and quantitative research methods, Drs. Voelz and Schade, along with four project consultants and four doctoral students in homiletics, will analyze and assess how AOH members have emphasized diversity, equity, and inclusion in teaching since the academy's emphasis on "unmasking white preaching" began. In 2018, the AOH launched a multi-year effort to understand and act upon the ways that whiteness has systematically impacted the research, practice, and teaching of preaching, especially since AOH's leadership and membership has traditionally privileged white, mainline Protestant voices since its founding.

"We are grateful to The Wabash Center for its investment in our work to understand the ways that the teaching and learning of preaching among members of the Academy of Homiletics are systematically entangled with whiteness and white supremacy, to analyze what progress we as a guild have made since 2018, and to assess what gaps and obstacles remain," Voelz said.

"The data we gather from this study will be useful across a wide cross-section of theological education as well as the Christian church in America," Schade said. "For example, this grant will equip professors of preaching to either start or further their efforts to decenter whiteness and attend to the reconstruction of preaching that fully embraces diversity in all its forms."

Voelz and Schade hope to use the \$5,000 grant to cause a ripple effect on the wider church, so that preachers will be better equipped to serve their congregations and proclaim the liberating word of the gospel that seeks justice, restoration, and healing from systemic racism.

"We are grateful to the Wabash Center for supporting our work in the Academy of Homiletics," AOH President and Professor of Homiletics and Seminary Dean at Louisville Presbyterian Seminary Debra Mumford said. "Since 2018, we have thematically, systematically, and very intentionally encouraged our members to examine the ways that whiteness influences our research, teaching, and general practice. With this grant, we will be able to track our progress, identify areas for improvement, and continue to move this work forward."

The Wabash Center seeks to enhance and strengthen education in theology and

religion in theological schools, colleges, and universities in the United States and Canada.