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For Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion



## Trading Powerpoint for Play-doh

Karyn L. Wiseman, *United Lutheran Seminary (formerly Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia)*

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One of my goals is to be as creative as I can be – in my preaching and teaching. I have not always thought that I was creative, but I have come to appreciate my creativity more in the last few years. However, it's often very hard to convince others of their creativity. Most people, in my experience, when asked if they are creative, quickly answer, "No." A few years ago I ran across Julia Cameron's book, *The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity*. Through it I was reminded that we are ALL created by the Divine Creator to be creative.

Many of my preaching students answer that creativity question with a big NO, as well. But

preaching requires creativity – in crafting a sermon, finding



images and metaphors, and presenting the sermon in an engaging and creative manner. Getting students to acknowledge that reality, come to own it, and embrace their creativity has meant trying something new for me as a professor.



My preaching classes every semester have a “Play-doh Day” when we look at a number of preaching texts and then spend time playing with them to find images and metaphors for preaching. We start by having a conversation for about 20 minutes of a 2 hour class session about creativity and I use a few sections from Cameron’s book as conversation starters. And then I break out the crayons, colored paper, play-doh, and other crafting supplies and the students begin to work on expressing their creativity around those ideas.

They pick an idea from the text and find a concrete image or metaphor to use in the exercise. Then they have time to create something with Play-doh or crayons that expresses that. I try to create a relaxed environment for this activity by playing music and letting students work casually on their creative expressions. Many students have created some very good art work – stick figures are ok and affirmed – and have found ideas that others in the room never would have thought of. But not everyone finds their groove.

A big piece of the learning is moving around the room as students describe and show their artwork. Teaching with crayons and Play-doh is an amazing way to teach without lecturing but some will still balk at owning their creativity. But it’s a start.

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