

## Contact Us

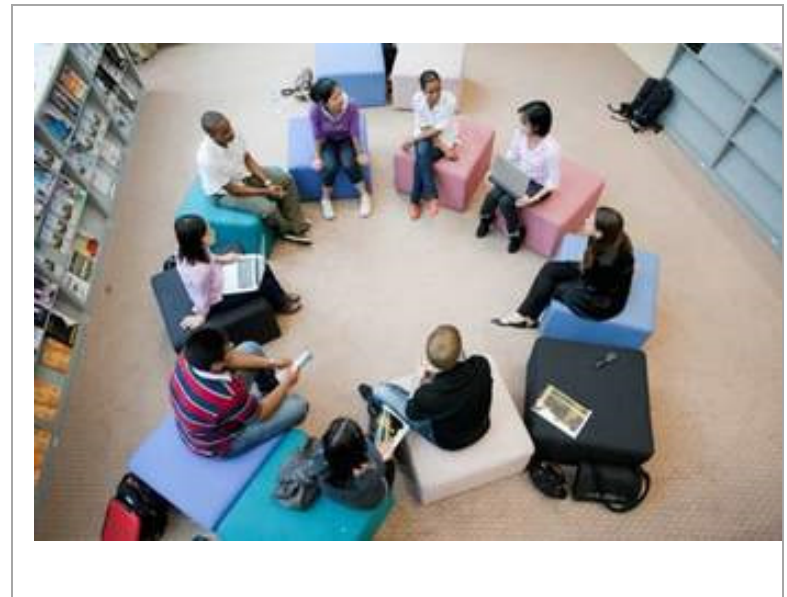
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# Tell me your story...



*"I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen..."*

*John 3:11*

Everybody's  Church  
First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham

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of Birmingham**  
1669 W. Maple Rd.  
Birmingham, MI 48009

# Tell Me Your Story...

In 2016, the Session of First Presbyterian Church  
adopted a new initiative.

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*Connected in community, we seek to  
form more authentic and intentional  
relationships with one another in  
Christ.*

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To that end, we have agreed to cultivate community in the congregation through the power of faith based story-telling. We do this to know one another more deeply, to connect our faith journeys, and to share our joys and our sorrows.

Describe an important life-changing decision. How did God impact your decision?

Read a passage of scripture and describe how that passage has impacted your life.

Who has been the most influential person in your faith life? Tell about an experience that you had with that person.

Recount an experience of healing.



# Story-Telling Prompts to Get You Started

Describe an event that restored your faith in humankind.

Share an experience that opened you up to the suffering of others.

Tell about a time when you offered yourself (skills, time, talent) in a way that made a difference to others.

Talk about a time when God disappointed you.

When did you receive a gift that you did not deserve?

Who showed you what it means to be truly accepted?

Share a time when you had the opportunity to communicate God's love to another?

Recount a time when a stranger showed up in your life with something to teach you.

Tell about a time in nature when God's presence became palpable.

Describe a time when you found yourself in the presence of the Holy.

What experience has taught you to slow down and pay attention?

Recollect a memory that you cherish. What role does it play in your journey with God?

Remember a childhood first. How did this experience change you and your relationship with God?

Describe an experience that affirmed your sense of life's meaning.

# Why should we share personal stories of our faith?

## Because...

- Scripture tells us to. We are people of the Book and our stories are part of a larger faith story revealed to us through Scripture.
- Our life lessons are a source of blessing and wisdom to others.
- Our stories pass along important values, beliefs, insights, passions and actions that are important to our community.
- When we take time to prepare a story, we also take time to notice the movement of God in our lives.
- The more conscious we are about our faith stories, the more clarity we have about who we are, why we are here and what God wants us to do in the world.
- We do not live our stories alone. We are characters in one another's stories.

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*"For we do not, after all, simply have experience; we are entrusted with it. We must do something-make something-with it. A story, we sense, is the only possible habitation for the burden of our witnessing."*

*-Patricia Hampl*

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# Crafting and Telling a Faith Story

## Think about an experience of God in your life.

It doesn't have to be anything spectacular. It might be a very simple moment or period of growth in which you became aware of God's unconditional acceptance of you, God's delight in you, God's care for you, or God's challenge to you.

It may involve an experience of love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness or self-control.

It might be a time when you felt compelled to act. Perhaps it involved truth-telling, witness, the pursuit of justice, taking care of someone who needed protection, serving in a place that felt uncomfortable, or giving sacrificially.

## Outline your experience of God in three parts:

- A. **Before:** Reflect on what your life was like before this experience. What were you unaware of or missing? What was the key problem, emotion, situation or attitude that you were dealing with? How were you seeking to resolve your situation or feelings before you experienced God?
- B. **How:** What were the circumstances surrounding your experience? Where were you? Who were you interacting with? What were you doing? Did it occur in a singular moment or over a prolonged period? What made you realize that God was with you in this?
- C. **Since:** How did this experience impact you? What happened after the experience? How were you changed? What changed around you because of your experience? How have your thoughts, attitudes and emotions altered? How has your relationship with God and others changed? What are you still struggling with about the experience?

## Prepare to share your story orally with others

Practice the story in your mind. As you prepare to tell the story remember to:

- A. **Stick to the point;** the story is about your experience of God and how it has impacted you.
- B. **Be specific.** Stories are always better when they include specific events, genuine feelings and personal insights. Don't be vague.
- C. **Be honest.** You don't need to dramatize or exaggerate. The truth of what God has done in your life is enough.

# How to Receive the Faith Story of Another

Your job as a story-listener is to attend to the story that has been shared. Listen actively with your whole body attuned to the story-teller. Keep eye contact, lean in, nod your head to show that you hear and understand. Accept the emotion that is shared. Ask an appropriate follow up question to invite the teller to go deeper. Thank the teller for sharing. Later, tell the storyteller how you were impacted by hearing their story.

## What NOT to do:

- Do not try to fix the person or the situation. It is not your job to make the storyteller feel better or to fix the circumstances described in the story. Do not solve any problems. Instead, appreciate the power of God in the situation.
- Do not critique or interpret the story. Let the storyteller's interpretation of events stand. It is a powerful story if it makes sense to the teller.
- Do not jump in with your own similar story. That will take emphasis away from the storyteller and diminish the power of their story.