

One-to-One StorySharing

One-to-One StorySharing is an intentional conversation between two people who share and receive each other's stories of what matters most. It is a potent tool for forming community, deepening relationships, identifying gifts, healing brokenness and overcoming resistance; and building a relational culture.

How Can We Begin?

Host One-to-One StorySharing at Church:

- During sermons, invite people to pair off and discuss a topical question
- During Coffee Hour, in 1- or 2-minute blocks
- At the start of meetings and classes, to get grounded and connected
- During Christian Formation, in 5-minute blocks, to explore issues

The purposes in the human mind are like deep water, but the wise and faithful will draw them out. – Proverbs 20:5

Guidelines for the Speaker:

- Keep it real, sharing **real stories** from real life.
- Aim for vivid, **sensory-rich storytelling**: what you saw, smelled, tasted, who was there, where you were, what you felt – recreate the experience.
- **Avoid interpreting** or reflecting on the experience
- Notice the **beginning, middle, and end** of your story, plus points where you made a significant turn or choice.

Guidelines for the Listener:

- Engage in **active, engaged listening**. Imagine the speaker is revealing something important and even holy.
- Offer **generous hospitality**. Think about what helps you to feel valued.
- If there is a pause, ask **open questions** to help your partner to speak freely and fully and to go deeper with their story. “How did that make you feel?” “I’d like to picture this. What did you see?” or “Please, tell me more.”
- Ask for follow-up opportunities: “Is there anyone you think would share this passion or concern?” “Would you like to join me for ... (or to read this together, or to check out this podcast, or to meet this group)?”

How Can We Go Deeper?

- **Within the Church**: Organize a one-month StorySharing campaign in your church. Create a board on the wall or online with every member's name, and invite people to sign up with each other to do two 30-minute StorySharing sessions ideally with two members they don't know well.
- **Beyond the Church**: You're already connected with family, friends, regular acquaintances, neighbors, people who help you and people you help, partner organizations, etc. Many of them are eager for respectful, mutual conversation. Issue a genuine invitation rooted in your own desire to build relationship and hear the other person's story. For example: “Our ministry is listening to our neighbors, and I'd love to hear your story and questions and share my own. Could we talk soon?”

Prompts for StorySharing about Faith in a Church-Related Setting

- Share a story of a compelling experience of the Holy or of God.
- Recall the story of when you knew this church was yours.
- When have you felt God really alive in your church (perhaps in the last month)? Describe that moment.
- Share about a moment when you felt God really alive in your church.
- Does some practice link you closely to God or make you feel connected, loving and grounded? Share a story about engaging in that practice.
- Have you ever been part of a truly loving community? Share a story.
- Some people find it hard to believe in God. Share a story about an experience that taught you something about the power of faith in Jesus.
- bell hooks once wrote: "Love allows us to enter paradise." Share a story about a time someone made you feel loved.
- Reinhold Niebuhr *said*, "Nothing that is worth doing can be done alone, but has to be done with others." Share a story about a time you worked with other people of faith to achieve a goal that was important to you. What did you learn about God and yourself in the process?
- Do you consider yourself a worker with God? Share a story about a time you felt you were working with God to do something.
- We praise God with the "communion of Saints" and with "all the company of Heaven." Share a story about someone who has died with whom you still feel connected through prayer or another act of faith.
- Peace of heart and mind come from a power greater than ourselves. Share about a time when you have felt the peace of Christ.
- No person ever amounts to much, until they learn to appreciate their origins. Share a story about the first person that took you to Church or significantly informed your faith.

Prompts for StorySharing about Faith in a Secular Setting

- Share a story about when you felt really connected to a community, the world, the universe, or something greater than yourself.
- Share a story about the people or groups that help to lift your spirits.
- When you are really part of a group, how do you feel? Share a story about an experience in a group.
- How have you used spiritual or meditative practices – prayer, meditation, deep breathing, etc. – in your life? Have they ever been useful to you for dealing with a challenging experience? Share a story of using these practices.
- Share a story about the first time you visited a place of worship that was different than the faith tradition you grew up in.

Learn more about the Beloved Community StorySharing Campaign

at www.episcopalchurch.org/storysharing

Learn more about relational organizing

at <http://www.piconetwork.org> or <http://www.industrialareasfoundation.org>.