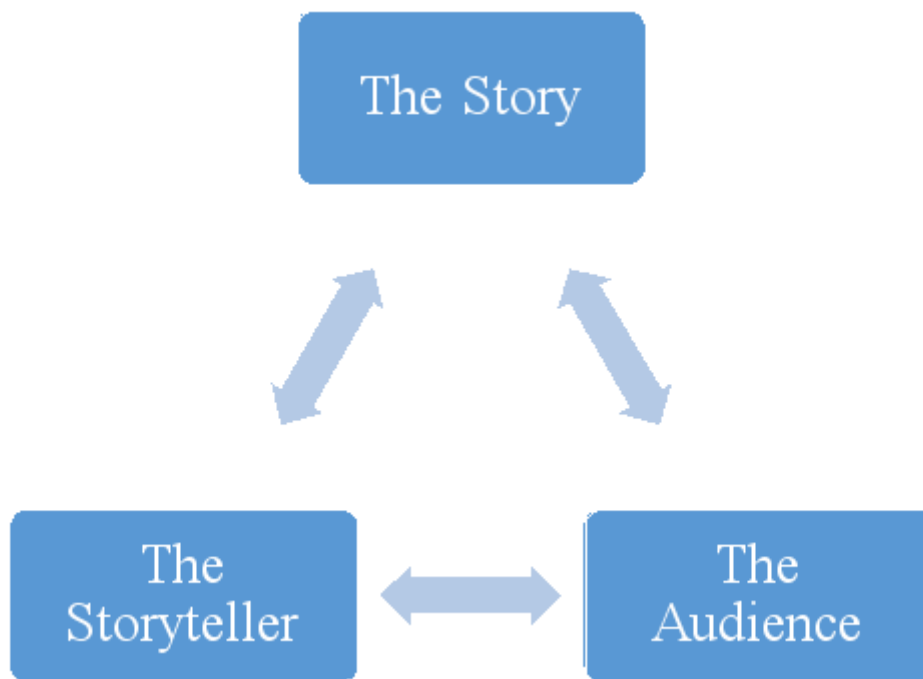


Handout One: The Art of Storytelling

Storytelling is an art form that goes beyond simply conveying a story perfectly to an audience. The best storytelling is done by a storyteller who is *present* in that particular time and place, with that particular audience, and meets the needs of that moment. This means that it always involves a little thinking on your feet, and making real human connections not just to your story but also to your listeners.

The Storytelling Triangle



Handout Two: What Makes a Good Story for Worship?

- Worship is an experience of the sacred, and ideally touches our minds, bodies, hearts, and spirits. A good story for worship touches people at an emotional level, provokes thought, and touch us on a human level.
- A good story for worship is not too obvious or “preachy”, and includes unexpected elements or surprises.
- A story should have enough details and texture added to make it feel like a full and well-developed experience, but not so much detail to overload the narrative arc and bore the listeners.
- The story really can engage all ages present. Aiming just for the youngest kids sometimes makes it too cute and you lose the adults. Aiming just for the adults may bore the kids or bring in topics they can’t yet understand or aren’t developmentally appropriate. But there are universal human struggles and experiences that all ages understand, and our elders still remember what it was like to be a kid and can relate to a nuanced story about a child’s experiences. There can be layers of meaning in a good story – something for everybody.
- You should ideally like the story you are going to tell. You will be spending a lot of time with the story, so it helps to like it!

Handout Three: Cautions in Picking a Story

For more on this topic, see *A Good Telling* by Kristin Maier

- Cross Cultural Stories and Cultural Misappropriation
 - *Do Your Homework*
 - *Understand your motivation*
 - *Is this story yours to tell?*
- Bad-guys vs good-guys
- Uncritical use of violence
- Wealth as an end-goal
- Black/White, Bad/Good Imagery
- External Beauty as a Measure of Goodness
- “Happily Ever After”

Handout Four: Resources for Finding Stories

(The DRE should own most of these books, and is probably willing to lend them to you to search for a story.)

Kindness: A Treasury of Buddhist Wisdom for Children and Parents by Sarah Conover

Ayat Jamilah: Beautiful Signs: A Treasury of Islamic Wisdom for Children and Parents by Sarah Conover and Freda Crane

Stories in Faith: Exploring Our Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources Through Wisdom Tales by Gail Forsyth-Vail

Story, Song, and Spirit: Fun and Creative Worship Services for All Ages by Erika Hewitt

What if Nobody Forgave? And Other Stories by Colleen McDonald

Hide and Seek with God by Mary Ann Moore

A Good Telling: Bringing Worship to Life with Story by Kristin Maier

After Aesop: Stories for All Ages by Aaron McEmrys

A Lamp in Every Corner: Our Unitarian Universalist Storybook by Janeen K. Grohsmeyer

Picture books can be adapted to be told, but I would discourage you from reading them in the service.

Handout Five: Now You Have a Story. Now What?

Step One: Read the story through, and decide what The Most Important Thing (MIT) about the story is, for the context you've chosen it.

Step Two: With the MIT in mind, what events and details need to be present and stressed to highlight the MIT?

Step Three: Learning the Story. See Hand Out Six

Step Four: Develop Your Telling:

- **Develop Characters.** Envision your characters, and how they would talk and how they would stand or move. Practice being the characters as you tell the story. A pause and a shift in body language/posture can signal when you are switching from one character to another.
- **Practice rhythm and pauses.** Where is it effective to speak slowly, to take a pause, or to go faster? Play with your telling a bit so you find good rhythms. Changing rhythm a few times in a story can help keep the attention of your audience. But rhythm needs to go with emotional tone – don't go fast during a sad part, for instance.
- **Movements.** Choose a few movements that will support the story. You don't have to mime everything in the story – in fact that gets overwhelming and distracting – but a few appropriate movements (for instance, pointing up in a part where a character is climbing a mountain or a tree) support and enrich the telling.
- **Practice! Practice! Practice!** Try it in front of a mirror. Try it in

By Sara Lewis, Director of Lifespan Religious Education, Credentialed Religious Educator

front of a friend or family member.

Handout Six: How to Learn a Story

There is no one right method for memorizing stories. What works best for me may not work best for you. But the main methods used by storytellers fall into three categories:

word for word	Scene by scene	A combo - usually memorizing beginnings, endings, and quotes and winging the rest
<p>Pros:</p> <p>stays true to the language chosen ahead of time, can better honor the original author</p> <p>better consistency in telling</p> <p>Cons:</p> <p>Takes more time to memorize</p> <p>Can be more dry, lacking energy in the telling</p>	<p>Pros:</p> <p>Easier to memorize</p> <p>Flexible and responsive during the telling - more relational and engaging</p> <p>Cons:</p> <p>Can lose the flow (introduction of “ums” “ers”, etc. as you search for a word)</p> <p>Less consistent tellings</p>	<p>If you memorize the important bits, those will be consistent and well said.</p> <p>The rest can be improvised around those Important Bits.</p>

Memorizing Scene by Scene

- If you are artistic or a visual learner, draw yourself a story board. This is a series of boxes with a picture of what is happening in each scene. Since this is just for you, it can literally be stick figures – it is just an exercise to aid your memory.
- Another alternative is to make a series of index cards, and write a quick summary of the scene on the card. Organize them in order and flip through them as you are memorizing the story.

Memorizing Word for Word

- I type out a full script for myself, of every word I want to say. I then read through it over and over and over and over
- By Saturday I should be able to deliver the story without the script.

What If You Forget Something?

- “meanwhile”
- “But what you don’t know is”

By Sara Lewis, Director of Lifespan Religious Education, Credentialed Religious Educator

Storytelling 101, for the Olympia Unitarian Universalist Congregation

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Handout Seven: Interacting With Your Audience

- Eye-contact – not too much, not too little, and to all different parts of the room.
- Gauge their reaction.
 - Lean-in vs. Lean-Back
- Asking questions that don't really want an answer: “have you ever felt like that, lost and alone?”
- Asking questions that do want an answer – risky!
- The “knowing pause”
- Repetitive phrases, with gesture to invite them to join you on them.
- A noise or gesture that they can do when you signal them to, or a prop that you have already put out that you can ask for at a certain point.