

# Episcopal Provincial Synod 2009

## Public Narrative Project Story Guide

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Materials adapted for this workshop by Devon Anderson and Liz Pallatto

## **Welcome to the Episcopal Public Narrative Project!**

This workshop is sponsored by the Joint Standing Commission on Planning and Arrangements and the Executive Council's Standing Committee on Congregations in Ministry.

From July 7-17, 2009, over 15,000 people will attend the 76<sup>th</sup> General Convention of the Episcopal Church in Anaheim, California. During this time, deputations from 108 dioceses, the Convocation of American Churches in Europe and Navajoland will engage in a historic, vision-focused conversation about the Mission of the Church through Ubuntu, a traditional African belief regarding a way of being in caring, sharing, harmonious relationship with others.

This conversation is an opportunity for the Episcopal Church, a community of 7000 congregations and over 2 million members, to articulate a deeper understanding of its identity and relationships for the next generation. This conversation will open the opportunity to a deeper understanding of who we are and why we are called to mission through action in the world.

The purpose of this workshop is to offer an overview of the art of public narrative, an opportunity to learn how to practice it, and preparation for its use at General Convention.

Public narrative is a leadership art that can be used by members of the Episcopal Church to articulate the call to action that is rooted in one's own journey and that of one's community. Public narrative can be a way to articulate Ubuntu – the recognition of the fact that I am because you are, that we are interdependent.

During this workshop you will be asked to tell your story of why you've been called to your own mission (story of self), why we as a community are called (story of us), and the urgency of challenge that confronts us with the demand for action now (story of now). And as you learn to tell your own story, you will also learn to elicit the stories of others. You will be most successful if you bring an "exploratory" spirit to this workshop – try new things, take some risks, ask new questions.

**Bonnie Anderson**  
**President, House of Deputies**

# Strategy for Mission Development

The goal of this undertaking is to equip each deputation with public narrative skills by July 2009.

Here's how the strategy is unfolding:

- June 16, 2008 – Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Planning and Arrangements and of the Standing Committee on Congregations in Ministry, provincially elected members of Executive Council, the co-chairs of the General Convention Worship Committee and other invited guests were introduced to the practice of public narrative and invited to assist in training others at a workshop at each of nine Provincial Synods in the fall of 2008 and spring of 2009.
- January – June 2009 – Participants in all remaining Provincial Synods learn the practice of telling and coaching public narrative and are prepared to participate in the public narrative exercise at General Convention 2009.
- July 2009 – Deputations at General Convention (about 800 people) put their public narrative skills to work, addressing the challenge of renewing their commitment to mission as individuals, as congregations, as dioceses and as a Church.

## **Outcomes by June 30, 2009**

- Participants from all Provinces learn the practice of public narrative.
  - Participants from all Provinces equipped to coach others in public narrative.
  - Participants in all Provincial workshops invited to participate in public narrative exercise at the 76<sup>th</sup> General Convention.
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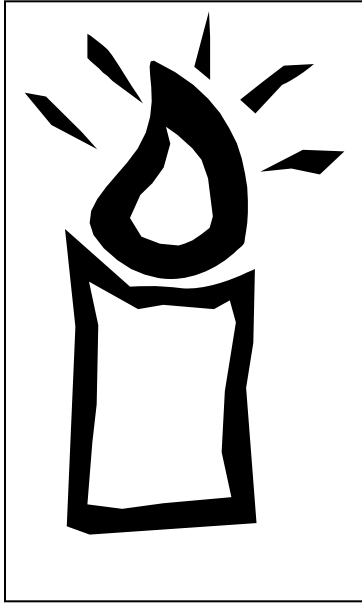
## **Using Public Narrative in the Context of Your Own Mission Work -- Action Plan**

- Our hope is that you will take the public narrative skills directly into the work that you are currently doing as a leader within your congregation or diocese.
- You should think about the focus for your work and how public narrative can be integrated into that work.

## **Commitments to Using Public Narrative as a General Leadership Skill**

1. Develop your own leadership practice of public narrative.

2. Coach others in this skill both to help others improve and to practice your own skills in developing the stories of others.
3. Engage your community members in story circles. Replicate this training for others.



## Why is Public Narrative so critical to learn and practice now?

The church faces challenges, among which are disagreement on scriptural interpretation and authority, human sexuality, an aging membership and statistical decline. These are major challenges, to be sure, but the challenge we face is whether or not we can confront a deeper challenge, a challenge that may be the key to all the others. Now is the time for us to reinforce and build critical tools that will enable us to become a people of mission.

This is the challenge of mission. And, as Shakespeare wrote, we may well be at the point when "we must

take the current when it serves, or lose our ventures."

### ***What is mission as we understand it?***

There are many ways to understand the mission in this context. A review of references gives a sense that there is no one definition and yet each indicates that there is an overarching theme of active engagement with others to promote a vision of something better.

For instance, the Book of Common Prayer (p.855) indicates that the "The mission of the church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ." "The Church pursues its mission as it prays and worships, proclaims the Gospel, and promotes justice, peace, and love."

"The Church carries out its mission through the ministry of all its members."

In the book, *What Can One Person Do?*, contributor Ian Douglas explains the meaning of *Missio Dei* -- Latin for mission of God. "The central element of God's mission or *Missio Dei* is God's commitment to restore to unity that which has become broken, to reconcile a divided world, to heal a hurting humanity."

S.J. Samartha in *One Christ—Many Religions: Toward a Revised Christology* defines mission as God's "continuing activity through the Spirit to mend the brokenness of creation, to overcome the fragmentation of humanity, and to heal the rift between humanity, nature, and God."

**Your own interpretation of mission then leads you to the beginning of your source of inspiration for action.**

## ***Why mission?***

Faith calls us on many levels. As we become clear about our faith, we are called to take ever increasing levels of engagement. We begin to make *personal* confession of our belief or of the call. We join together with others in communal confession of faith – to develop an awareness of faith on a larger scale. Then, we begin to take leadership – to reach out beyond ourselves and, with our community, to proclaim our faith by doing God’s work in the world, a confession of faith in action.

That is mission: acting to translate our personal faith, in community, into God’s work in the world. It is not an afterthought we may only get around to after we have taken care of ourselves, but, rather, it is the way we can truly care for ourselves. Commitment to mission draws us out of the narrowness of our own lives, redeeming us even as we enter the domain of the “other” – the outcast, the alien, the uncertain, the “least of these.”

## ***What does commitment to mission mean?***

Commitment to mission as a leader means that you do more than enact mission as an individual. As a leader, you draw from yourself as inspiration to inspire others to join in action towards achieving mission.

First, we accept it as our own; we root it in our own values, our own practice, and our own day-to-day lives. We do not delegate it, compartmentalize it, professionalize it – all ways of distancing ourselves, allowing others to “take care of it” for us.

Second, we make this commitment to each other, expecting support from each other, offering challenge to each other, celebrating successes and failures with each other.

And third, we commit to concrete, specific action that changes the world, honoring the gifts of choice, creativity and collaboration with which we have been blessed by leaving this place better than we found it.

Consequently, commitment to mission, if we are to succeed, requires us to build bridges to each other, not to erect barriers; to find resources in each other, not deficits; to act creatively, not habitually; to engage the future, not dwell in the past; and to act now and not delay.

### ***This is the work of public narrative.***

Public narrative is a leadership practice based on the recognition that we access, teach and share values through the stories we tell: stories of encounter with challenge, choices made and lessons learned – in our hearts, as well as in our heads.

First, we shall learn how to tell stories of why each of us, as individuals, is called to mission. Then we shall learn to tell stories of why we, as a community, as a church, are called to mission. And, finally, we shall learn to tell stories of the urgent need to act now. We will then learn to link all three elements: self, church and action, in a renewed commitment to mission.

This is our goal for our 2009 General Convention: to recommit ourselves as individuals, as communities and as a church to mission.

### ***How do we hope to achieve this?***

**We find our way to recommitment by learning how to articulate the values that actually move us to act. We celebrate our values in worship. We decide upon legislative action. We discern a pathway from expressing our values to acting our values.**

# Overview of Public Narrative as a Leadership Skill

## *Public narrative as a practice of leadership*

Public narrative is the “why”—the art of translating values into action through stories. It is a discursive process through which individuals, communities, and nations construct their identity, make choices, and inspire action.

## *Why Use Public Narrative? -- -- Two Ways of Knowing: Interpretation*

Public leaders employ both the “head” and the “heart” in order to mobilize others to act effectively on behalf of shared values. In other words, they engage people in interpreting why they should change their world – their motivation – and how they can act to change it – their strategy.

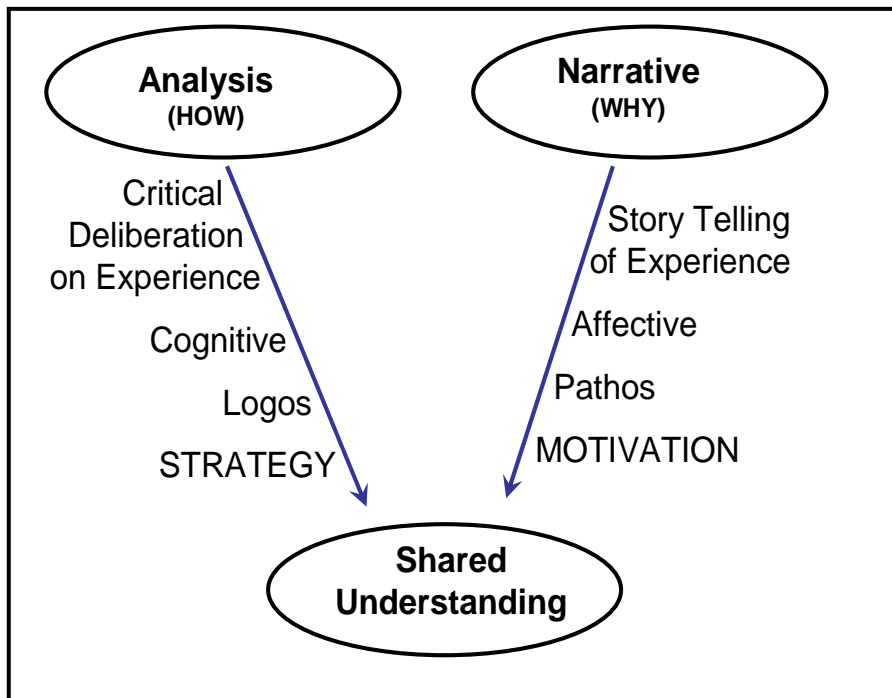


Figure 1

***The key to motivation is understanding that values inspire action through emotion.***

There are emotions that inhibit action: inertia (habit), fear, apathy, self-doubt, isolation (alienation)

These emotions can be overcome by appealing to emotions that facilitate action: hope, anger, urgency, a feeling of efficacy or “you can make a difference” – or YCMAD for short, and solidarity.

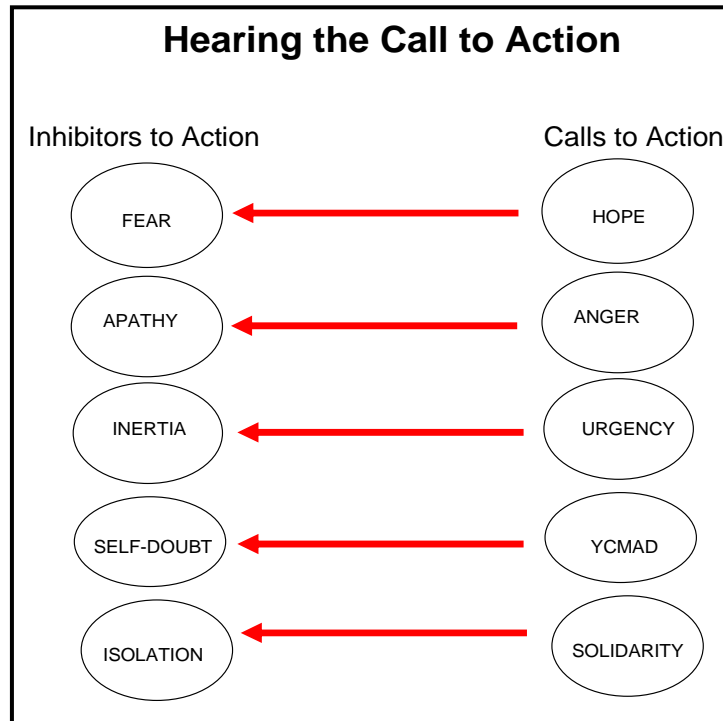


Figure 2

## **Developing Your Own Personal Narrative**

**Public narrative combines a story of self, a story of us, and a story of now.**

**A “story of self” tells why we have been called to serve.**

The key focus is on choice points, moments in our lives when our values are formed when we have to choose in the face of great uncertainty, When did you first care about being heard, about concern with others, about abuses of power, about poverty, about the natural world? Why? When did you feel you had to do something about it? Why did you feel you could? What were the circumstances?

A “story of us” communicates why our community, organization, movement, campaign has the capacity to accomplish goals relative to the call to mission.

Just as with a person, the key is choice points in the life of the community and/or those moments that express the values underlying the work your organization does.

A “story of now” communicates the urgent challenge we are called upon to face now

The story includes a description of the path to take to achieve goals relative to the mission – the unique strategy or set of ideas that help us to overcome challenge and to succeed. The story also includes an ask that engages the audience in the thing they can do to achieve collective mission.

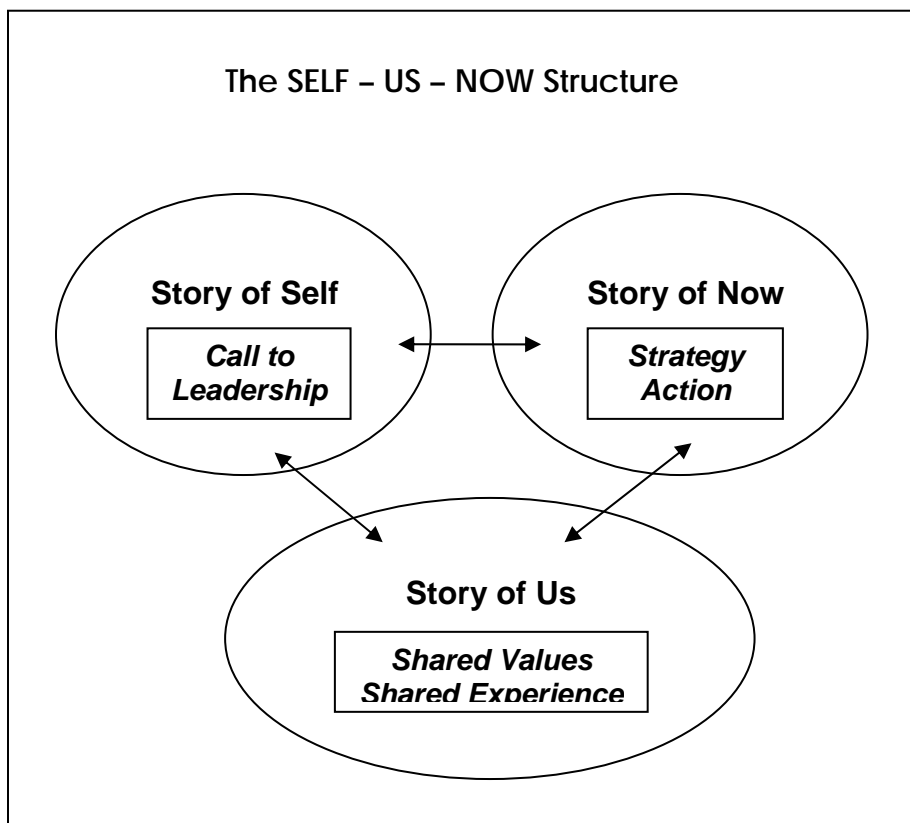


Figure 3

### The Three Key Elements of Public Narrative Structure

#### Challenge - Choice - Outcome

A plot begins with an unexpected challenge that confronts a character with an urgent need to pay attention, to make a choice, a choice for which s/he is unprepared. The choice yields an outcome -- and the outcome teaches a moral.

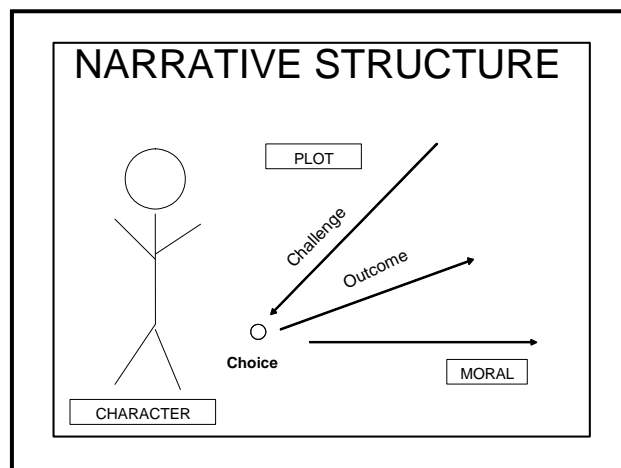


Figure 3

Because we can empathetically identify with the character, we can “feel” the moral. We not only hear “about” someone’s courage, we can also be inspired by it.

The story of the character and their effort to engage around values engages the listener in their own challenge choice and outcome relative to the story.

## ***Incorporating Challenge, Choice, and Outcome in Your Own Story***

There are some key questions you need to answer as you consider the choices you have made in your life and the path you have taken that brought you to this point in time as a leader. Once you identify the specific relevant choice point, perhaps your first true experience of god, or choice to worship of your free will, dig deeper by answering the following questions.

**Challenge:** Why did you feel it was a challenge? What was so challenging about it? Why was it your challenge?

**Choice:** Why did you make the choice you did? Where did you get the courage (or not)? Where did you get the hope (or not)? How did it feel?

**Outcome:** How did the outcome feel? Why did it feel that way? What did it teach you? What do you want to teach us? How do you want us to feel?

A word about challenge. Sometimes people see the word challenge and think that they need to describe the misfortunes of their lives. Keep in mind that a struggle might be one of your own choosing – a high mountain you decided to climb as much as a hole you managed to climb out of. Any number of things may have been a challenge to you and be the source of a good story to inspire others.

### ***Three Activities to Prepare Your Story of Self – Us- Now***

**SELF - Reflect on your story as it relates to what you want to achieve**

**US – Identify stories – capacity of the audience/community you will address**

**NOW – Articulate the urgent challenge, your strategy and a single step anyone can take to be part of the solution.**



## STORY WORKSHEET THE BASICS

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Let's start with the assumption that you have a story to tell. You need to do some thinking to start and develop your story.

Before you begin to work on your public narrative, take a moment to clarify the basics of what you would like to accomplish as a leader. Be succinct. This outline will give you a starting point for your story.

Your story of self should always start with the now as a reference point – what are the experiences and values that cause you to take leadership that reflects your call to mission?

Keep in mind that the final form of your story will include all three elements of the public narrative – self, us, and now.

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### BASIC OUTLINE OF YOUR LEADERSHIP STORY

As a leader, I would like to accomplish \_\_\_\_\_ (real tangible change in the world).

I am going to talk with \_\_\_\_\_ (individual, group, audience, community) to ask them to make a collective commitment to taking one concrete action together with me.

The action I am going to ask them to take is \_\_\_\_\_.

## Preparing to Tell Your Story of Self

Preparing your story is not necessarily a linear process. As you think more deeply about one part of your story, you will find yourself revising or deleting parts of the story that no longer make sense. When you rehearse your story with others, and get feedback and coaching, you may even go all the way back to the basics. This list of steps will help you understand how to start and how to pinpoint ideas or steps you may have missed as you began to develop your story.

1. Start with the basics – fill in the blanks on the simple outline below. What challenges link your story of self, story of us and story of now? Locate the hope in your story.
2. Spend time in reflection about yourself, develop empathy and find your connection to your audience, and clearly articulate your vision, strategy and action. Fill out the outline in greater detail.
3. Work to build out the specific details of your stories of self, us, and now using the worksheets.
4. Identify the challenge, choice, and outcome in each of the three areas of self, us, and now.
5. Find common themes in your stories of self, us, and now around challenge, choice, and outcome and weave these themes through your story.
6. Identify places where you can bring the story alive with vivid detail—how did things look, smell, taste, sound, and feel at the moment your story happened?
7. Practice your developing story and incorporate feedback from others.

8. Tell your story to your audience! Reflect on how you did and make adjustments.



## WORKSHEET: STORY OF SELF PREPARATION

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### What are the experiences and values that call you to take leadership?

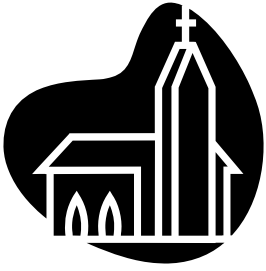
*You should have been thinking of your story in advance of the workshop. If you didn't get a chance to do so – we have listed some key elements and types of experiences that may have contributed to your current choice to take leadership on global poverty issues.*

FAMILY & CHILDHOOD	LIFE CHOICES	CHURCH EXPERIENCE
Parents/Family Growing Up Experiences Your Community Role Models School	School Career Partner/Family Hobbies/Interests/Talents Experiences – Finding Passion – Overcoming Challenge	Introduction to the Church First Experience of Faith/God Connection to Scripture Role Models/Community Current Experience of your Congregation

*Take some time to think about the elements of your story in the context of the challenge, choice, and outcome. In this case the outcome might also be the thing you learned in addition to what actually happened.*

CHALLENGE	CHOICE	OUTCOME

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## Preparing Your Story of Us -- Connecting to Community and Audience to Create Collective Action

### *Moving from Self to Us*

We've done the work of articulating our personal stories of why we are called to faith and justice. We've begun to build relationships with each other and through relationships articulate our shared values, interests, and resources. Now, how do we translate those shared values, interests, and resources into collective action?

### *Community through Story – “And we are witnesses in all he did”*

One way a group of people establishes an “us” – a shared identity – is through telling of shared stories, stories through which they can articulate the values they have in common, as well as the particularities that make them an “us.” These stories of how people came to be together, to found an organization, to overcome challenges together are clues to their shared interests and values as a community.

Think of how the early church grew. People shared their encounters with Jesus - seeing him heal people, hearing him preach good news of peace – and these people began to see themselves as a new community because of those shared experiences.

### *Your Audience – Your Congregation*

#### **Identify the stories of “us” of your unique audience**

A “story of us” is a story about a community that is called to work together. In this instance where you are practicing your skill at public narrative, think of that community as your congregation.

As you develop a story that will engage your audience, you should draw on the stories that the group shares in common. You should spend time investigating and identifying these stories – which you can use to draw on the moral values and motivations of the community.

**Identify WHAT in those stories causes you to believe that this group of people has the collective capacity to engage the problem.**

It is also through these stories that you will find a chance to identify your unique reason for believing that this community has the capacity to join you in confronting the urgent challenge.

What are some of the “stories of us” that express this audience or community – from the stories of the Bible to the story of the founding of this congregation, to the on-going efforts of your community in faith. What are the specific events, places, experiences that occur in these stories that illuminate the values and capacities of this group of people.

### ***Key Questions to Identify the Stories of US.***

**Audience** -- Who is the specific audience you will address?

**Purpose, Values, Strengths** -- What stories exist for this audience that highlight their purpose as a group, their shared values, interests and motivations?

**Strengths and Capacities** – What stories exist for this audience that indicate the reason you believe they can take on a challenge?

**The Challenge** – What stories exist for this audience that indicate that they would have an interest in the challenge you are describing? What makes you believe they would choose to take on this challenge? What makes you think they can overcome the challenge and be part of a hopeful solution?



**WORKSHEET  
STORY OF US PREPARATION**

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Use these questions to help you to put together your story of now. You should draw on your own current real work in your congregation or diocese to fill in the answers to the questions below.

**Who is your audience/community that you will be speaking to? (The group within your church, your parish, church leaders, community members, etc.)**

**What are some stories of this audience that give you an indication of their shared purpose and the goals of this group? What are their values?**

**What are some stories that give you a sense of the strengths and capacities of your audience/community?**

**What are some stories of your church community -- audience that gives you the belief that they could join together with you in mission and create real tangible change in the world?**

## **Developing Your Story of Now**

Now we know why you've been called to a particular mission, we know something of who it is you want to call upon to join you in that mission, so what action does that mission require of you right here, right now, in this place?

A "story of now" is urgent, it requires dropping other things and paying attention, it is rooted in the values you celebrated in your story of self and us, and it requires action.

### **The Elements of a Story of Now**

- The strategy – your plan to achieve your goal.
- A strategic "hopeful" choice that each person in your audience can make.
- A specific ask for each person that involves a commitment of time/resources before they leave.
- A description of what collectively can be achieved.

### **Why It Matters**

The choice we're called on to make is a choice to take strategic action now. Leaders who only describe problems, but fail to identify action that those whom they bring together can take to address the problem, aren't very good leaders. If you are called to address a real challenge, a challenge so urgent you have motivated us to face it as well, then you also have a responsibility to invite us to join you in action that has some chance of success. A "story of now" is not simply a call to make a choice to act – it is a call to "hopeful" action.



## WORKSHEET STORY OF NOW

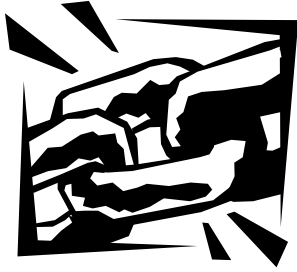
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Use these questions to help you to put together your story of now. You should draw on your own current real work in your congregation or diocese to fill in the answers to the questions below.

**Why is it urgent to take on the challenge now? What makes it urgent relative to other problems? Who are you serving in your community and the world by taking on leadership in this area? How are you expressing your faith by taking on this challenge?**

**What is your strategy to help alleviate the problem, create real tangible change? How will you know that you have developed an effective solution? What will the outcome look like if you are successful? What will you do to stay in relationship with those you are helping?**

**What is the single most important first step people can take to join you in this strategy? What form will their commitments take? Is it clear what they should do? Is it clear when they should do it?**



## TELLING YOUR PUBLIC STORY: LINKING SELF, US, AND NOW

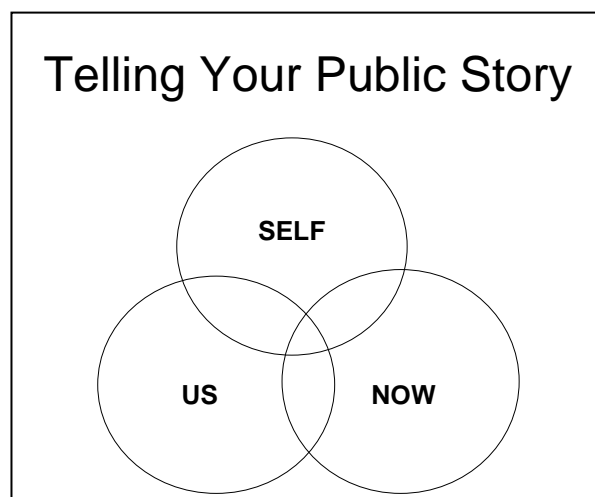
If I am not for myself, who will be for me?  
When I am only for myself, what am I?  
If not now, when?

- Hillel, 1<sup>st</sup> century Jerusalem sage *Pirke Avot*

Rabbi Hillel, a contemporary of Jesus, taught us that we must root right action in who we are – our values, our traditions, our relationship with God. But he also argued that “self” is ultimately insufficient. We can fulfill our own mission only in relationship with others, also struggling to fulfill their mission purpose. And, further, for this relationship to be meaningful, we must turn it into action – not next year, not next month, not next week – but now. To combine our stories of self, us, and now, we have to find the link between the values that call me to my mission, the values that call my community to its mission, and the urgency that calls us to act now.

That linking may require us to rethink our stories of self. Storytelling is an iterative, non-linear – process. Each time you tell your story you will adapt it – to make yourself clearer, to adjust to a different audience, to locate yourself in a different context. As you develop a story of us, you may find you want to alter your story of self, especially as you begin to see the relationship between the two more clearly. Similarly, as you develop a story of now, you may find it affects what went before. And, as you go back to reconsider what went before, you may find it alters your story of now.

Our goal for this training is not to leave with a final “script” of your public narrative that you will use over and over again. The goal is for you to learn a process by which you can generate your narrative over and over and over again, when, where, and how you need to in order to motivate yourself and others to specific, strategic action.



# LINKING YOUR STORIES TO CREATE A WHOLE NARRATIVE

## DRAWING ON SELF

As a church leader you can use public narrative to connect your story of self to the story of your community, and to the urgent challenges it must address.

Public narrative enables you to articulate your source of motivation as a source of motivation to others. You give those to whom you speak insights about who you are as an individual through the specifics of your own life story.

However, hearing your story alone is often not enough to mobilize people to take action. You also need to link it to values you share with them. And you need to link it to the urgent necessity of action, the challenge.

## LINKING TO US – COMMUNITY – COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

The leadership work in telling a story of us is to evoke the values that give definition to the community you share, the identity you share. A “story of us” is a story of why we are called to work together as a community, a way to experience the values we share. We as individuals can find ourselves to be more powerful as part of a collective, striving to achieve shared purpose, especially in the face of challenge. The intention behind public narrative is to help bring together individuals as a collective in an expression of faith wherein the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts.

You as a leader need to consider words you would use to identify the collective audience you are addressing, that you wish to lead. How can you help them to see themselves as part of a collective with a greater capacity to achieve mission together, rather than alone?

Each person as an individual is part of something greater in the Episcopal Church. There is liturgy, tradition, history, individual sources of inspiration and saints on earth who help to create bonds of community. Naming these can be important steps to creating shared identity.

You will need to consider who the people are in the room with you who are also leaders. This is their role and title, but who are they really? Why are they here? What are they hoping for? What experiences have you shared before you ever came to this room? What experiences have you shared since you’ve been here? Are there some who are here who are joyful in their expression of faith, some who inspire you through their actions, anyone that you particularly look to as a role model?

The way you know if your “story of us” works well is how the people with whom

you're trying to communicate respond, the people in the room with you, the people who are hearing what you have to say.

Again, it's the specifics of your story and particularly your ability to recognize the uniqueness of this particular group that will motivate and inspire others.

Could you find the words, the stories, to evoke experience of the values that you share?

## **CLOSING WITH NOW**

As you weave your narrative together to mobilize others, you continue the thread from your own personal sources of value, to the values you share with others, to the challenge you now must confront.

A story of now begins with an *urgent* challenge - a challenge to the values you share, a challenge that demands that you drop other things and pay attention. It is often found in the contrast between the world as you envision it and the reality of the world as it is. But it also must be a story of *hope*. It suggests a course of action that could allow us to meet the challenge, if we are faithful, courageous, and committed. Theologian Walter Brueggemann defines the "prophetic imagination" as consisting both of criticality, the experience of the pain of the world, and of hope, the experience of the promise of the world. A story of now will express both.

What are the urgent challenges that you as a church, as a community of faith, are called upon to face today – challenges your values will not allow you to ignore, turn away from, or postpone? And what is the source of hope you draw upon that tells you that you can meet those challenges? And what action does this hope demand of you now? What choices must you make about what you can do to meet them? What would be the outcome if you, together with the others you lead, took action relative to mission? What would look different? What particular injustice or problem would be addressed? What specific goals would be realized? How would the result create a world more in keeping with your faith?

You would know that your public narrative was effective if members of the audience were to make commitments to a specific action that you identified as a next step towards achieving that vision.



## WORKSHEET

Tying it all together in a successful public narrative.

SELF		US		NOW	
What are your experiences and values that call you to take leadership on global poverty?		What is your reason for believing in the possibility of the people you will be speaking to? What can they do to confront the challenge?		Why is it urgent to deal with global poverty? What is your strategy to overcome this challenge? What is the first step that each person can take to be part of your solution?	
CHOICE		CHOICE		CHOICE	
OUTCOME CHALLENGE		OUTCOME CHALLENGE		OUTCOME CHALLENGE	

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## APPENDIX: Coaching Tips: Learning to Elicit Other People's Stories and to Provide Feedback

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### DO

**Make sure you can identify the CHALLENGE, the CHOICE, and the OUTCOME in the story.** For example, if someone tells a story of an issue that distresses him or her, make sure you ask about how they handled it—what was the CHOICE he/she made, and what does that demonstrate about his/her underlying VALUES?

**Attend to specific points** in the story that do work and that don't work, but give feedback on what does work first. For example, this particular detail was vivid, or this was the precise moment where the story became clear or hard to follow.

**Focus on choice points.** Whether in story of self, story of us, or story of now this is where the action is. And it is how the choice point felt. For example, "When exactly did you decide to leave your job and come here? Tell me about it. How did it feel? "

**Ask questions about the intended audience and the desired action or response.** Our stories, in the context of our work, are always created in the context of motivating action. Who will this story be told *to*? How will it resonate with them? Is the "ask" clear? Put yourself in the shoes of the storyteller's intended audience, and let the storyteller know whether this story would have moved you to act, and what specific pieces of the story accomplished that. To push even further, ask the storyteller how s/he might adapt the story to fit a very different audience (e.g. If the story is crafted to motivate college students to register or volunteer, ask how they might tell the story differently to the local business association).

**Connect the dots.** If a story isn't making sense to you, makes leaps you can't follow, contains assumptions that are hidden, has gaps that are mysterious, ask! If it doesn't make sense to you, chances are that it won't make sense to anyone else. Trust your instincts and your common sense on this.

**Look for themes.** Does a similar kind of choice, kind of value, or kind of challenge recur over the course of the story? If so, ask the storyteller about it? S/he may not have realized because s/he is so "inside" the story that it is hard to be mindful of it at the same time.

**Build the skeleton then put meat on the bones.** By reporting what you are hearing, helping the storyteller to sketch a very simple outline of his or her story arc and then, once the road map is clear, proceed to fill in details, enhance transitions, etc.

**Show it, don't say it!** Challenge the storyteller to take you to the time, place, moment when the event happened – the choice, the reaction, the realization. Ask people to try speaking about it in the first person present, without using the word “and”. For example, “I stand up. Everyone looks at me. I can't speak.”

**Indicate where you saw evidence of the kinds of emotions that motivate people to take action or fall into inaction.** What were the moments where you felt the urgency, a sense of anger, hope, solidarity, a sense of being able to make a difference in the story? Were any of the demotivating emotions – inertia, fear, doubt, isolation – overcome in the story?

### *DON'T*

**Offer vague, abstract, "feel good" comments, unless you've established the context.** What does the storyteller learn from “you did a great job”, as opposed to, “the way you described your moment of choice made me feel very hopeful because. . . .”

**Make value judgments about the storyteller's voice or the validity of the point s/he wants to make.** The key here is that persons find ways to express themselves in their own voice – word choice, humor, metaphor, etc. Of course they need to know if choices they've made actually communicate what they want to communicate.