



# Storytelling: The Key to Stewardship

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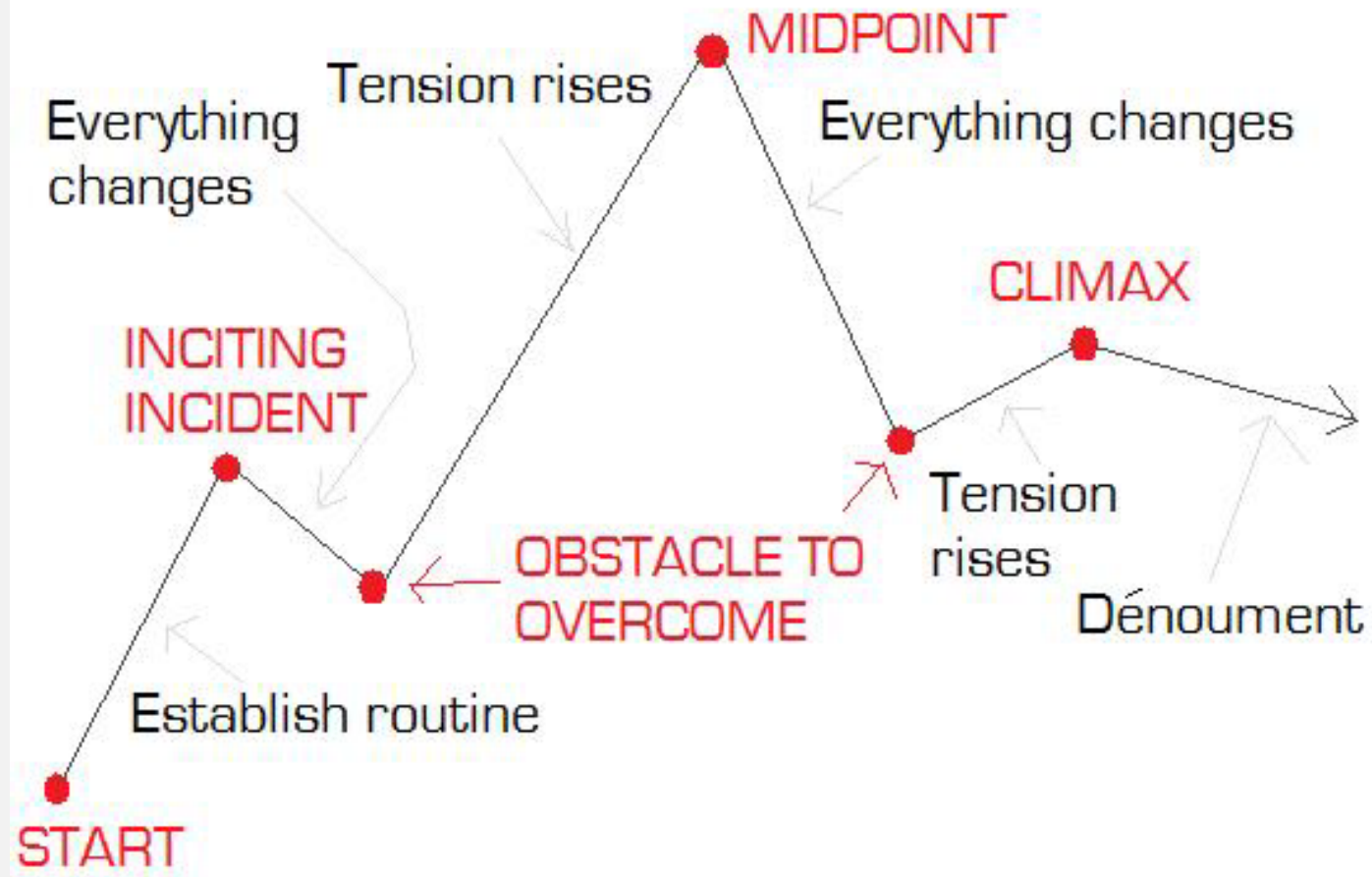
# The Best Dog Ever





# Over the River and through the Woods

1. **Exposition.** This is the reader's introduction to the story.
2. **Rising action.** This is when conflict begins to ramp up.
3. **Climax.** Typically, the climax requires the main character to face the truth or make an important choice.
4. **Falling action.** This is what happens as a result of the protagonist's decision.
5. **Resolution.** The resolution of a narrative arc isn't always happy, but it does close the loop.



# THE STORY ARC

# The Moth: Storyslam

- **Moth stories are told, not read.**
- *We love how the storyteller connects with the audience when there is no PAGE between them!*
- **Have some stakes**  
*Stakes are essential in live storytelling. What do you stand to gain or lose? Why is what happens in the story important to you?*
- **Have a great first line that sets up the stakes and grabs attention**
- *“The mountain loomed before me. I had my hunting knife, some trail mix and snow boots. I had to make it to the little cabin and start a fire before sundown or freeze to death for sure.”*
- **Know your story well enough so you can have fun!**  
Make an outline, memorize your bullet points and play with the details. Enjoy yourself. Imagine you are at a dinner party, not a deposition.

Don't assume that everyone knows everyone else's stories.

If you find great stories to tell, the best result you can have is: "I didn't know that!"

# *Why do stories matter? Because they motivate generosity!*

There are lessons you can borrow from the non-profit world. The non-profit world is largely your competition for stewardship dollars. But you've got two things they don't:

- Unprecedented time with the donors
- Theology

*I will leave the theology up to those with seminary training.*

Here's your key question you want to answer with the stories you tell:

- What would be missing from your community if your church closed tomorrow?

For member of your congregation, this can be:

- What would be missing from your life if your church closed tomorrow?

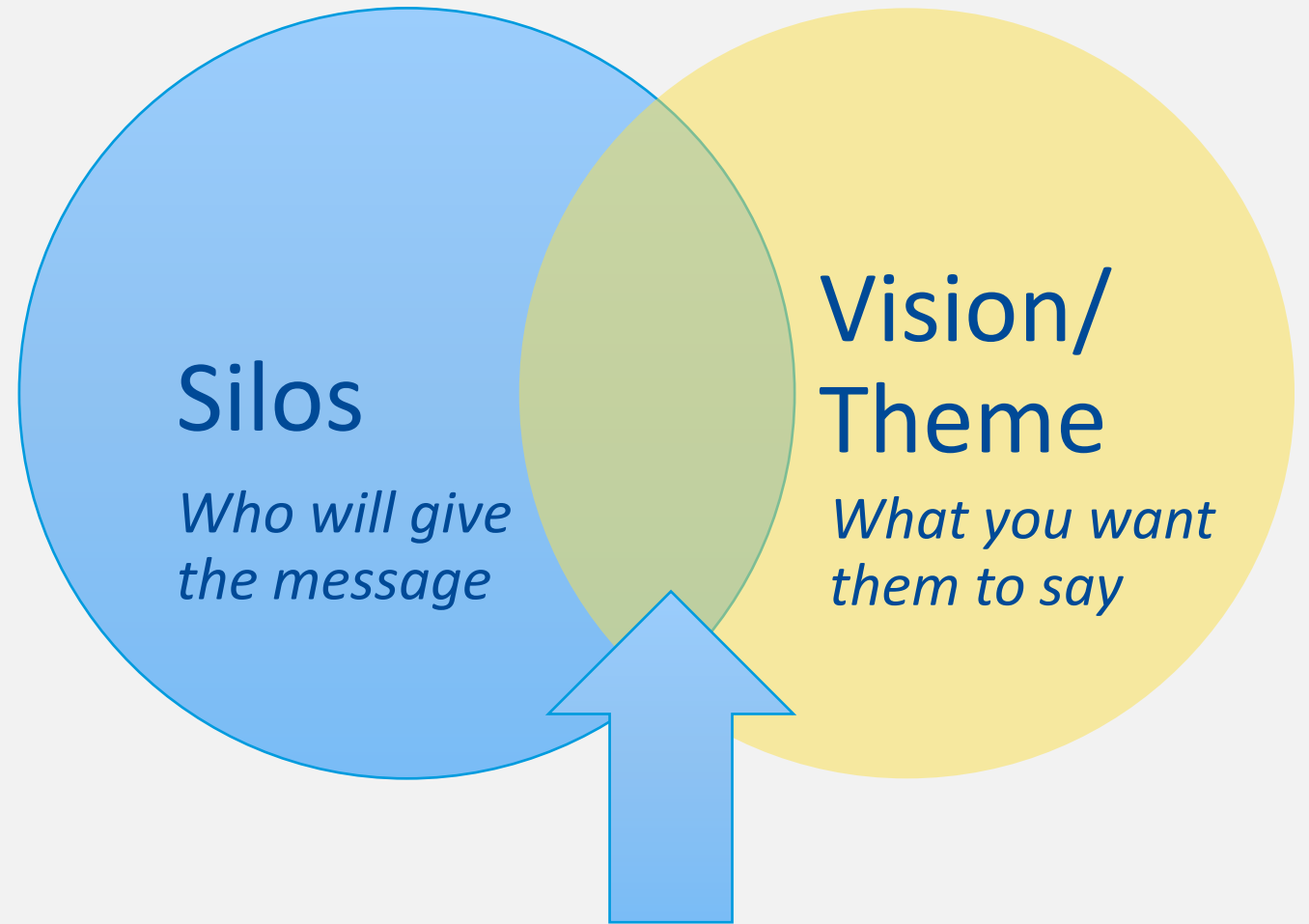
# Groups and silos: how to share stories across your congregation

*Sunday worship is how most people think of church. But you're more than that one hour per week timeframe.*

# Groups in churches

- Men's fellowship
- Presbyterian Women
- Knitting group
- Card games
- Yoga
- Older Adults Group
- Children's choir parents

# Effective storytelling



*The right person says the right  
thing to the right group*

# What's the right thing?

- Differs for every person.
- Someone who they relate to.
- Someone sincere.
- **Always:** Fits the general theme/mission of the church.
  - The last one is a goal, and not mandatory. But generally speaking, you want to keep repeating the message that “our church is full of hope” or “our church loves Jesus” often enough that it becomes the identity, and people embrace it.

# Stories from churches

# Forest Hills Presbyterian Church

Cleveland, OH

**LaDon Headen: *Forest Hill Church – A “Doing Church”***  
***Where Relationships Are Formed***



Member LaDon  
Headen

Shannon and LaDon Headen became acquainted with Forest Hill Presbyterian in 2013 after attending a friend’s wedding here. Shannon and their daughter Lotus attended for two weeks, LaDon joined them on the third, and they along with their two other children Lyric and Zen, have been coming ever since. Shannon is now the Director of Youth Ministries, and LaDon serves on the Nominating Committee, works the soundboard during worship services, and has taught Hip Hop classes as part of Black History Month programming.

What stood out about Forest Hill to both LaDon and Shannon was its outreach – that it, as LaDon said, “did help other people, did more than just talk about what we should do and actually put things into action. This is a church that is actually doing, a doing church.”

What keeps LaDon coming back to Forest Hill also are the connections that he has made and relationships that he has formed that he would not have made in his everyday life. “And in doing that,” LaDon reflected, “I’ve gotten to know people and stories and events. And the talents and time that some of these people have given have enriched my life and made my life better.”

LaDon gave the example of how fellow member Jacob Stauffer became a role model for his eight-year-old son Zen. Jacob graduated from Villa Angela-St. Joseph in 2016 and played on the basketball team. Zen, while attending a game, observed the discipline of the student athletes and how they handled themselves both on and off the court. He was quite impressed with the players and grew in admiration, specifically for Jacob. LaDon said, “And now Jacob has this admirer, this fan that he never had before. But in addition, my son had another person that he could view as a role model.”

**Pantry Guests: *Forest Hill Church – Being Part of the Kingdom of God (Abundance Pantry Part 2)***

“Everybody has a story,” Paul Jennings said, referring to guests of the Abundance Food Pantry as he discussed his role in Forest Hill Church’s weekly program. Two guests who were kind enough to sit down and share their stories were John and Rebecca.

**John** was homeless for nine years and had stayed at 2100 Lakeside Men’s Shelter before securing an apartment in the Coventry area. He heard about Abundance Pantry by word of mouth. **Rebecca** lost her job when the golf club she was managing went into foreclosure and suddenly shut down the summer of 2016. She was directed to Forest Hill through the United Way 211 Help Line. Both have visited the Pantry for over a year.

While **John** is grateful for the food he receives, he also greatly appreciates how he and other guests are treated with respect, tolerance, patience, and love. He talked about the “natural order” of God’s love from one person to another. “It makes me want to follow that order, ‘cause when you take the time to do something for someone you don’t even know simply because of the love of Christ it’s overwhelming to me.” John indeed continues this order of love himself; he shops for his brother, who has medical issues, and picks up baby food for a woman in his building.

**Rebecca** is a single mom of two including a daughter with special needs who requires hospitalization. “Money’s tight right now trying to get by and take good care of them. I don’t come as much when the kids are at school. But, in the summer, honestly, I wouldn’t financially make it through.” Rebecca also talked about her first visit to the Pantry. “I was embarrassed because I’d never been in a situation like that and I was crying...She [volunteer Rosanna Sprague] was so kind and she just made me feel so comfortable, and that there was nothing to be ashamed of and that they’re there to help. She’s just, they’re all wonderful.”

The Abundance Pantry not only provides food for the body but also respite from the challenges of everyday life. John may have summed it up best when reflecting on the emotional benefits of the Pantry Lunch, held every fourth Thursday for its guests. “It’s a blessing because it gives them a sense of, what’s the word, normality? When you’re just being normal...just being part of the Kingdom of God.”

# First Presbyterian Church

Delray Beach, Florida



## ***Marie's Story***

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Marie Buss just celebrated her 95<sup>th</sup> birthday. Marie's family lived pretty far from church growing up, so it wasn't until later in her childhood when her brother started attending a church closer to home that she started attending regularly.

In 1992, when Hurricane Andrew stormed through Miami and Florida, Marie and her husband decided to wait it out with their son in his home. When they returned to their condo the back of it was missing. This was an unsettling time for Marie, one she remembers well. She and her husband decided to move out of Miami, which meant finding a new church home.

After visiting a number of congregations, they found their place at First Presbyterian. "I wanted a place that was welcoming, and I wanted to do something. I wanted to be able to make a difference." Marie wasn't interested in simply sitting and listening to someone else. "I finish a puzzle and I look at it and then think – what good did that do? It didn't help anyone, but sometimes you do have to unwind," she admitted.

When Marie started attending First, she quickly joined a small group of ladies with a "big official name" that she couldn't possibly remember. The group worked to make Christmas items for a bazaar and eventually started calling themselves Holly House. Marie is delighted to see that the group has grown and now there are even men who help set up the bazaar and sell things. Marie hasn't been able to attend for a couple of years for physical health reasons, but she still considers herself part of the group, and she is grateful for having found the group after living through Hurricane Andrew. She is also grateful that Holly House allows her to continue her calling to serve others. "Even though I can't attend; I still crochet sweaters that go to Hungary and migrant workers on the other coast. People in wheelchairs in nursing homes sit all day. Their legs get cold, and I make lap blankets for them."

Being at First helps Marie maintain her connection and closeness to God and her way to serve. "I have never expressed myself to anyone about how I feel about God. I experience God as a friend," she shared. "If you don't believe in God, how can you live a life? There are many days if it wasn't for God, I don't know how I would have existed. Problems and concerns that develop as you mature, get married, raise children - there are more and more opportunities for problems and my solution is to go to God. I don't get a bulletin from God or flashing lights, but it comes within me. All of a sudden, I realize I could do this or that. God is at work helping me think better."

Marie reads her bible daily and prays. She continues to serve by taking prayer requests from others. "I can pray in the moment," she said. "When someone says something to me, I can pray immediately. I don't need to go to a corner. I can pause, block everything out, and pray, wherever it is needed."



## *Pregi's Story*

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Pregi Febriani grew up in Indonesia and came to the U.S. for her bachelor's and master's degree in hospitality. She knew when she arrived in the U.S. that she wanted to find a community. "I was looking for a church family because I didn't have family in the U.S. The way I was raised, you always have God, and you can just pray, as simple as that, but I knew I also needed a community."

After moving to Florida with a friend, Pregi began sitting on the back row of congregations in search for the one she would call her home. "I am very introverted so if the church is too small everyone will know I am new, and if the church is too big it might not feel like a family. I would sit in the back and get a feel for the churches."

First Presbyterian was similar to her church back home. "The people greeted me and made me feel welcomed, but they didn't overwhelm me."

Even when Pregi works late nights at the hotel and restaurant, she still tries to get up and go to church. "My parents say that an hour at church can make your whole week different. You can read the Bible and pray but coming to church is a way to give yourself a break and be in community."

After her children were born, she appreciated that the church provided ways for families to gather. Now, as her children are aging, she values Dr. Hood's weekly prayers and meditation books. "Sometimes I feel like I pray the way I teach my children to pray. I just say, 'God thank you for this day, I hope it is good.' Dr. Hood's prayers and messages are educational and inspirational, and I like to have his book with me. I spend a lot of time in the car rider line at school to pick up my children. I can pull the book out and just read one paragraph again and again for inspiration. That is what I need sometimes. Other times, I can read pages; but God always finds a way to give me what I need at that time."

Pregi is grateful that she and her family call First Presbyterian their family here in the U.S.

# Where to find the stories



Numbers that  
tell stories

1,544

Items to Portland  
Avenue Food Pantry



Numbers that  
tell stories

312

People attended 12-step  
meetings in our church

CHRIST UNITED  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH

ADVENT:  
ONLY IN THE DARKNESS CAN  
YOU SEE THE STARS.  
MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

JN. 10:30 AM WORSHIP  
CHRISTUNITEDSD.ORG  
WALK TO CHURCH  
THIS SUNDAY!

SERMON: CHRIST'S  
AMBASSADOR

Numbers that  
tell stories

52

Bible verses and uplifting  
quotes placed on our sign



Numbers that  
tell stories

12,057

Hours volunteered by our  
congregation in our community

# Where are your church's stories?

Tell me about a time when your church did something that made a difference.

- Stood with the marginalized
- Took care of those in need
- Invited community groups into the building
- Took a bold stand

Tell me about a member who found your congregation and has made it a big part of their life. Introduce me to them.

Say thank you with stories



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