

You have a story to tell

People love stories. The music and entertainment industries exist to give us narratives that inspire and inform. Researchers have even discovered that, when listening to a story, the listener's brainwaves synchronize with the speaker's.

The stories we tell create meaning and leave a lasting impression on how we see the world and ourselves. Good stories go beyond information-sharing to influence the listener on a deeply personal level. If a child has ever begged you to read the same story night after night, you already know that no matter how many times we hear a great story, we usually want to hear it again.

A big part of leadership is to listen to the stories in the organization and then help people tell new ones. As congregational leaders, we listen to learn the collective story. What are the historical highs and lows that have shaped the congregation as it is today? Who played a role in moving the church forward?

Over the next several weeks, many congregations will recognize the graduating class of 2024. Although we are beyond the daily restrictions of COVID-19, the pandemic is an undeniable part of this class's story. Most of them experienced a virtual high school graduation in 2020 and then spent the first year of college in a socially distant, hybrid learning environment. For the rest of their lives, these experiences will remain a part of their story.

To strengthen your leadership, think about the stories you would like your church to tell five or 10 years from now. What will it be doing? Whom will it serve? How will the church make people feel? What will people in the neighborhood say about the church? As you reflect on these questions, consider what needs to happen today for these stories to become reality in the future.

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