

A Public Narrative Learner's Guide for the Diocese of California

www.diocal.org/areaministry

Welcome

Public Narrative, a story-based community organizing method, is a leadership skill for ministry. The structure of **Public Narrative** (as outlined in the following pages) was developed as a critical component of teaching leadership skills in order to create change in the world through commitment to shared action. Widely employed in the preparation for the Episcopal Church's 2009 General Convention, **Public Narrative** training is now being offered to leaders in the Episcopal Diocese of California in support of Area Ministry and congregational development.

Area Ministry, like every movement for transformation of the church, relies on the willingness of Christian people to articulate their faith and invite others into common prayer and action. **Public Narrative** is one of the methods – which may also include demographic analysis, vocational discernment, community organizing and funding strategies – that lay the groundwork for renewal within the institution, and also catalyze fresh expressions of Church.

However, the heart of Area Ministry is not technique, but a life-giving movement from maintenance to mission. Area Ministry is outwardly directed, especially toward young adults and others underrepresented in the church. By calling forth the passionate stories of all people in the community – giving voice to our common hopes for justice for all, spirituality rooted in worship and education, diverse leadership and revitalized churches – Area Ministry leads us toward the Beloved Community.

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Program goals

- Catalyze broader and more effective storytelling for mission and ministry.
- Improve the narrative skills of ministers, both lay and clergy, to foster cultural and community change.
- Equip a corps of experienced storytellers capable of extending **Public Narrative** practice throughout the Diocese of California.
- Replicate training for **Public Narrative** on an ongoing basis, within varied ministry settings.
- Create a collaborative community of **Public Narrative** practitioners in the Diocese of California.

Learner goals

- Articulate a compelling "story of self, us, and now".
- Acquire skills to coach others in crafting **Public Narrative**.
- Contextualize and utilize **Public Narrative** skills to strengthen specific practices of ministry and the mission of the Diocese of California.

Tell your story with passion and conviction; proclaim the good news of our Church; invite others to join in: It's this kind of personal witness that's always been the lifeblood of Christian community.

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Public Narrative Learner's Guide

The key to finding the courage to act with purpose is attending to the emotional information through which we experience our values. Some emotions facilitate intentional action, while others inhibit it.

Public Narrative as a practice of leadership

We exercise leadership when we accept responsibility to enable others to achieve purpose in the face of uncertainty. Through narrative we learn to make choices in response to the challenges of an uncertain world – as individuals, as communities, as nations. To face challenges creatively we must find sources of hope, (a matter of the heart, and detailed in our story); formulate a vision of how we can act, (a matter of the head, outlined by our strategy); and then act, (a matter of skillful and determined hands). **Public Narrative** can help us link our own calling to that of our community to a call to action now: a “story of self, a story of us and a story of now”.



Inertia – or habit – and apathy inhibit mindful action. While habit dominates, we don't pay attention, we operate on autopilot, and we experience no reason to consider our course of action. On the other hand, when urgency confronts us, we experience it as anxiety that calls our attention, that challenges us to consider our course of action. Similarly, when we experience anger as a dissonance between the world as it is and the world as it should be, the tension can propel us into action.

How we respond depends on our access to another set of emotions. If fear takes over, we try to hide, strike out, or just freeze, like a deer in the headlights – which is not very helpful. On the other hand, if we can find hope, then our curiosity is stirred, we ask questions, we explore, and we begin to do some creative problem solving. Similarly, if we feel isolated, our fear grows; while if we feel solidarity, empathy or love, we can reach toward courage. Finally, if we are unable to counter self-doubt with experience of our own worth, value and efficacy, we will find it hard to find the courage to take the risks often required to respond.

The three key elements of Public Narrative structure: plot, character and moral

A narrative is built from a plot. A plot begins with an unexpected challenge that confronts the protagonist with an urgent need to act – to make a choice (a choice for which she or he is unprepared) and which results in an outcome that teaches a moral. Because we can empathetically identify with the character, we can “feel” the moral. We not only

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learn about someone's courage, we can also be inspired by it. A protagonist's struggle to deal with his or her own challenges of uncertainty engages us because we are eager to learn how to deal with our own. The core unit of any story, then, is threefold: a challenge, a choice and an outcome.

Public Narrative combines a "story of self, a story of us and a story of now"

By telling your "story of self," you can communicate why you were called to care, to act and to lead: your own call to mission

In the "story of self," the key focus is on choice points: moments in our lives, or in the lives of our parents, when our values are formed, when we had to make a choice in the face of great uncertainty. When did you first begin to develop a concern for others?

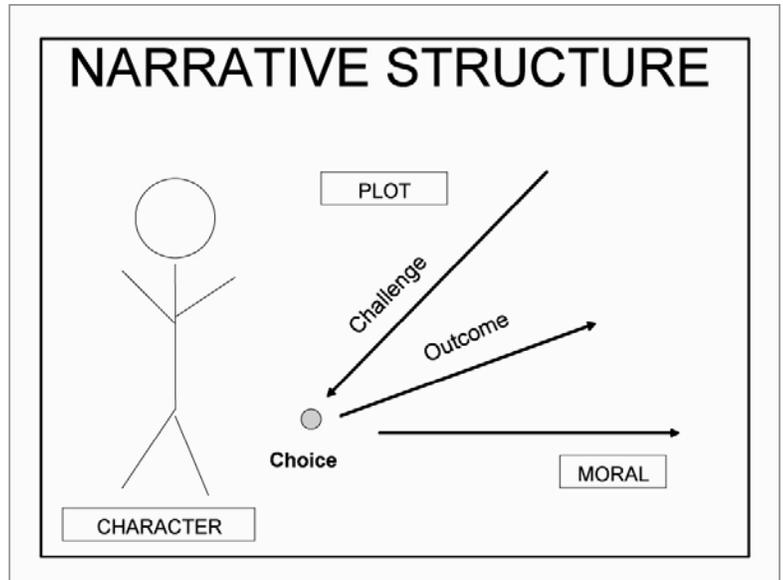
When did you begin to think you should follow in the footsteps of Jesus, or when did you first feel called to provide care for the "least of these?"

As you contemplate your own personal journey, ask yourself, "Why?" Consider the experiences from which you learned your values. For example, if you volunteer in your local soup kitchen, why did you feel compelled to do so? When did you feel that for the first time? What happened? If it was experience of the truth that "we are all made in the image of God ... we all have worth, and we all deserve to be fed," when was that? What were the circumstances? Did you recall your Baptismal Covenant to "respect the dignity of every human being" – an experience of a value rooted in the wider church?

The identification of the sources of the values evident in your own story creates a foundation for your "story of us".

A "story of us" communicates why our community is required to act, is called to mission

As a church, we share a broad narrative, a history of challenges, choices, and outcomes that celebrate many common values which in turn give us our identity and purpose. Just as with your "story of self," the key to articulating a "story of us" is to identify the choice points, the shared moments, and the experience that can communicate the values that we share as a community, as a church.



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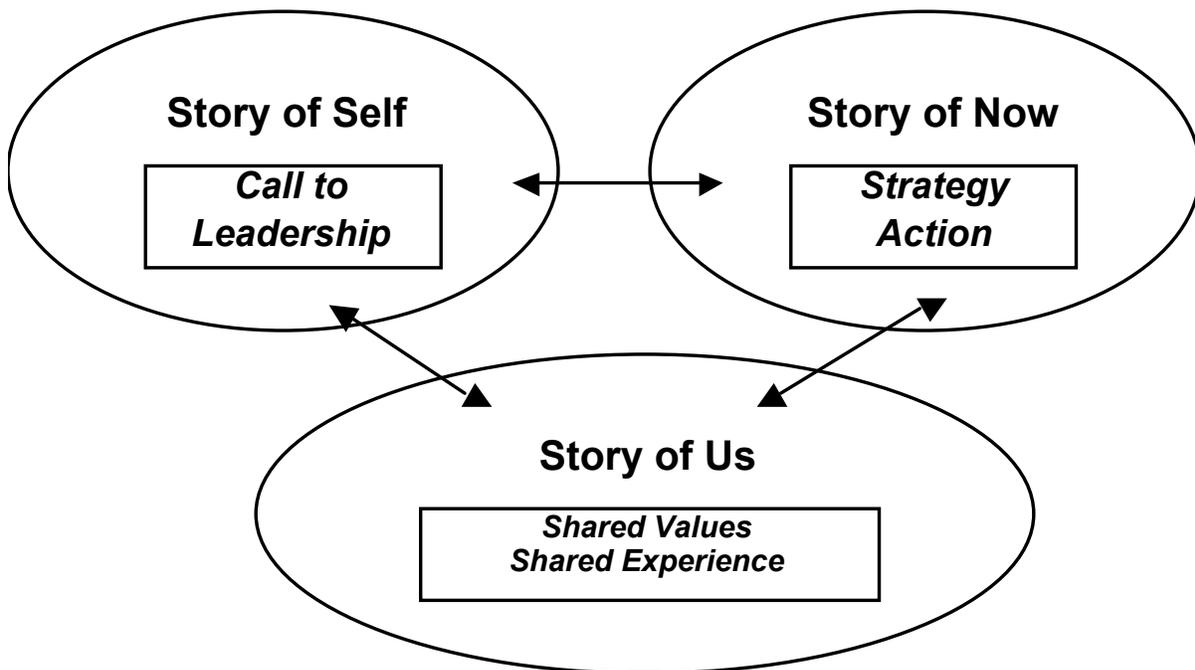


In telling your “story of us,” consider how your personal story intersects with the stories of others at your table. **Ubuntu** – “I am because you are” – teaches us that our stories arise from our interdependence, that even if we disagree or diverge, we share a life together. Our shared story is based on shared experiences of challenge, and the values that enabled us to find the resilience to continue. Every Sunday, as we consider the Gospel, we experience the telling of another chapter in our “story of us” as a church, an experience we celebrate in the Holy Communion.

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

We tell a “story of now” to articulate the urgent challenge that (given our mission) demands action; the vision that inspires us; and the choice we must make (and call upon others to make) to act. The choice must spell out a specific outcome, call on us to work together, and begin with a specific commitment.

The SELF – US – NOW Structure



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Preparing to Tell Your Public Narrative

Learning to tell your story is not linear process. As you think more deeply about one part of your story, you will find yourself revising or deleting other parts of the story that no longer make sense. The important thing is to let your mission purpose serve as the focus for your story. This is not a biography, but rather a narrative that leads to an action outcome.

For example, if you want to take steps to alleviate global poverty, focus your “self story” on when you may have first realized this was important to you: such as when you took a trip overseas with a youth ministry. Why did you care, when others did not? And why did you act, when others did not? Then focus on stories that lift up the related values your community shares: in this case, the other people at your table. Then speak about your “now” – the urgent challenge, the vision and the specific “ask” (for example, why it is urgent to commit to raise new funds for a particular mission...).

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: As a leader, what is your mission / purpose in the Diocese of California?
2. Spend time in reflection about yourself, find your connection to the community of people you are speaking to, and clearly articulate your vision, strategy and action.
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. What challenges link your “story of self,” “story of us” and “story of now”? Locate the hope in 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 their response. How many said “yes”?

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Worksheet: Preparing Your "Story of Self"

Telling one's "story of self" is a way to share the values that define who you are – not as abstract principles, but as lived experience

What are the experiences that called you to care, to act, to lead?

Here are some key elements and types of experiences that may have contributed to your call to care, to act and to lead – to assume leadership in mission.

Family & Childhood

Parents / Family

Growing Up Experiences

Your Community

Role Models

School

Life Choices

Education

Career

Partner / Family

Hobbies / Interests / Talents

Experiences / Finding Passion / Overcoming Challenge

Church Experience

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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Goals of telling your "story of self"

The first goal is for you to begin learning how to tell your personal story of why you have been called to assume leadership in your congregation or area – and its mission.

A second goal is to begin learning how to coach others: by listening carefully, offering feedback, asking questions, etc. In this way you can develop leadership in others as well as refine it in yourself. Be prepared to take some risks, and support your group members as they step out on the limb themselves!

Coaches: The Coaching Checklist on the next page offers many useful tips

"Story of self" agenda Total Time: 11:30–12:20 (50 min.)

1. Coach reviews norms, chooses timekeeper

11:30 – 11:35 am (5 min.)

- Stay on time;
- listen respectfully (i.e., be **present**);
- share opportunities for giving feedback;
- avoid evaluating the content of someone's experience; and
- note that the coach should tell his or her own story, not debrief.

2. Tell your story to one another and respond to each other

11:35 – 12:15 (40 min.)

Each person takes two minutes to tell his or her story. The group then has three minutes to offer feedback. Adhere to these limits! (The timekeeper should gently but firmly enforce.) This encourages focus and ensures that everyone has an opportunity to be heard.

Storyteller, frame your story in this way:

(Self) In two minutes, tell your "story of self" as it relates to the reason(s) you are leading your particular call to mission.

Finish your story with two sentences:

(Us) "I can connect to you because of our shared values of _____."

(Now) "Join me to do _____."

Elect the best storyteller in the group.

3. Debrief

12:15 – 12:20 (5 min.)

Did anyone learn something new about themselves?

Did anyone learn something new about others at the table?

(Record feedback from your group members on the next page.)

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Record feedback /
comments from your
group members here:

Coaching Checklist: Preparing to Coach Others on Their Stories

DO –

- ... say first what works in the story, focusing on specifics.
- ... identify the **challenge, choice** and **outcome** in the story.
- ... clarify choice points – the moments when one thing happened instead of another.
- ... Identify the emotions that facilitate action – especially looking for the **hope**.
- ... connect the dots in the narrative, helping to illuminate how someone got from “here” to “there”.
- ... look for themes.
- ... ask questions about the intended audience and the desired action or response.

DO NOT –

- ... offer vague or abstract “feel good” comments, such as, “You did a great job,” when you could instead offer specific concrete feedback about your reaction to the story and what worked.
- ... enter into debate or react to the content other than give feedback on the key points of **Public Narrative** or to get clarity about the storyteller’s intention in a key area.
- ... make value judgments about the storyteller’s voice or the validity of their lived experience. Remember that tellers are experimenting and need a safe space to try out new things.
- ... focus on this as a public speaking exercise, offering comments about “sounding confident,” “making eye contact” or needing “to say a few less ‘ums.’” Instead, spend your time on the structure of the storyteller’s **Public Narrative**.
- ... think about what you’re going to say about your own story while someone else is saying theirs.

Pay attention to each teller, and learn, through that process, how to adapt your own story.

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Coaching Your Group's "Story of Self"

As you listen to each group member's stories, taking notes will help you to provide good feedback and to remember details about individuals in your group later. Use the grid at left to track your group members' stories.

Each group member should take notes on one another.

Notes				
Outcome				
Choice				
Challenge				
Name				

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Public Narrative Workshop Credits

Acknowledgements

We welcome your suggestions for improving this guide further for future workshops. We also welcome you to use it and adapt it for your own workshops, subject to the restrictions below.

This workshop guide has been developed over the course of many workshops by Liz Pallatto, Joy Cushman, Kate Hilton, Jake Waxman, Devon Anderson, Rachel Anderson, Adam Yalowitz, Lenore Palladino, Jose Luis Morantes, Carlos Saavedra, Sean Thomas-Breitfeld, Shuya Ohno, Petra Falcon, Michele Rudy, Hope Wood, and many others.

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(continued on the following page)

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Personal Learning Action Plan

What you can do

1. How will you act on your call to leadership?

2. How will you engage others in acting together with you?



3. How will you translate your mission commitment into action?

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4. When can you next use this *Public Narrative* format to engage others in your work?

If you have any questions about these terms, please contact **marshall_ganz@harvard.edu** or Marshall Ganz, Hauser Center, Harvard Kennedy School, 79 JFK Street, Cambridge, MA 02138.

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Other Credits

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Closing Prayer

Leader: We are called to leadership in these ways –

(The people name their calls to leadership)

All: **With God's help, we honor each other's vocation.**

Leader: We will invite others to act together with us in these ways –

(The people voice their plans for engaging others)

All: **With God's help, we become a ministering community.**

Leader: We will translate our commitments into action in these ways –

(The people describe their commitment to action)

All: **With God's help, words inspire action.**

Leader: We will share the ministry of Public Narrative again –

(The people say when they will use Public Narrative again)

All: **With God's help, our story transforms the world.**

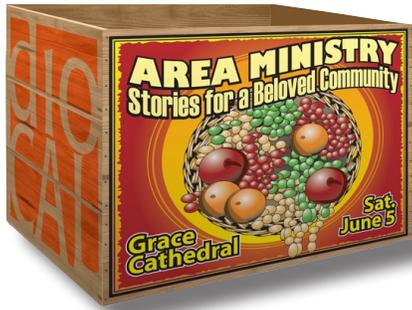
Collect: Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated to you; and then use us, we pray you, as you will, and always to your glory and the welfare of your people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **Amen.**



Notes

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Area Ministry: Stories for a Beloved Community

Saturday, June 5, 2010

Grace Cathedral

Schedule

Workshop activities will occur in Gresham Hall except where noted.

9:15 – 10:00	Registration	
10:00 – 10:15	Welcome	Bishop Marc
10:15 – 11:15	Public Narrative Overview	Liz Pallatto
11:15 – 11:30	Break	
11:30 a.m. – 12:20 p.m.	Public Narrative Practice: Small Group Work	Table Groups
12:20 – 12:40	Plenary Storytelling / Debrief and Wrap-up	Liz Pallatto
12:40 – 12:50	Next Steps: Public Narrative for Area Ministry	Canon Barlowe
12:50 – 1:00	Closing Prayer	
1:00 – 2:00	Lunch served on the plaza	
2:00 – 4:00	Ordinations (Nave)	

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For more resources about telling your story, visit –

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