



OFFICER TRAINING DEACONS & ELDERS

FALL 2019

Instructions for Creating Your Faith Story

“Listen to your life. See it for the fathomless mystery it is. In the boredom and pain of it, no less than in the excitement and gladness: touch, taste, smell your way to the holy and hidden heart of it, because in the last analysis all moments are key moments, and life itself is grace.” — Frederick Buechner, *Now and Then: A Memoir of Vocation*

“Before I can tell my life what I want to do with it, I must listen to my life telling me who I am.” — Parker J. Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation*

“The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.” — Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC*

Creating Your Faith Story

Each Deacon and Elder at First Pres is asked to create a “Faith Story” as part of the Officer Training experience. Part biography and part statement of faith, these faith stories are a way for new Deacons and Elders to introduce themselves to our church community. Each story is a way of sharing something fundamentally important to the faith, life experiences and values that you hold. Each story describes what you believe to be true about God’s presence in the world and the church, and what that presence calls you to believe and to do.

And each story also constitutes each new officer’s examination before the Session of the church, a prerequisite before ordination. New Officers will share their “Faith Story” at the Officer Retreat in Maumee Bay on November 8 & 9, 2019 or if necessary, at the Wednesday, December 11, 2019.

Each story is a unique window into the narrative of each person, and shares something of how each life intersects with the movement of God, the life of our community of faith, and the challenges of faithful living.

Faith stories are widely variable, and all styles are acceptable. Some writers recount meaningful life experiences that have shaped their vocations. Others tell the story of the shape of their relationship with God and the church. Some are statements about what one believes, “I believe ... “ Still others describe the many places one passes through on the way to this moment.

We suggest you gather your biography that you shared with the Nominating Committee, some photographs of key moments in your life and begin drafting a story. Please limit your story to no more than 350 words, so editing will be important.

A Process for Creating a Faith Story

One way to create this Faith Story is to divide your life into three equal chunks of time. Then recall the high points of your personal, family, work, spiritual and religious experience and other high points from your life and use them for framing your own Faith Story.

Topics such as:

- a. childhood,
- b. teen years,
- c. first paid work,
- d. high school days,
- e. college years,
- f. military service,
- g. significant relationships,
- h. entering the working world,
- i. marriage, partnerships, creating a family,
- j. the world of work,
- k. creating a home,
- l. family life,
- m. the birth of kids,
- n. world of work,
- o. moves from place to place,
- p. raising children,
- q. travel,
- r. personal writing or accomplishments,
- s. retirement,
- t. >>>???

Include the whole range of experiences – joy, sorrow, challenge, frustration, satisfaction, uncertainty, as well as formal religious experiences as baptisms, births, your profession of faith—Vacation Bible School, confirmation, first Communion, Sunday school, church camp, mission projects, volunteer work in the church or community, marriage, funerals, friendships, special events, high points in you life, family or work, athletic teams, publications, musical events, personal triumphs and breakthroughs, setbacks, and disappointments.

Especially try to put down things like your first date, first job, first “F,” first day at high school, first big high school assignment, the first concert you attended. First time you performed or sang in public.

Some people like to start at the beginning and work forward, toward today, the

present. Others just jot things down in the time chunks as they pop into mind and then order them with numbers. Do whatever works for you.

Work in different colors of marker, one color for religious events, one color for everything else, other colors for other things. Have fun!

“Each time a door closes, the rest of the world opens up.”

— Parker J. Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice*

Creating Your Faith Story Worksheet

First Third of Your Life....	Second Third of Your Life....	The Third Third of Your Life....