

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:18-20

## Bishop Curry’s Challenge

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry has presented a [challenge](#) to all Episcopalians to “proclaim with our words and our lives the loving, liberating, and life-giving good news of Christ.”

One way to proclaim the Good News of Christ is by telling our own story in our own words, but that can be intimidating. Most of us would rather share stories about our favorite restaurant, movie, book, sports team, or travel destination than to discuss our faith. As Christian formation leaders, how do we encourage and support Presiding Bishop Curry’s goal within our churches? What steps are needed to equip and empower adults for these conversations?

While there are many ways to express our faith journeys, sometimes adults need some guidelines to help them do this. There are four parts to this expression:

- Explore our faith journeys, taking note of where God is in our daily lives.
- Connect our personal stories to scripture and our faith tradition through a process of theological reflection
- Develop active listening skills to recognize people in our lives who would benefit from hearing about our faith journeys and to identify cues about the best ways to connect and share with those people (as Paul describes in [1 Corinthians 9:19-23](#))
- Identify ways to share our stories with others (in conversation, in writing, through images, etc.)

Clearly, the process takes time. For many, understanding where God is in their daily lives can be the most challenging step. In this article, we’ll focus on exploring our faith journeys.

## Exploring Our Faith Journeys

Our faith journey—how we view our lives through a lens of faith and where we see God at work in our lives—is a story unique to each individual and constantly being written. The Episcopal Church’s Evangelism Charter asks us to see our lives as a part of God’s greater story. Most people have not really looked at their faith journey as a big picture. They may not see a journey at all, as they have been in church since the day they were born, or they may think their journeys are too filled with potholes and detours to show a walk with God. Helping everyone to see their faith story as part of the larger story of God working in the world allows people the freedom to explore what God has done, is doing and will do in their lives.

Paul tells us that God has equipped each of us with spiritual gifts to share with the world ([1 Corinthians 12](#)). I am convinced that God has also endowed each of us with stories of faith that the world needs to hear—our piece of God’s Truth. These are stories that we are uniquely qualified to share based on the trajectory of our faith journey. Each person’s unique perspective contributes depth, nuance, color and clarity to our vision of God’s kingdom.

Because adults, like all people, learn in different ways, be sure to include a variety of projects and ways for them to explore their faith journey stories, both alone and in community. Be mindful that this process is not a two hour or even one-day event. These activities would work best over a 4 to 6 week period, where relationships and communication can develop on a deeper level.

## Exploring Our Stories

### 1. Chart Life and Faith Journey Timelines

This works well for those who like to see things chronologically or who love visual representations.

Draw a timeline on an 8-1/2”x14” piece of paper (or poster paper), from birth to the present, with decades indicated (age 10, age 20, etc.). On the top of the timeline, mark life milestones, both positive and negative. Examples might include graduations, marriage, the birth of children, relocations and career changes, deaths, and divorces.

On the bottom of the timeline, mark milestones in his/her relationship with God and Christ.

Examples might include outward events such as baptism, confirmation, but also inward moments when God felt very present or absent, times of palpable grace and times of doubt.

Allocate time for each person to review their timeline. What do they notice? Are there larger patterns? Were there any surprises? What does this timeline show them about God and their journey of faith?

Their next step will be to write a 'prose' version of what they learned in this visual representation.

## **2. Write in a Journal or Discuss with a Spiritual Friend**

Writing about the large and small epiphanies that appear on our timelines helps us to reflect on our life's journey. For people who don't like to write, discussing these epiphanies with someone who is committed to listening reflectively without judgment or interpretation can help with this process.

Here are some questions that can help people get started with their exploration:

- Who are the people who guided your faith journey? How did they do that?
- Describe some defining moments of your faith journey? What made them significant?
- How has your faith been reflected in your work, your hobbies, your values, your choices, and your priorities at various times in your life?
- In what ways has your faith guided and supported you over your lifetime? How has your church/faith community guided and supported you?

At the end of the process, the goal is to have a few examples of God in action, in ways that are discernable and can be shared with others

## **3. Conversation**

At this stage, several faith stories may have emerged. To help identify the most significant stories, and to look for emerging themes, invite parishioners to meet in pairs to share their stories. After attentive listening, ask each person to describe the times when they felt the other person showed the most energy as well as any themes that appeared.

#### 4. License Plate or Bumper Sticker

Once each parishioner has had an opportunity to identify some recurring themes, invite them to sum up one or more themes by envisioning them on a vanity license plate or bumper sticker. They will have one license plate or bumper sticker for each theme. Examples might include:

- Fear Not
- God is Love
- Feed My Sheep
- Give Thanks
- Abundant Grace

Encourage them to share with others in the group a brief example of how this “bumper sticker” is reflected in their faith story.

#### 5. Summary

Ask parishioners to summarize their key themes and the faith stories that illustrate them. Remind them that faith journeys don't ever end and that their story will continue to grow and change. Parishioners who might still be stuck on seeing their journey should be encouraged to share what they can. Encourage everyone to continue to pray about their narrative, so that in telling and retelling their faith journey, they will encourage others to search for and share their own story of God at work in their life.

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