



How to Use *Horizons Magazine*

WHY THIS ISSUE IS IMPORTANT

Did you know that there is a Hebrew scripture counterpart to the cherished old hymn, “I Love to Tell the Story”? Look at Psalm 78:1–4, and you’ll find the psalmist eloquently declaring the role of story as testimony “to the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done” (NRSV). Our foundational story, the message of the Bible—our primary source for life-in-Christ formation—tells us over and over again that just as we are cherished and offered grace-full life by the loving, triune, relational God, so are we to share that story in all our relationships with God’s creation.

Each theme article in this issue looks at “story” in a different context—scripture that shapes us; musical melodies and lyrics with formational power; an instrument of justice in nations, churches and family homes; and a communal experience mediator. We’re also reminded of the stories of exploitation and pain we’d rather not hear, but to which our faith opens our ears and calls us to respond. Part of our calling as Presbyterian Women is to continually seek our roles in God’s story, and to witness to the reality of that story through our words and actions. What story is your life telling?

WAYS TO USE THIS ISSUE

Share with church school teachers, public and private school teachers, pastors and anyone else you know whose work revolves around storytelling in some form or fashion.

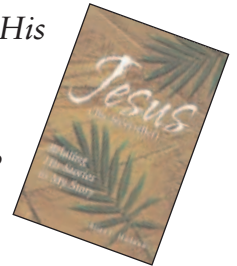
- 🔥 Invite a professional storyteller to come to your circle, church school class or the youth group. Public libraries may be able to connect you with storytellers, or if you live near a college or university, their English and drama departments are good contact sources.
- 🔥 At session or church committee meetings, ask the moderator to include a brief “storytelling time” as an opening or community-building activity, using an item of business on the agenda to guide the choice of topic. For example, in a Christian Education Committee meeting, each person briefly might share a story of a church-related learning event or activity that facilitated memorable spiritual growth or reflection.
- 🔥 Use the theme articles in this issue as discussion curriculum for a church school class or any other adult study group in the church. Simply read the magazine, and invite the group to talk about what surprised, educated, disappointed or inspired them. Include time for questions. Use one or two articles a week and rotate leadership among participants, or offer to serve as facilitator yourself.
- 🔥 Pair a young person with an older adult in your congregation, and ask them to trade stories. If you want to get a real “living history” of your congregation (not just the facts of pastorates, facility issues and mission activities), ask the young people to use whatever technology is available to them to interview long-time members and create a multimedia presentation—something along the lines of “This Is Our Story.” Present the project to the entire congregation, preferably over a meal and fellowship gathering. After the multimedia presentation, invite those present to share their own stories, either in a large group setting or around each table.

- Consider adding a story time to your study of *For Everything, A Season: A Study of the Liturgical Calendar*. Following the closing prayer for each lesson on a season of the liturgical year, ask each participant to tell a story, no more than one minute each, of a special memory in their lives that is connected to the particular season you've just studied.
- Ask each person in your group (circle, church school class, youth gathering, etc.) to bring a favorite childhood storybook to your next gathering and share its meaning in their lives. If the physical resource isn't available, a title and description work fine.
- Use these additional resources:

Dancing with Words: Storytelling as Legacy, Culture, and Faith
By Ray Buckley
Nashville, Tenn.: Discipleship Resources, 2003
ISBN: 0881774073*



Jesus The Storyteller: Relating His Stories to My Story
By Brian L. Harbour
Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys, 1999
ISBN: 1573122513*



FOCUSING ON THE ISSUES

“A God of Story” by Rebecca Irwin-Diehl

- Think of the differences that position and perspective can make in our recall of stories and events; in your circle, family or congregation, how do different people recount the same story?
- The author says, “There is no better time of year to gain a new appreciation for the power of story. Advent and Christmas are seasons for storytelling . . .” In your circle, church school class, or other group, discuss how, in recounting Jesus’ birth, you might tell Mary’s story, Joseph’s, the innkeeper’s or the shepherds’.
- Is there a story from the life of your congregation, circle or PW that when mentioned, seems to automatically evoke community and remembrance? For instance, “Margaret was the one who always brought Grandy’s dinner rolls to our annual Bible study introduction supper.”

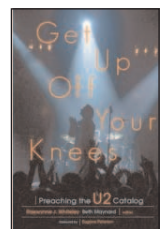
“With Heart and Soul and Voice” by Kathleen Robertson King

- How do you understand “music as spiritual practice”? If you’ve never considered music as life-and-faith-forming outside the context of congregational or “churchy” use, how does this article help you see music in a different light?
- Either for an individual meditation exercise or for discussion in your circle, church school class or other group, think about what songs and/or styles of music serve as bridges connecting your life’s story with God’s story.
- For further discussion or study, consider these additional resources:

White Soul: Country Music, the Church, and Working Americans
By Tex Sample
Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1996
ISBN: 0687032938*



Get Up Off Your Knees: Preaching the U2 Catalog
Edited by Beth Maynard
Boston: Cowley Publications, 2003
ISBN: 1561012238*



“Truth-Telling in the Aftermath of Atrocity” by Molly Graver

- Have you yourself, or persons you know, suffered deep wrongs or injustices (like those described in this article) that might have been or were helped toward healing by truth-telling? Are these stories you would feel comfortable sharing with the group? shared with others, and if so, in what ways?
- While this article addresses truth-telling as a healing instrument in national or political situations, have there been instances in your family, employment or even church setting where the opportunity for a similar process might be helpful in moving toward some resolution or even reconciliation? What would such a process look like in a Presbyterian/Reformed context?

“Telling Stories Right” by Dee Dee Risher

- Dee Dee Risher says that the depictions of Jesus she saw in her childhood were less than historically or culturally accurate. What images of Christ, and of other biblical characters or Bible stories, do you recall from your own earlier years? Have your mental images changed over time? If so, in what ways?
- Do you look for intentionally diverse depictions of people and their circumstances in books and resources you give your children or grandchildren? What about television shows you or family members watch—are such considerations as diversity in racial, socioeconomic circumstances and religious identification apparent?
- Does your congregation, through its Christian Education Committee and session, ensure that all materials used, particularly children’s and youth curricula, reflect the diversity of God’s creation? If you don’t know, feel free to ask!
- There are several children’s books (for all ages!) that show special sensitivity to God’s creation of different shades of skin hue in people and various experiences of scripture:

People

Written and illustrated by
Peter Spier
New York: Doubleday, 1988
ISBN: 038524469X*

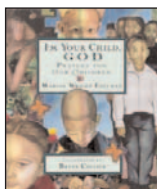


Psalm Twenty-Three

by Tim Ladwig
New York: African American Family Press,
1993
ISBN: 1569770255*

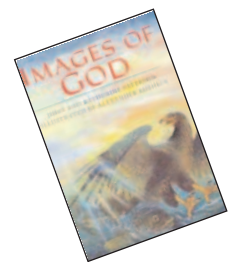
I'm Your Child, God: Prayers for Our Children

By Marian Wright Edelman,
illustrated by Bryan Collier
New York: Hyperion, 2002
ISBN: 0786805978*



Images of God

by John and Katherine
Paterson, illustrated
by Alexander Koshkin
New York: Clarion, 1998
ISBN 039570734X*



- Does the stained glass or other artwork in your church facility reflect a particular cultural aesthetic, or is there diversity in imagery?
- If you attend General Assembly in Birmingham, Alabama in June 2006, or the next time you're in Birmingham, be sure to visit Sixteenth Street Baptist Church and view “The Wales Window of Alabama” in the balcony. This is the stained glass depiction of a black Jesus created by artist John Petts, donated through contributions of the children and business community of Cardiff, Wales. The window replaced one of those destroyed in September 1963, when four young black girls were killed in a bomb blast motivated by racial hatred.

- See these Web sites for a fascinating account of the Jesus 2000 contest, sponsored by the National Catholic Reporter, and the winning entry, “Jesus of the People.”
- “How Jesus 2000 Grew Wings, Keeps on Flying” by former editor of National Catholic Reporter Michael Farrell is the story of the Jesus 2000 Contest and thought-provoking reflections on art and meaning.
www.natcath.com/NCR_Online/archives/051200/051200i.htm
- View the winning entry in the Jesus 2000 Contest, artist Janet McKenzie’s “Jesus of the People.”
www.bridgebuilding.com/narr/jmjep.html

“Love in Deed” by Susan Jackson Dowd

- Does your circle or congregation participate in the Fellowship of the Least Coin Offering? If not, how can you help educate others and facilitate participation?
- In our North American society, where the philosophy of “bigger is better” often prevails, what does it mean to deliberately employ a means of contribution like a “least coin”? Should the coin be nickels, dimes—or even quarters—for those able to afford it, or should it remain pennies, regardless of a person’s material wealth? Why? Asking these questions at your next circle meeting or group gathering will likely elicit some surprising answers!

“Untold Stories” by Megan Quitkin

- What local child- or youth-serving organizations in your community need to read this article? Do you have social workers in your congregation who have contacts with these agencies? If so, you may ask these professionals to assist in identifying agencies that would benefit from this article. Your circle, PW, session or congregation may wish to order extra copies of this issue to share the article with selected organizations.
- Both female and male children can be vulnerable to sexual exploitation. As noted in the article, “. . . adolescents require at least one positive adult role model with whom they can foster a caring, meaningful relationship.” The Search Institute offers resources and guidance for individuals, parents and families, congregations, schools and communities in fostering relationships with children and youth.
www.search-institute.org
- Consider joining the Presbyterian Child Advocacy Network (PCAN).
www.pcusa.org/phewa/pcan

“Tell Me a Story!” by Ellen Birkett Morris

- Check your church library, presbytery resource center or bookstore for the series, *The Storyteller’s Companion to the Bible*, from Abingdon Press*. The publisher says of this multi-volume resource, “The goal is to provide readers with insights into the biblical story and suggestions on how it might be retold for audiences today.” Use the books for your next Bible study meeting to give new life to familiar stories. Or use them for personal reading to gain a new perspective.

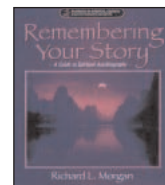
- Consider these resources for guidance in telling your own story (for yourself or others):

Story Circle Network

This is “a national not-for-profit membership organization made up of women who want to explore their lives and their souls by exploring their personal stories.”
www.storycircle.org

Remembering Your Story: A Guide to Spiritual Autobiography

By Richard L. Morgan
 Nashville, Tenn.: Upper Room, 1996
 ISBN: 0835807819*



Memoirs of the Soul: Writing Your Spiritual Autobiography

By Nan Phifer
 Cincinnati, Oh.: Walking Stick, 2002
 ISBN: 1582970807*



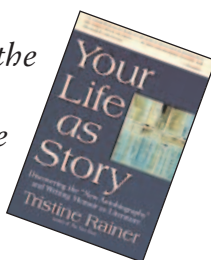
Writing from Life: Telling Your Soul's Story

By Susan Wittig Albert
 New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 1996
 ISBN: 0874778484*



Your Life as Story: Discovering the "New Autobiography" and Writing Memoir as Literature

By Tristine Rainer
 New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 1998
 ISBN: 0874779227*



Journaling: A Spirit Journey

By Anne Broyles
 Nashville, Tenn.: Upper Room, 1995
 ISBN: 0835805824*

Life's Companion: Journal Writing as a Spiritual Quest

By Christina Baldwin
 New York: Bantam, 1991
 ISBN: 0553352024*

Reclaiming Your Story: Family History and Spiritual Growth

By Merle R. Jordan
 Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1999
 ISBN: 0664256414*



BIBLE STUDY RESOURCES

“Christmas” by Laura Mariko Cheifetz

- Instead of a “traditional” gift, honor your loved ones and friends through donations to their favorite charities, worthy causes or faith communities. Consider honoring at least one PW in your life with a life membership, extra mission giving or a contribution to the Widening the Circle Fund (see p. 35 of the September/October 2005 Horizons for more information on this fund and how to contribute).
- In your circle or other group, discuss your childhood memories of family Christmas customs, and share your current practices for the season. Do you observe the twelve days of Christmas? What would you like to change or do differently? Are there traditions from your youth that you would like to restart?
- See if your PW or congregation will sponsor a truly alternative gift market. Offer artisans’ gifts from fair trade organizations such as Ten Thousand Villages (www.tenthousandvillages.com, 717/859-8100) or SERRV (www.serrv.org, 800/422-5915). Or consider promoting alternative gift-giving through Heifer International (www.heifer.org, 800/422-0474) or other similar self-development organizations.

- Use the resource *Whose Birthday Is It, Anyway?: Ideas for a Christ-Centered Holiday* from *Alternatives for Simple Living* (see www.SimpleLiving.org or call 800/821-6153). There is a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)-specific version available.

“Epiphany” by *Laura Taylor de Palomino*

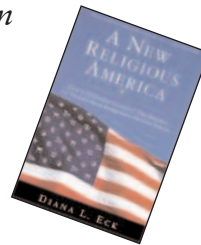
- As you anticipate celebrating Epiphany, in what concrete ways can you, your family, and your congregation share the hospitable love of “the Light of the world”—Christ—with those who most need it?
- Does your family have any stories of memorable immigrant hospitality or inhospitality being received or given? Remember that borders and barriers come in many forms.
- Call your presbytery resource center to check out a copy of the DVD *Dying to Get In: Undocumented Immigration at the U.S./Mexican Border*. See www.bretttolley.com for ordering information on this informative and thoughtful new resource which may provoke deep discussion in any group about the meaning of true hospitality).

- *A New Religious America: How a “Christian Country” Has Become the World’s Most Religiously Diverse Nation*

By Diana L. Eck

New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001

ISBN: 0060621591*



This book is very helpful in understanding the current religious landscape in the United States.

*Recommended resources are available through several channels—purchase at your local bookstore or click on link to order online; some may be available through your presbytery resource center.