

FORMULATING YOUR STORY



For our advocacy to be effective, we must be able to communicate why we care about an issue and what we want to change. Our position on an issue and our vision for change are shaped by our faith and our lived experiences.

Your experience – your story – is unique and powerful.

Today, policies often are debated as abstract concepts detached from their real impacts on God's people and God's planet. Rather than debating numbers and statistics, we can use our stories to demonstrate how these policies will affect our lives and our communities. And we can share a concrete vision for change.

Jesus demonstrated the power of story through his use of parables. Likewise, sharing our stories can help avoid the same contentious debates and instead invite others to consider a new perspective.

Effective advocacy is rooted in what we know best: our faith, our stories, and our hope for a better future.

Here are some tips for preparing and sharing your story:

- **Reflect:** Reflect on what experiences have shaped you and why you have been called to respond in this moment. Think about how your experiences connect with others in your community and point to systemic patterns of injustice.
- **Set a goal:** What do you hope will be accomplished by telling your story?
- **Define your audience:** Plan how to use your story. Whether in a Letter to the Editor, writing directly to a decision maker, or building a local movement - your story can be used in a variety of ways as an advocate.
- **Be authentic:** Speak from your heart. Personalize your message by using 'I' statements (I feel, I think, I believe etc.).
- **Share inspiration:** Include elements that have inspired you and where those elements come from – family, community, faith, etc. What Christian values or United Methodist social teachings might you share?
- **Challenge others:** How does your story ask the audience to reconsider their ideas, opinions or beliefs?
- **Stay focused:** Keep your story focused and concise.
- **Practice, Practice, Practice:** Writing your story down, word for word, can be a helpful aid and a comfort if nerves set in. Rehearsing your story out loud helps you gauge timing and clarify your message.