

Faith Formation through Storytelling By and For All Ages

UUA General Assembly 2016

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Overview of Workshop

- Why story for faith development
- Techniques for a *good* telling
- ***Children and youth make props with Gail***
- Criteria for choosing stories
- Respectful cross cultural storytelling
- Techniques for working with all ages
- ***Telling *The Sun Goddess of the Heavens* together!***
- Further resources



Rustle, Rustle, Rustle

By Kristin Maier

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Available in *A Good Telling: Bringing Worship to Life with Story* at UUA Bookstore

Rustle, Rustle, Rustle

Shrew



Photo: Jamie McCarthy

Sandhill Crane





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Story Reaches All Ages/Experiences

Who are “we” as a multigenerational community?

- We have a wide span of development:
neurologically, cognitively, socially
- This combines with broad theological diversity
- Also, ethnicity/race, gender & gender identity, class, sexual orientation, physical ability, neurodiversity, etc.

Story effectively bridges developmental/social differences

- Our brains are hard wired for storytelling
- Story is accessible from a very young age

Story and Faith Formation

Faith formation is increasingly *constructive* as we develop

- Being “instructed” about proper beliefs is less and less effective as we mature.

Instead, story invites the listener into a whole experience

- The (vicarious) lived experience allows each listener to make meaning that is authentic for them.

Storytelling builds multigenerational community

- Creates a shared community experience of living in the same story
- Relationship built between teller and each listener.



The Keeper of the Rain

By Kristin Maier

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Available from *A Good Telling: Bringing Worship to Life with Story*

Bringing Stories to Life – The Basics

- Find your “naturally powerful voice”
 - Neither too weak nor overwhelming for the story
- Use a dynamic voice
 - Able to increase and decrease volume for dramatic effect
- Use a good tempo
 - Use an “elastic tempo” – vary your tempo to fit with what is happening in the story
- Develop your characters
 - Make subtle changes in voice, posture, emotional tone to signal different characters and give them life

Using Movement to Enhance a Story

Disembodied

Poor posture
Lacking eye contact
No change in demeanor or posture for different characters or dramatic moments
No movement at all

Embodied

Good posture
Good eye contact
Emphasizes key story elements through movement
Uses subtle changes in posture, stance, and movement to portray various characters
Movement fits the tone and action of the story

Distracting

Movement detracts from story
Motion doesn't fit or is disproportionate to the tone or action in the story
Too much motion makes it hard to focus on the core of the story
Delicate moments in the story are lost

Inviting Emotions from your Listeners

Flat Telling

No changes in facial expression

No changes in voice volume, intensity

No pause before or after emotional content

No movement that conveys emotions

Inviting the *Listener to Feel*

Subtle changes of voice, facial expression and body language

Reveal the emotional responses taking place *inside* of the characters – doesn't overshoot

Leave time/silence for listeners to absorb emotional content

Over Emoting

The emotional display is distracting from the story

Emotional reaction comes across as out of proportion to the story

Over-emoting takes any interpretive work away from the listener

Listener is left feeling they are being told what to feel

An Invitation for kids

Help make props for our play – “The Sun Goddess of the Heavens” - a giant mirror, a bonfire, and more!

(Adults will explore how to select great stories, cross cultural considerations, and tips for working with all ages.)

Criteria for Selecting Stories

Seek out stories that are:

- Engaging to you!
- Emotionally rich
- Allow the listener to enter an *experience*
 - A story we can see, hear, touch, watch move
- Hold something unexpected that needs resolution
- Something for everyone to chew on – not playing to just one age
- Explore our shared values
 - Stories that resonate with our principles
 - the holy within, between and around us
 - how we are to be together on this planet

Beware of Unintended Messages

- Bad Guys versus Good Guys
- Uncritical Use of Violence
- Wealth as the End Goal
- External Beauty as a Measure of Goodness
- Black/White, Bad/Good Imagery
- Unnecessary gendering

Offering Cross Cultural Stories

- Can teach respect for other cultures
- Can incorporate and lift up the stories beyond the dominant culture.
- Can reflect and celebrate the cultures of children and adults in our congregation.
- If lacking sensitivity, respect and awareness, can be hurtful and alienating to real people.
- Can reinforce negative or inaccurate beliefs or assumptions held by the dominant culture.

Avoiding Cultural Misappropriation

Cultural misappropriation: the borrowing of cultural elements in ways that are disrespectful, dismissive, and even damaging to the culture from which they originated.

Ways to avoid misappropriation:

- Do your homework (about story, history, current context)
- Be reflective about your own purposes
- Invite others to tell the story when appropriate
- Prepare the story thoroughly
- Help guide congregation's understanding (contextualize in respectful way)
- Speak with humility, respect, and sensitivity
- Be Open to Feedback and Learning

Goals and Methods for Working with All Ages

- Enlist a team of adults
- Think through logistics from a kid perspective
- Hold positive and high expectations
- Facilitate and encourage safe fun
 - An opportunity for boundaried play
- Remember: process is more important than product!



The Sun Goddess of the Heavens

Adapted by Kristin Maier

© 2013, Kristin Maier

Available in *A Good Telling: Bringing Worship to Life with Story*

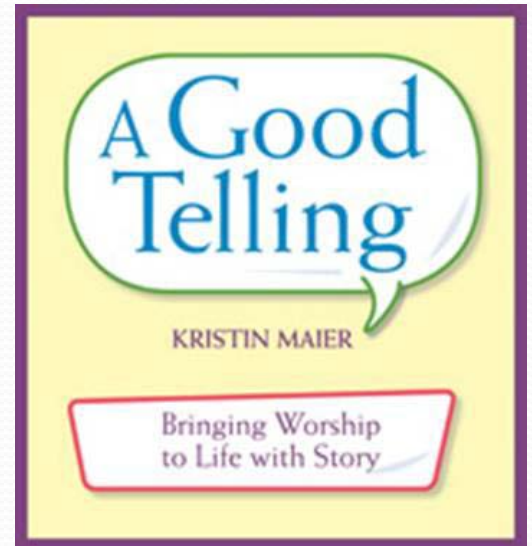
For more about Storytelling in Worship

*A Good Telling:
Bringing Worship to Life with Story*

By Kristin Maier

Available through InSpirit, the UUA Bookstore

Video Demonstrations at www.KristinMaier.com

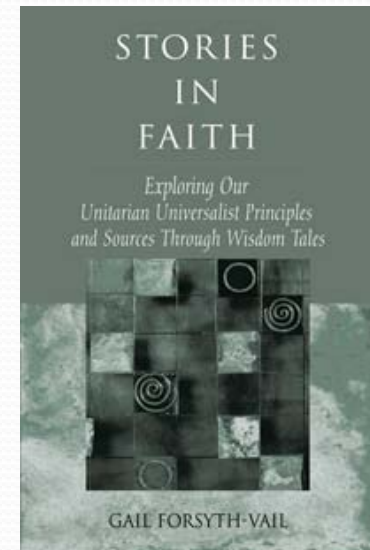


More Stories for Telling

*Stories in Faith:
Exploring Our UU Principles and
Sources Through Wisdom Tales*

By Gail Forsyth-Vail

Available through InSpirit, the UUA Bookstore

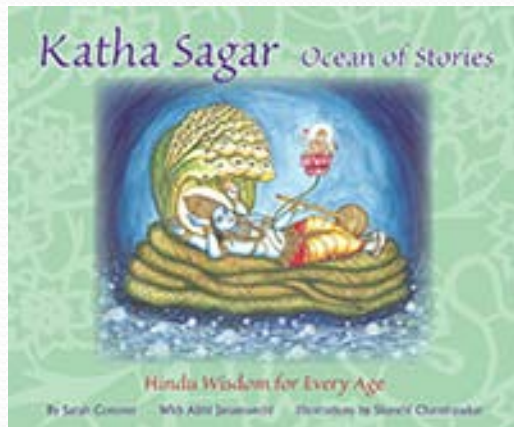


New Resources

Ancient Stories for Modern Times

By Faye Mogensen

A collection of 50 tales from around the world with reflection questions and story maps.



Katha Sagar: Ocean of Stories

By Sarah Conover and Abhi Janamanchi

A collection of stories from Hindu epics, myths, and folk traditions across India.

Additional Resources

Tapestry of Faith searchable database of stories:

<http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/search>

*Many other books of stories at the UUA's InSpirit bookstore: <http://www.uuabookstore.org/>
(Including Erika Hewitt's *Story, Song and Spirit* and Sarah Conover's series of stories from several cultures and traditions.)*

Available through InSpirit, the UUA Bookstore