

Rhythms of Grace Through Storytelling

“Our individual stories are part of the public history of God’s grace.” Margie Reitsma

Some basic elements of a good story

Theme

There must be a point to the story. It doesn’t need to be “preachy” but there should be an underlying message or theme.

Heart

The message of the story should come from your heart. It must be important to **you** first, before you can get anyone else to care about it.

Plot

It must be a story, not a mere recitation of events. The plot of a story is the sequence of events that shape the broader narrative, with the events causing or affecting each other.

Focus

Use details to set the scene or to shape characters. However, don’t get so bogged down in details that you lose the focus of the story.

Self-disclosure

If it’s your personal story, put yourself into the story. This makes you human, easier to relate to and may even add some humor.

Show, don’t tell

You can use props or gestures. Find ways to tap into several senses to round out the picture. Be expressive in your voice and facial expression. Dramatic pauses work well in some stories as well.

About the workshop leader:

William (Bill) Wildey, spent 31 years on the staff of Church World Service. During his tenure at CWS, Bill traveled to many countries around the world. It is through his travels, the people he met, and the work that he did, that he learned the true power of stories. He has taught workshops on effective public speaking, storytelling, major gift fundraising, and has hosted and been a guest on television and radio programs through the years.

He worked with singer/songwriter and master storyteller, Harry Chapin for several years. Throughout his career, he has worked with various other performers, including Pete Seeger, Lou Rawls, Noel Paul Stookey (Peter, Paul, and Mary), and others.

Following his retirement from CWS, Bill served as Interim Pastor at Zion United Church of Christ in South Bend, IN before he and his wife, Maureen, moved to Ponte Vedra. He now serves as the Adult Ministry Director at Palms Presbyterian Church in Jacksonville Beach, Florida.

Bill can be reached by email at bill.wildey@palmschurch.org