

Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?

I will, with God's help. Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you see evil being done, rebuke it for the glory of the Lord and the comfort of the afflicted?

When someone asks you to do something, will you do it as if you were doing it for the Lord?

and receive the Holy Communion with a conscience that is clear from any accusation of sin?

Will you claim the Lord's forgiveness for your sins and the forgiveness of others?

Will you proclaim the Good News of God in Christ?

Will you, with God's help, seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

I will, with God's help. Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

I will, with God's help. Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being? I will, with God's help.

Pro/Claim

Engaging  the Baptismal Covenant

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Introduction

*“So here’s what I want you to do. When you gather for worship, each one of you be prepared with something that will be useful for all: Sing a hymn, teach a lesson, **tell a story**, lead a prayer, provide an insight.”*

— 1 Corinthians 14:26, *The Message*

From the time when Christians gathered in homes in first century Mediterranean cities like Corinth to the present day, our faith has been passed on through the medium of story. It’s the way we communicate the extraordinary grace of Christian life in ordinary language. Through story we recollect the moments of sacred insight, identify the metaphors that disclose deeper truths, and shape the narratives that point us toward the already and always-coming kingdom of God.

This five-session curriculum, especially designed for use in group settings, uses a method of storytelling known as Public Narrative to make the extraordinary—in this case, the radical promises Episcopalians make at baptism—accessible in ordinary language. And more than just accessible, it makes our stories invitational: when we learn to speak authentically about our baptismal identity, we become natural evangelists. The witness of our lives proclaims the Good News of God in Christ.

The deceptively simple structure of Public Narrative storytelling—designed for community organizing—gives anyone the tools to craft invitational stories that invite transformation. As people grow in comfort telling their stories, please encourage them to record and upload them to YouTube. The video-making process challenges people to share their stories and inspires others to do the same. Emailing josephm@diocal.org will allow the Diocese of California to build the video library for this curriculum.

The learning resources contained herein include a leader’s guide, sample lesson plans, daily prayer practices to deepen our understanding of baptism, and links to a rich library of audiovisual resources that support teachers and learners. Open the “story-book” ... and proclaim the good news that is yours to tell!

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Nobody who has ever told or heard a story should be shy about leading Pro/Claim sessions. Guidelines for group leaders are integrated throughout the provided text, and anyone experienced in adult education or group facilitation will find these sessions easy to lead.

Flexibility and openness is a foundational principle of small group leadership. Adults bring their own rich experience to everything they learn, and Pro/Claim is designed to build upon participants' own life stories and perspectives. Because of this, facilitators should be prepared to adapt timing and content according to the rhythms of their particular group.

It is also the responsibility of the group leader to —

- **Pray for participants** before, during and after each session.
- Provide for a **hospitable meeting space**, which includes adequate lighting and comfortable chairs, a writing surface, and appropriate audiovisual resources.
- Introduce **the agenda and timing** for each session, giving people permission for self-care.
- Make sure that **introductions are made** (and made again if new people enter the group after the first session) and make name tags available in order to relieve the anxiety of having to remember unfamiliar names and faces.
- Establish appropriate **norms for group life** and review these as needed, especially when new participants enter the group.

SAMPLE GROUP NORMS

- Extend and receive welcome.
- Be present as fully as possible.
- What is offered in the circle is by invitation, not demand.
- Speak your truth in ways that respect other people's truth.
- No fixing, no saving, no advising, and no setting each other straight.
- Learn to respond to others with honest, open questions instead of counsel or corrections.
- When the going gets rough, turn to wonder.
- Attend to your own inner teacher.
- Trust and learn from the silence.
- Observe deep confidentiality.
- Know that it's possible to leave the circle with whatever it was that you needed when you arrived.

The following is an outline for a typical 75-minute session—

- 10 Welcome and introductions**
- 5 Opening prayers and focus Scripture**
Prayers pp.11–13, Scripture and baptismal promises pp. 9–10
- 10 Introduce and play Pro/Claim video(s)**
Located online at www.diocal.org/proclaim
- 10 Debrief video(s)**
See sample debrief questions below.
- 10 Introduce Public Narrative theme(s)**
Leaders should read pp. 14–19 in advance.
- 15 Practice storytelling in groups of two or three**
Allocate time for each group member to both tell and hear stories.
- 5 Volunteer storyteller**
Invite someone to offer their practiced story to the whole group.
- 5 Housekeeping**
Remind people of daily prayer practices pp. 11–13, and of upcoming session dates and times
- 5 Closing prayers**

Leaders are encouraged to adapt timing and content according to the needs of their group. This may include extending the introductory activities, using more than one video, or adapting the prayers for length, time of day, or group-specific preferences.

Audiovisual support for each session (the Pro/Claim videos) can be found at www.diocal.org/proclaim. Leaders may choose to show one video (per the schedule outlined above), or more if time and interest permit. The purpose of the audiovisual support is to provide good—but not perfect—examples of baptismally-based Public Narrative. Participants should be invited to constructively engage the video content through questions like—

- What captured your attention in this story?
- When did you hear the storyteller speaking personally?
- When did you hear the storyteller speaking about a value we all share?
- When did you hear the storyteller make an invitation?
- How might you tell a story like this?

Public Narrative teaching materials can be found on pages 15–20. Leaders are encouraged to familiarize themselves with these materials and reference them briefly in each session (perhaps emphasizing a different aspect in each session).

Daily prayer practices are available on pages 12–14. They can be used at home by individual participants either to deepen reflection on the previous session's scripture and baptismal promise, or anticipate the next session's. The scripture and baptismal promises for each session (and hence the daily prayers) can be found on pages 9–11.

Session Structure

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

It is appropriate for the leader to offer welcome, describe the goals and timing of the session, and—if time permits—engage in some introductory activities. Introductions will need to be repeated if new people join the group after the first session.

OPENING PRAYERS

Leader: Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

People: And blessed be God's kingdom, now and for ever. Amen.

Leader: Bless the Lord who forgives all our sins;

People: God's mercy endures forever.

Leader: There is one Body and one Spirit;

People: There is one hope in God's call to us;

Leader: One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism;

People: One God and Father of all.

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank you that by water and the Holy Spirit you have bestowed upon we your servants the forgiveness of sin, and have raised us to the new life of grace. Sustain us, O Lord, in your Holy Spirit. Give us an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works. Amen.

READ SCRIPTURE APPOINTED FOR THE SESSION

PROMPT

It may be appropriate for the leader to invite a participant to read the scripture appointed for the session, which can be found on pp. 9–11.

INTRODUCE BAPTISMAL COMMITMENT OF THE SESSION

PROMPT

Leader indicates which baptismal commitment (found on pp. 9–11) will be the basis for storytelling in this session, and that the video(s) to follow will be based on that commitment.

PLAY VIDEO(S) CORRESPONDING TO BAPTISMAL COMMITMENT

PROMPT

There may be more than one video corresponding to the baptismal commitment for the session. Leader should feel free to choose the one that best suits their community, or play more than one if time permits.

INVITE COMMENTARY ON VIDEOS

PROMPT

Leader may offer an open-ended “what did you think” question, or—after the first session—ask participants how well they think the video reflected the Public Narrative “Self-Us-Now” structure, or how it illustrated the baptismal promise.

INTRODUCE PUBLIC NARRATIVE THEME(S)

PROMPT

Participants should be encouraged to read the entire Public Narrative Learner’s Guide (pp. 15–20) between sessions. Leader may choose to introduce one theme (for example, the ‘self-us-now’ structure or the ‘challenge-choice-outcome’ narrative elements) to teach. In the first session especially, it may be appropriate to direct participant attention to the worksheet on p. 19.

PRACTICE STORYTELLING IN GROUPS OF TWOS AND THREES

PROMPT

Leader invites participants to listen to each others’ stories and coach each other according to the Public Narrative method.

VOLUNTEER STORYTELLER

PROMPT

Time permitting, the leader may invite one or more participants to tell their practiced story to the whole group.

HOUSEKEEPING

PROMPT

Leader reminds participants that the daily Morning and Evening Practices are available for their use between sessions, and reminds them of the date, time and location of upcoming sessions.

CLOSING PRAYERS

PROMPT

This brief prayer service incorporates the Apostles' Creed—the historic baptismal creed—and elements of Compline to close the session. Leader may choose other prayers appropriate to the time of day or needs of the group.

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth;
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Pray: Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake. Amen.

Guide us waking, O Lord, and guard us sleeping; that awake we may watch with Christ, and asleep we may rest in peace.

Lord, you now have set your servant free to go in peace as you have promised;
For these eyes of mine have seen the Savior, whom you have prepared for all the world to see:
A Light to enlighten the nations, and the glory of your people Israel.
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

Guide us waking, O Lord, and guard us sleeping; that awake we may watch with Christ, and asleep we may rest in peace.

Leader: **Let us bless the Lord.**

People: Thanks be to God.

All: May the almighty and merciful Lord, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, bless us and keep us. Amen.

Session-specific Resources

SESSION ONE

Audiovisual resources at www.diocal.org/proclaim

Baptismal Commitment:

Faithfully continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers.

Focus Scripture:

"The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love."

— Ephesians 4:11–16



SESSION TWO

Audiovisual resources at www.diocal.org/proclaim

Baptismal Commitment:

Where there is evil, I will resist it. Whenever I fall into sin, I will repent and return to the Lord.

Focus Scripture:

"Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' No, 'if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

— Romans 12:16–21



SESSION THREE

Audiovisual resources at www.diocal.org/proclaim

Baptismal Commitment:

Proclaim by both word and example the Good News of God in Christ.

Focus Scripture:

“As you go, proclaim the good news, ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment. Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve their food. Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. As you enter the house, greet it. If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.”

— Matthew 10:7–13



SESSION FOUR

Audiovisual resources at www.diocal.org/proclaim

Baptismal Commitment:

Seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving my neighbor as myself.

Focus Scripture:

“Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet’; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.”

— Romans 13:8–10



SESSION FIVE

Audiovisual resources at www.diocal.org/proclaim

Baptismal Commitment:

Strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being.

Focus Scripture:

“Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.’”

— Luke 10:30–35



Daily Morning Practice

- Prepare:** Take a quiet moment to set aside other matters, focus and enter God's presence. Remember (or imagine) your baptism, and try to experience anew God's love for you in that moment.
- Pray:** Open my lips O Lord, and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.
Create in me a clean heart O God, and renew a right spirit in me. Amen.
- Read:** The Baptismal Commitments:
With God's help, I will faithfully continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers.
With God's help, where there is evil, I will resist it. Whenever I fall into sin, I will repent and return to the Lord.
With God's help, I will proclaim by both word and example the Good News of God in Christ.
With God's help, I will seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving my neighbor as myself.
With God's help, I will strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being.
- Consider:** The baptismal commitment corresponding to this or the next session. How might God be calling you to respond in faith to this particular commitment in the midst of your life right now?
- Read:** The scripture appointed for the session or the next session.
- Ask:** What word, phrase or theme catches your attention in this scripture? Ask God to show you what—with your own experience and imagination—makes this word, phrase or theme important to you right now. Ask God if there is an action you are called to take or a change you are called to make.
- Pray:** From Holy Baptism (BCP p. 308)
Heavenly Father, I thank you that by water and the Holy Spirit you have bestowed upon me your servant the forgiveness of sin, and have raised me to the new life of grace. Sustain me, O Lord, in your Holy Spirit. Give me an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works. Amen.
- Be silent:** Take a moment to rest and give thanks for your baptism.

INTENTION AND REFLECTION

	Morning: What specific action might I take to respond to this week's baptismal commitment?	Evening: What happened?
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		

Daily Evening Practice

Prepare: Take a quiet moment to set aside other matters, focus and enter God's presence. Give thanks for the blessing of this day of life.

Recollect: Recollect the high and low points of your day, and ask God to illuminate whatever events or feelings merit further prayer and attention.

Intention and Reflection: Return to your morning intention and reflect. How were you able to live into that particular expression of your baptismal identity today? Make a note and watch for patterns.

Remember: The gifts of baptism:
I am buried with Christ in his death.
I share in his resurrection.
I am reborn by the Holy Spirit.
I have been given the forgiveness of sin and raised to a new life of grace.
I am marked as Christ's own forever.

Pray: Guide me waking, O Lord, and guard me sleeping; that awake I may watch with Christ, and asleep I may rest in peace. Amen.

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Public Narrative Learner's Guide

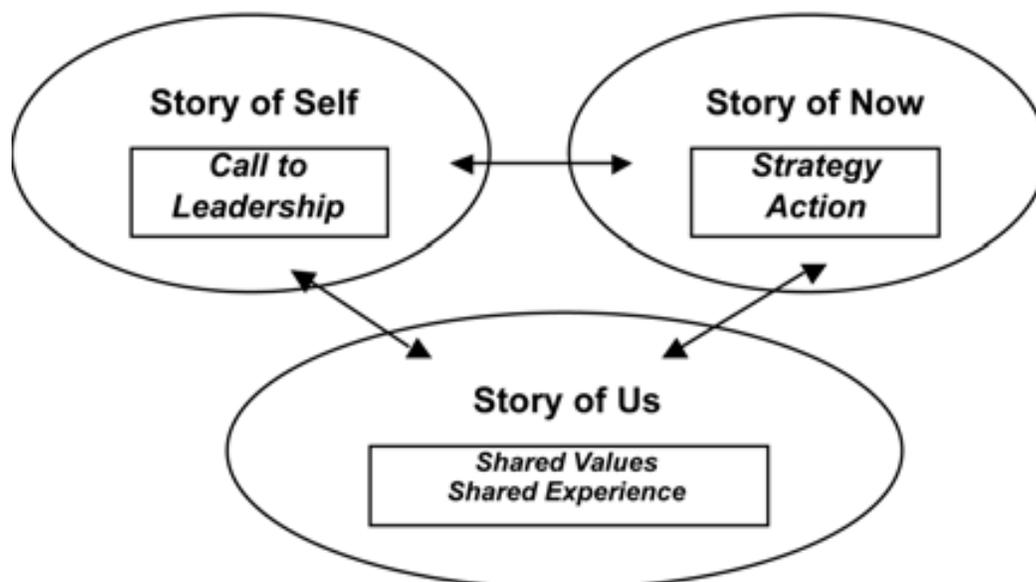
PUBLIC NARRATIVE AS A PRACTICE OF LEADERSHIP

We exercise leadership when we accept responsibility to enable others to achieve purpose in the face of uncertainty. Through narrative we learn to make choices in response to the challenges of an uncertain world—as individuals, as communities, as nations. To face challenges creatively we must find sources of hope (a matter of the heart, and detailed in our story); formulate a vision of how we can act (a matter of the head, outlined by our strategy); and then act (a matter of skillful and determined hands). Public Narrative can help us link our own calling to that of our community to a call to action now: a “story of self, a story of us and a story of now”.

Inertia—or habit—and apathy inhibit mindful action. While habit dominates, we don't pay attention, we operate on autopilot, and we experience no reason to consider our course of action. On the other hand, when urgency confronts us, we experience it as anxiety that calls our attention, which challenges us to consider our course of action. Similarly, when we experience anger as a dissonance between the world as it is and the world as it should be, the tension can propel us into action.

How we respond depends on our access to another set of emotions. If fear takes over, we try to hide, strike out, or just freeze, like a deer in the headlights—which is not very helpful. On the other hand, if we can find hope, then our curiosity is stirred, we ask questions, we explore, and we begin to do some creative problem solving. Similarly, if we feel isolated, our fear grows; while if we feel solidarity, empathy or love, we can reach toward courage. Finally, if we are unable to counter self-doubt with experience of our own worth, value and efficacy, we will find it hard to find the courage to take the risks often required to respond.

The SELF – US – NOW Structure



THE THREE KEY ELEMENTS OF PUBLIC NARRATIVE STRUCTURE: PLOT, CHARACTER, AND MORAL

A narrative is built from a plot. A plot begins with an unexpected challenge that confronts the protagonist with an urgent need to act—to make a choice (a choice for which she or he is unprepared) and which results in an outcome that teaches a moral. Because we can empathetically identify with the character, we can “feel” the moral. We not only learn about someone’s courage, we can also be inspired by it. A protagonist’s struggle to deal with his or her own challenges of uncertainty engages us because we are eager to learn how to deal with our own. The core unit of any story, then, is threefold: a challenge, a choice, and an outcome.

PUBLIC NARRATIVE COMBINES A “STORY OF SELF, A STORY OF US, AND A STORY OF NOW”

By telling your “story of self,” you communicate why you were called to care, to act and to lead: your own call to mission

In the “story of self,” the key focus is on choice points: moments in our lives, or in the lives of our parents, when our values are formed, when we had to make a choice in the face of great uncertainty. When did you first begin to develop a concern for others? When did you begin to think you should follow in the footsteps of Jesus, or when did you first feel called to provide care for the “least of these?”

As you contemplate your own personal journey, ask yourself, “Why?” Consider the experiences from which you learned your values. For example, if you volunteer in your local soup kitchen, why did you feel compelled to do so? When did you feel that for the first time? What happened? If it was experience of the truth that “we are all made in the image of God ... we all have worth, and we all deserve to be fed,” when was that? What were the circumstances? Did you recall your Baptismal Covenant to “respect the dignity of every human being”—an experience of a value rooted in the wider church?

The identification of the sources of the values evident in your own story creates a foundation for your “story of us”.

A “story of us” communicates why our community is required to act, is called to mission

As a church, we share a broad narrative, a history of challenges, choices, and outcomes that celebrate many common values which in turn give us our identity and purpose. Just as with your “story of self,” the key to articulating a “story of us” is to identify the choice points, the shared moments, and the experience that can communicate the values that we share as a community, as a church.

In telling your “story of us,” consider how your personal story intersects with the

stories of others. Our stories arise from our interdependence: that even if we disagree or diverge, we share a life together. Our shared story is based on shared experiences of challenge, and the values that enabled us to find the resilience to continue. Every Sunday, as we consider the Gospel, we experience the telling of another chapter in our “story of us” as a church, an experience we celebrate in the Holy Communion.

A “story of now” communicates the urgent challenge we are called upon to confront together

We tell a “story of now” to articulate the urgent challenge that (given our mission) demands action; the vision that inspires us; and the choice we must make (and call upon others to make) to act. The choice must spell out a specific outcome, call on us to work together, and begin with a specific commitment.

PREPARING TO TELL YOUR PUBLIC NARRATIVE

Learning to tell your story is not linear process. As you think more deeply about one part of your story, you will find yourself revising or deleting other parts of the story that no longer make sense. The important thing is to let your mission purpose serve as the focus for your story. This is not a biography, but rather a narrative that leads to an action outcome.

For example, if you want to take steps to alleviate global poverty, focus your “self story” on when you may have first realized this was important to you, such as when you took a trip overseas with a youth ministry. Why did you care when others did not? And why did you act, when others did not? Then focus on stories that lift up the related values your community shares: in this case, the other people at your table. Then speak about your “now”—the urgent challenge, the vision and the specific “ask” (for example, why it is urgent to commit to raise new funds for a particular mission...).

This list of steps will help you understand how to start and how to pinpoint ideas or steps you may have missed as you began to develop your story.

1. Start with the basics: As a Christian leader, what is your mission / purpose? In this case, living out our baptismal identity is our purpose.
2. Spend time in reflection about yourself, find your connection to the community of people to whom you are speaking, and clearly articulate your vision, strategy and action.
3. Work to build out the specific details of your “stories of self, us and now” using the worksheet that follows.
4. Identify the challenge, choice and outcome in each of the three areas of “self, us and now”.
5. Find common themes in your “stories of self, us and now” around challenge, choice

and outcome and weave these themes through your story. What challenges link your “story of self,” “story of us” and “story of now”? Locate the hope in your story.

6. Identify places where you can bring the story alive with vivid detail: How did things look, smell, taste, sound and feel at the moment your story happened?
7. Practice your developing story and incorporate feedback from others.
8. Tell your story to your audience! Reflect on their response. How many said “yes”?

WORKSHEET: PREPARING YOUR STORY OF SELF / US / NOW

The first goal is for you to begin learning how to tell your personal story of why you have been called to assume leadership in Christian ministry.

A second goal is to begin learning how to coach others: by listening carefully, offering feedback, asking questions, etc. In this way you can develop leadership in others as well as refine it in yourself. Be prepared to take some risks, and support your group members as they step out on a limb themselves!

What are the experiences that called you to care, to act, to lead?

Here are some key elements and types of experiences that may have contributed to your call to care, to act and to lead—to assume leadership in mission.

Family and Childhood	Life Choices	Church Experience
Parents / Family	Education	Introduction to the Church
Growing up Experiences	Career	First Experience of Faith / God
Your Community	Partner / Family	Connection to Scripture
Role Models	Hobbies / Interests / Talents	Role Models / Community
School	Experiences / Finding Passion / Overcoming Challenge	Current Experience of Your Congregation
Family Attitudes Towards Money	Resources / Income / Generosity	Tithing / Pledging

Take some time to think about the elements of your story in the context of the challenge, choice and outcome. In this case the outcome might also be the thing you learned in addition to what actually happened.

Your story of ...	Challenge	Choice	Outcome
<p>SELF —</p> <p>Why do you value this?</p> <p>Describe a specific experience.</p>			
<p>US —</p> <p>Why would it matter to anyone else?</p> <p>What is the value shared by the community.</p>	<div data-bbox="537 905 1382 1192" style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #e0e0e0; padding: 10px;"> <p>For the purposes of Pro/Claim, our baptismal promises ARE the value shared by the community. Take time to consider how your actions align with baptismal values and why they might matter to anyone else.</p> </div>		
<p>NOW —</p> <p>What would you need from someone else in order for the community to manifest this value?</p>			

PUBLIC NARRATIVE CREDITS

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Record your story and share it on YouTube!

Send a link to josephm@diocal.org
for sharing beyond your network
and inspiring others to Pro/Claim
the Good News.

Pro/Claim
Engaging  the Baptismal Covenant

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