

**SERMON**  
**By: Gail Fricker**

***“Telling Our Stories”***

**June 10, 2018**

**Acts 26**

As a storyteller I know that it is true that everyone loves to hear a story. I have first hand experience of telling stories to hundreds of different audiences around the world, young and old, rich, and poor. It really doesn't matter who you are – everyone loves a good story! It can be around the campfire, over dinner with friends, or even a good bedtime story. Stories can engage our imaginations, move us to laughter or tears, inspire us – and a whole load of other things too. Traditionally of course, storytelling was always an oral tradition, but now we can also share stories via email, or even pictorially through face book and other media. But, I believe that storytelling is such a strong, and an important part of our very fabric of being, that even though the style of telling may change – storytelling will always continue.

Our bible tells us that too! It is a book that is full of stories. Just a couple of weeks ago at youth group on Wednesday night, I told all the girls gathered the story of Esther – they were totally engaged as they heard how the orphan girl became a queen, and then risked her life to save her people. After telling the story – they were inspired to ask questions – is it true? Why did she do that? What happened next? ... etc. – questions that led us into a wonderful discussion about faith, about trust in God, and about how we can do amazing things when we allow the Holy Spirit into our lives.

Telling our faith stories can lead us into those kinds of discussions.

In our scripture today, we heard how Paul recognised the importance of telling his faith story. Again, and again in Acts, he tells his story of conversion, and shares what God has done and is doing in his life. In Acts 26, as he tells King Agrippa about his Damascus Road experience, and he does so hoping that everyone listening to his story will be inspired to turn to God themselves. In verse 26 he says to King Agrippa:

*“I pray that not only you but everyone listening to me today could be saved just like me”*

Paul's story is full of hope for what God can do in other's lives.

Recently when I was at London Conference the very Reverend Dr Gary Paterson, our previous United Church moderator, reminded us that when we tell our faith stories, it is like smaller flowers budding in spring – so full of hope and growth. We talk too much about the church dying and getting smaller – but instead, we need to be telling our stories of hope. We need to tell others about what God is doing in our lives. And as these stories spread, these small green shoots of hope – then there can be growth.

I recognize that it is not easy to speak to others about God. Telling our faith stories really isn't part of our United Church or Presbyterian upbringing. But if we don't speak out, then there will be no growth. And really, if God excites you – why wouldn't you want to tell others about your journey of faith?

One church that I preached at as a Licenced Lay Worship Leader always started their service with something they called "Spiritual Sightings" – just calling out ways that they had seen the Spirit at work during the week. It's an easy way to begin to share stories of faith. Just think about it for a minute – what one exciting way have you experienced God's Spirit this week? What spiritual sighting would you share? Anyone?

(three signets born in Stratford)

Sharing our stories of the Spirit at work is important. They are signs that God is at work in our lives. And so, I have asked three members of our congregation to come and share their stories of what God has been doing in their lives. I'd like to first invite Anne Carrol to come forward.

*"This is my story, this is my song, praising my maker all the day long.*

*"This is my story, this is my song, praising my maker all the day long."*

(Anne's story, John's story, Susan's story)

Thank you to all three of you. I encourage everyone this summer, to think about sharing with others about how you have seen God's Spirit at work.

I want to end by reading a prayer from theologian Walter Brueggemann, in his book "Prayers for a Privileged People"; it reminds us how telling the old stories can lead to new songs:

We love to tell the old, old story.

We love to sing the old, old song

Of your saving deeds of mercy, and freedom, and healing and newness.

We know about Exodus freedom

And dancing tambourines.

We know about land and huge clusters of grapes.

We know about rivers of water and rivers of oil.

We know about the strangeness that

The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed,  
the dead are raised, the poor rejoice.

We know.

Give us courage to trust what we know and to obey what we hope.

We know that the old, old story – in telling – becomes a new, dangerous, transforming song.

And so we sing.

Amen.