

Advices and Queries for Creating Stories in the Manner of Faith & Play™

Since 2005, the development of Faith & Play Stories has been a joyful, Spirit-led collaboration by the members of the Faith & Play Group. We recognize that other Friends may find new stories rise for them, either out of a need in a religious education curriculum or because of a personal leading that calls to be explored. We encourage these endeavors, and for the integrity of our work with Faith & Play Stories, we also ask that Friends who create stories in this manner include on written scripts the following language: *"This is a story written for Friends trained to use Godly Play® and Faith & Play™. It is not part of the published Godly Play or Faith & Play story collections, but is meant to be told using that same method and approach."*

Story development is deep work. Each story follows its own path, and the process cannot be hurried. We stay open to leadings and new insights and work together in relationship with our co-creators and with Spirit. The advices and queries below are shared in faith and friendship with our community of practice — storytellers, writers, artists, teachers, Friends called to explore our experiential faith through story.

LET STORIES COME TO YOU

- The best stories come from the heart, not the intellect.
- A story will come when ready. Have patience, don't rush or try to force the process.
- Listen, and perhaps you will hear a story calling to be told.
- I wonder what stories have spoken to you deeply, and where you have found yourself in stories? How can we listen for stories to come from within?

WHY THIS STORY?

- Does the story come from Spirit? Is it a message for you alone, or is it also for others? Does it seem to rise at this time for a reason, or in response to a need?
- Is the story rising for you connected to an aspect or example of Quaker faith, practice, or witness that feels important to explore?
- Will it speak to a wide variety of people, of differing ages and backgrounds with Quakerism?
- What do you hope listeners will remember or take away from the story? What is at the heart of your story?

RESEARCH YOUR STORY

- Read, read, read! Widen your ideas of what to read to include children's books, Pendle Hill pamphlets, scripture, in addition to the expected Internet and books.
- Build a web or draw an outline to see what might be included in your story.
- Allow yourself to "start big" knowing that you will edit out what is not needed.

IMAGINE WHAT STORY MATERIALS MIGHT LOOK LIKE

- What items need to be included? What colors, images, objects feel vital to telling the story?
- Consider what shape and color underlay is needed for this story.
- Are the materials you're developing both simple and visually pleasing? Will the pieces be available to others or adaptable in other environments?
- Will the materials be appealing to children to work with? Will they encourage exploration?
- Will they be safe and durable?
- Take care that the materials not distract from the story itself. Too much can get in the way of the intended message and not leave room for imagination.
- Are the materials the best available to you? The quality of the materials conveys an unspoken message that the story and children's work are important.

SHARE YOUR IDEA WITH FRIENDS

- Get feedback! Consider input from other storytellers.
- Working with a small group of trusted Friends usually make a story better than working alone.
- How do you feel hearing feedback; how you can stay open to messages about the story?

BEGIN TO WRITE

- You do not need to write sequentially, and may find that working in sections allows you to be open to moving ideas around in the story.
- Be open to playing with language and images.
- Where does the heart of the story open? (Think of Elizabeth Fry seeing the women in prison, and knowing she had to take action.)
- Try to balance the spoken words with what the materials and movements say in the story.
- Has a refrain or repeated language risen for you as you write the story? Pay attention to that — a repeated phrase can be a thread that runs through a story or between them.
- Is there an action for the storyteller to repeat throughout the story? (“came so close to God”)
- Is there language in other Faith & Play or Godly Play stories that can be repeated as a connection to the story you’re working on?
- What wondering questions might help people explore the story?

REWRITE, REWRITE AND EDIT

- As you write and re-write, set the ego aside. Keep listening for Spirit in the same way you did when the story idea first came to you.
- Listen carefully to input from others who may see either weaknesses or possibilities in the story that have not occurred to you.
- A story can take a long time to evolve. Be patient.
- Now is the time to simplify, to carve away anything not essential to the story.
- Do you have all the story you need? Is anything missing from what you want to say?
- Is there anything you can leave out and still have all the story you need? (It can be tempting to leave in details which are fun or interesting, but not actually necessary to the story. Resist!)

SIT WITH THE STORY

- Listen. Meditate. Pray. Hear what it is saying.
- At some point, you will find the story “settles” into its final or near-final form. You will know this because you will feel less inclined to continue to make changes.
- Sometimes you may realize that a story just isn’t working. You might need to rework extensively or even scrap what you have and start over.

SHARE THE STORY WITH FRIENDS

- Practice telling it. Allow others to tell it.
- Share the story with children. Watch their responses, listen to their wondering.
- Telling the story often reveals bumps and opens new possibilities, which may lead to new insights and necessary changes to both language and materials.
- Closely watch the responses of listeners to see what parts do or do not engage them.
- If you decide that the story is just for you and your circle of children or meeting community, please be sure to include on the story script the disclaimer shared at the end of the opening paragraph this document.

SHARE STORIES WITH FAITH & PLAY STORIES, INC.

- If you create a story that has been tested and well received, please consider sharing it with Faith & Play Stories, Inc. We want to work collaboratively with storytellers in the wider Faith & Play world.