

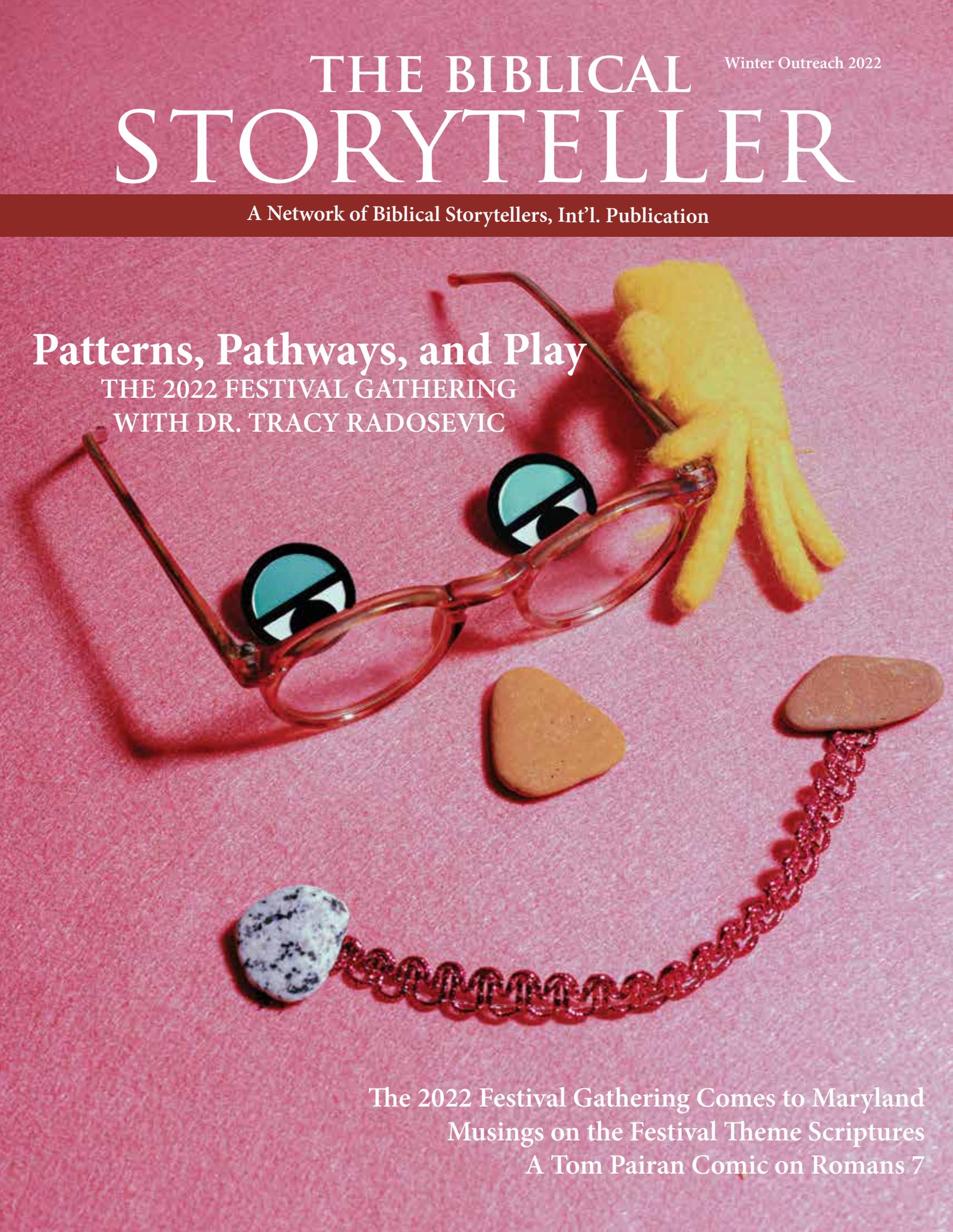
# THE BIBLICAL STORYTELLER

Winter Outreach 2022

A Network of Biblical Storytellers, Int'l. Publication

## Patterns, Pathways, and Play

THE 2022 FESTIVAL GATHERING  
WITH DR. TRACY RADOSEVIC



The 2022 Festival Gathering Comes to Maryland  
Musings on the Festival Theme Scriptures  
A Tom Pairan Comic on Romans 7

THE 2022 FESTIVAL GATHERING  
OF BIBLICAL STORYTELLING

Patterns,  
Pathways,  
and Play:

The primacy of story for  
life, growth, and community

Keynote Speaker

Dr. Tracy  
Radosevic



**LIVE EVENT!**

Wednesday - Friday

Aug. 3-5, 2022

Maritime Conference Center

Near Baltimore MD and BWI

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THE BIBLICAL  
STORYTELLER

The Biblical Storyteller is a publication of the Network of Biblical Storytellers, Int'l., an ecumenical, international, non-profit organization of scholars, clergy, and laity whose mission is to encourage everyone to learn and tell biblical stories. We provide and develop resources for telling biblical stories through audio, video, and computer technologies as well as telling them face-to-face.

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## Do You Play Enough?

Sure, you're a grownup but, do you play enough? If you're a Type A like me, your response is probably, "Play? What's that?"

I didn't play much as a child. My family considered play a waste of precious time. My grandmother's favorite words were, "What are you just standing around for, girl?"

You may have received similar admonitions as a child or an adult. Productivity (and its strong, handsome cousin individuality) is highly valued in our Puritanistic American culture.

Work (and what you do for work) has been used for years to place a value on your life. We don't ask others who they are, do we? We ask them what they "do." What we "do" often assigns us to a neighborhood, social circle, and yes, even a church.

Our myopic focus on work creates a destructive pathway that robs us of joyful energy. It creates a pattern of leaping over high bars without taking time to rest and restore ourselves. No wonder Americans are ranked 19th by *Forbes'* Happiness metrics.

"The only kind [of play] we honor is competitive play," says Bowen F. White, MD, author of *Why Normal Isn't Healthy*.

He's right. We root for gladiator-clad football "players," and wear their "colors" like gang members. We scream from the stands at 8-year-olds playing Little League. It's messed up.



*Donna Marie Todd, Editor*

In his book *Play*, psychiatrist Stuart Brown, MD, compares play to oxygen saying, "...it's all around us, yet goes mostly unnoticed or unappreciated until it is missing." Dr. Brown is the founder of the National Institute for Play. (Oooo! Who knew?)

The good doctor says that play is art, books, movies, music, comedy, flirting and daydreaming. Yes, and!



I love daydreaming! It's right up there with cloud-watching. I still do it, only now I call it "creative visioning" because, hey, I want people to understand it's work, right?

See how pervasive these patterns of all work and no play are in my life? No wonder I'm bored. Is there a destructive concrete pathway your lack of play is leading you down?

Years ago, I had a sign in my office that said: "**Life is Short, Stay Awake for It.**" When I hit my Medicare milestone this year, I made a new one: "**Life is Short,**

**Play While You Can.**"

That's why I'm looking forward to the Festival Gathering in Maryland this year! I have a feeling that Dr. Tracy Radosevich's keynotes on patterns, pathways, and play are going to rock my world! See you there!

# The Festival Gathering of Biblical Storytelling

*It's For Real! We're Live Again in 2022 at the Maritime Conference Center near Baltimore, MD!  
Wednesday afternoon, August 3, through lunch Friday, August 5, 2022*

After three years of pandemic lock-down, the Festival Gathering of Biblical Storytelling will again be live and in person!

The NBSI board conducted a careful search, and has selected a new location for the festival: the Maritime Conference Center (MCC) near Baltimore, Maryland.

The Maritime Center has fabulous buffet meals, comfortable sleeping rooms, plenty of gathering and meeting space, and it is located near a major international airport (BWI). The center also has a lovely pub for those evening gatherings when the conference day is over and you're ready to network with other storytellers from across the country and the globe!

The MCC is located four miles (or ten minutes) from Baltimore-Washington International (BWI), Thurgood Marshall Airport, and the BWI Amtrak® Train Station. Complimentary shuttle service to and from both locations can be pre-arranged for groups. MCC is accessible to the Mid-Atlantic region via I-95, MD-295 and I-695 and complimentary parking is available onsite.



Our keynote speaker this year is the Dean of the Academy for Biblical Storytelling, Dr. Tracy Radosevic. Known for her engaging style, bubbly personality, artful and informed biblical storytelling, and masterful teaching skills, Tracy's theme, "Patterns, Pathways and Play," will explore the primacy of storytelling for life, growth, and community. (See story on Page 10.)

*Come to the Festival Gathering and avail yourself of thought-provoking workshops, performances, conversations, and other amazing experiences that will fortify you with all manner of tools for nurturing life, growth, and community!*

Dr. Tracy Radosevic, 2022 Keynote Speaker

Wonderful new workshops are being planned that will provide insightful viewpoints and strengthen the skill sets of persons with all levels of storytelling experience from beginner to master storyteller.

## 2022 Festival Pricing

**EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION FEES  
(IF ORDERED BY MAY 15, 2022)**  
Member \$249    Non-Member \$349  
One Day Only \$125

**REGULAR REGISTRATION FEE**  
Member \$299    Non-Member \$399  
One Day Only \$175  
All Registration (except Wed. One Day)  
includes lunch and break-time snacks.

**Your overnight lodging rate includes  
breakfast and dinner. Lodging is additional  
and must be made with the MCC:**  
Toll Free (866) 900-3517.  
Single \$159/night    Double \$204/night

Festival favorites like the Epic Telling (Ecclesiastes!) and Lighting the Fire will be a part of the festival again this year! How much fun will it be to tell your part in the Epic or share a story at Lighting the Fire in front of a live audience again!

So that we may gather as safely as possible, the NBSI Board of Directors is limiting the attendance at this year's event to allow for physical distancing. All attendees must show proof of vaccination. See more under "Cancellation Policy and COVID-19 Protocols" below.

## ***Festival Gathering (FG) 2022 Cancellation Policy and COVID-19 Protocols:***

*Due to the ever-changing nature of the pandemic, your registration fee is fully refundable if your request is received by August 2, 2022. If NBSI cancels the FG, all registrations will be automatically and fully refunded by NBSI.*

*For the health and safety of all attendees, everyone will be required to show proof of vaccination upon entry to the Festival Gathering. We will adhere to the safety policies the CDC and local authorities are recommending at the time. We are also limiting attendance at this year's festival to accommodate physical distancing.*

# Tool Up for Success in 2022

## A Sample of New Workshops at the Festival Gathering



### An Overlooked Character in New Testament Letters: The Audience

Cliff Barbarick, Ph.D.

Letters aren't stories, and so they present a unique set of challenges for biblical storytellers.



For example, they lack the typical storytelling cues that characters, settings, dialogue, and plot provide—or, do they? In this session, we will hear and learn passages from different New Testament letters as we explore, specifically, how the audience of the letter functions as a character. This exploration will also help us imagine ways that we might creatively engage modern audiences when we tell New Testament letters.

#### Biography:

Cliff Barbarick is an Associate Professor in the Department of Bible, Missions, and Ministry at Abilene Christian University. In his New Testament classes he regularly performs biblical stories with his students as way to help them explore the biblical compositions more deeply.

### Odd Couples - or Story Matches Made in Heaven?!

Pam Faro, M.Div.

Bring a traditional story (folktale, fairytale, ghost story, legend...) that illustrates, echoes, or in some way connects to one of this year's FG theme stories. "Make your case" for your selection and tell the story to the group! Names will be drawn in random order, for telling as many 5-minute stories brought to the session as possible. Fun and generative brainstorming for sermons, youth activities, fellowship times!



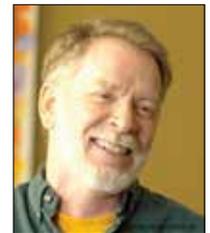
#### Biography:

Pam Faro is a performer/entertainer and educator who lives in Broomfield, CO. She has performed and taught across the US and overseas. Her diverse repertoire includes multicultural folktales, bilingual cuentos, biblical storytelling, interfaith storytelling, and personal/historical narratives including the true story of her great-uncle surviving the Titanic. She received her MDiv from Iliff School of Theology in Denver, and serves as a consultant/workshop-leader in using storytelling in ministry settings.

### Telling Hagar's Story Again and Again

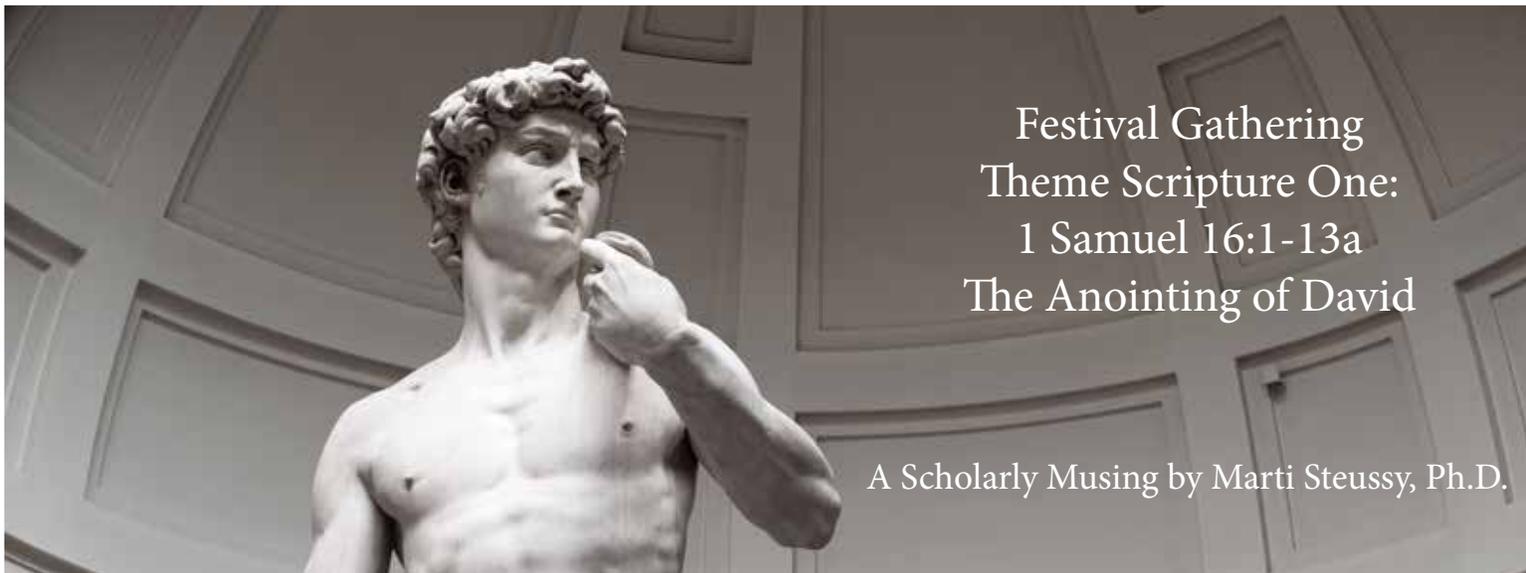
Phil Ruge-Jones

A fine way to grow as a teller is to observe the choices (translation, tone, gestures, posture, emphasis) that talented tellers make. We will explore the complicated story of Hagar (Genesis 16) by hearing six tellings and then discussing the impact each had on the audience. Provisional slate of tellers: Jason Chesnut, Kathy Culmer, Simone Rollings, Danette Rosenberg, Jim Sterner, Lori Ruge-Jones, and Sarah Weisiger. Phil Ruge-Jones, presiding.



#### Biography:

Phil Ruge-Jones is pastor of Grace Lutheran Church, Eau Claire WI and the coordinator of the NBSI Seminar. More importantly he has assembled an impressive group of tellers to lead us through this engaging process.



Festival Gathering  
Theme Scripture One:  
1 Samuel 16:1-13a  
The Anointing of David

A Scholarly Musing by Marti Steussy, Ph.D.

**At first glance, the story of David's anointing seems to operate in simple fairy-tale categories.**

A faithful prophet seeks out a lowly farm kid and designates him to replace the evil king who is oppressing the land. Christians know that this farm kid's descendants will include Jesus. This apparently-simple story, however, has complications.

The complexities arise as we work in the larger context of the Samuel books. For instance, is David really just a simple farm kid?

It can seem so in 16:1-3 and the next chapter's Goliath story. But in between, Saul's servants describe David as a "man of valor" (16:18, I quote NRSV unless otherwise indicated), in Hebrew, gibbor Chayil—a phrase used of Jericho's warriors (Josh 6:2), Jephthah (Jdg 11:1), and Saul's father (1 Sam 9:1, NRSV "man of wealth").

That and the terms "a warrior, prudent in speech" (16:18) suggest a mature young man from an elite family, not a peasant boy. Note also that Bethlehem was a walled city, important enough to have a Philistine garrison (2 Sam 23:14), and that David's father is

rich enough to equip three sons with expensive armor and weapons and to send gifts (bribes?) to their commander (1 Sam 17:13 and 17-18).

**We love "poor boy makes good" stories, but in its cultural context "shepherd" foreshadows a royal role. It was a common metaphor for rulers in the Bible (e.g., 1 K 22:17, Ps 80:1, and Isa 44:28), and in Mesopotamia and Egypt (where pharaohs are consistently pictured holding a shepherd's crook).**

The Samuel books are so multi-voiced (about Saul, David, even God) that Campbell and O'Brien propose, in *Unfolding the Deuteronomistic History* (Fortress, 2000), that the material in Joshua through 2 Kings (excluding Ruth) was compiled as a resource of episodes for storytellers, rather than an integrated narrative.

They suggest that one would either describe David coming to Saul's court as a musician (1 Sam 16:14-23) or tell the Goliath story (1 Sam 17), but not both, so listeners would not have to wonder why Saul, in the Goliath story, doesn't

seem to recognize his own musician. However, millennia of customs ask us to deal with the collection as a whole.

We can overlook the discontinuities or explain them away, but we can also understand the books as a communal telling that presents multiple viewpoints—like people at a family gathering giving differing accounts of long-gone relatives. I prefer this option.

We've seen some variety in descriptions of David; the same happens with Saul. God's comment about outward appearances versus the heart (16:7-8) is often taken as a veiled snipe at Saul, who is described in typical English translations of 9:2 as "handsome," and was chosen by the people rather than God, in this understanding. However, the term used in 9:2 is the standard Hebrew word "good," and ordinarily one would translate it as, "a good man, ...none better than he" (this is my rendering).

Nor is Samuel just the people's choice: see God's statement about Saul in 9:16-17, before the people ever weigh in (the summary of Saul's life in 14:47-48 suggests that he lived up to God's initial assessment). Did Saul's heart go sour later? Go to 10:1 and see who is in control of Saul's heart.

What brought Saul down? Perhaps, in part, Samuel's resentment.

Prophets were human, and Samuel had skin in the game. Preachers often assert that he is displeased in 8:6 because the people have rejected God. But the Hebrew words indicate that the job of ruling (*shaphat*, in Hebrew) had previously been done by Samuel himself, after which he appoints his sons to the job.

So when the people—correctly observing that Samuel is old and his sons corrupt—ask for a king to *shaphat* Israel (8:1-5), they are asking Samuel to appoint a replacement for himself and his sons. God's words to Samuel, "they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me" (8:7), confirm that Samuel feels personally rejected.

God tells Samuel three times to do what the people ask (8:7, 9, and 22), but Samuel just sends them home. Only when Saul arrives on his doorstep in the next chapter does Samuel finally obey God's order to anoint a king.

In 1 Sam 12, the prophet gives a "what did I ever do to you?" tirade and then summons a thunderstorm that will destroy the year's grain harvest.

After that, the people refer to LORD as "your [Samuel's] God" (12:19), rather than "our God" as they did in 7:8—hardly a successful case of a prophet bringing the people into relationship with God! Samuel's attitude remains combative in 1 Sam 13. Obeying a command from Samuel, Saul and his army wait, contemplating the Philistine lineup, for a full "seven days, the time appointed by Samuel," even though Saul's volunteer soldiers are leaving in droves (13:6-8 referring to 10:8). When Samuel does not show up within the appointed time, Saul takes action (13:9—after all, Samuel had also told him to "do whatever you see fit," 10:7). Boom!—Samuel appears,

thundering condemnation. It looks as if he has deliberately set up Saul. Two chapters later, Samuel refuses to pray with a repentant Saul (15:24-26). Why then does Samuel grieve over Saul (15:35, 16:1)? We don't know, although some interpreters suggest that he doesn't want to replace an intimidated king with a new one that he may be less able to manipulate.

Given all this, we cannot assume that Samuel's fear of retaliation from Saul in 16:6-7 is justified. It might be, but we cannot be sure that Samuel is right about Saul, any more than we can assume that foreign kings in Genesis would really have killed Abraham or Isaac to take their wives (in all three such stories, the king is horrified to discover that he has been lied to about the woman's marital status). As Randall Bailey notes, the only king the Bible reports as actually killing a man to take his wife is the king anointed by Samuel in 1 Sam 16.

Saul, Samuel, and David are all complex characters, but the most troubling complexities surround God. Here again we encounter multiple layers and voices in the books of Samuel. Samuel sits in a framework, the Former Prophets/Deuteronomistic History, in which a consistent, ethical God lays out clear rules and deals with people accordingly. But within that framework, individual stories—especially in the Samuel books—present God as powerful but unpredictable in morally troubling ways. For instance, God is said to prevent Eli's sons from listening to their father's wise warnings (1 Sam 2:23-25), but God then punishes the family for the sons' behavior, blaming Eli for not stopping them (1 Sam 3:11-14).

It's not too troubling that God tells Samuel to mislead Bethlehem's elders (16:2), since the statement about sacrifice is technically true, although a misdirection regarding the visit's real purpose. More troubling is the dis-

junction between God's comment on seeing hearts versus outward appearance (16:7) and what has happened with Saul—on top of which, we then find out that David is "handsome" (16:12, with Hebrew phrasing that, unlike 9:2, refers specifically to appearance).

Most troubling, perhaps, is the "evil spirit" God sends upon Saul in 16:14-23 (also 18:10 and 19:9). We can say that this is how the ancients understood mental and/or physical illness, which is probably true. But by the same token, the description of David as "a man after God's own heart" (13:14) may simply mean, "God must have loved David, since David rose to such a high position." That is rather different from David morally deserving his power.

## Storytelling Tips

What can tellers do with this complex story? I suggest leaning into the ambiguities of character and our uncertainties about God's involvement.

**This story invites us to ponder people and a world like our own, where virtue and success don't always go together, where the worst people have good in them and even the best are flawed.**

It reflects a never-dying human longing for new and good leaders, our hope that this time we really have a trustworthy hero. It gives us an opportunity to ask ourselves how we will deal with the fact that young leaders grow up and inevitably stumble in the process. And God's embrace of flawed characters such as Samuel and David can be good news: I remember a woman saying in a church Bible study, "I like David because if God could love him, God can certainly love me!" It's not wrong to tell this as a farm-kid-makes-good story, but there is a lot else we can do with it as well.



Festival Gathering Theme Scripture Two:  
Exodus 1: 8-21  
Shiphrah and Puah

A Scholarly Musing by Storyteller Priest  
Cynthia Park, Ph.D.

**“Now a new king arose over Egypt, who had never heard the name Joseph.”**

When I teach the Bible as Literature, this is my favorite verse to illustrate the text’s dramatic foreshadowing of a malevolent turn of events about to unfold. It so artfully describes the universal experience of a seismic social shift that destabilizes an entrenched political system built on favoritism. As with any major cultural reorganization, the first stage is chaos. And, sadly, the universal response to chaos is violence.

Here in Exodus, the violent reaction to the threat of the “minority race” becoming the “majority race” is a royal edict ordering the two attending Egyptian midwives delivering Hebrew babies to kill any live males born. First, some perspective.

The text indicates that there were only the two midwives – “one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah (1:15).” If, as the text also indicates, the fear was the rapid rate at which the Hebrew women were giving birth, then presumably Shiphrah and Puah were not truly the only midwives but were the organizers of a group of midwives. As supervising midwives, they

would be responsible for dispatching other midwives at all hours in all directions, something like the central call desk at Nonnatus House in the fictional drama “Call the Midwife.” This suggests that their brave actions were not only a response out of their own personal convictions, but that they were prepared to use their supervisory positions as moral influencers.

Their “fear” of God (1:17) made them fearless in the face of the king’s edict, and clever in their circumvention of the truth, claiming that the Hebrew women were so vigorous that the birthing is completed before the midwives can even arrive! Not only is their ruse believable, but it serves the additional purpose of reinforcing the rumored strength of the Hebrew people—not only in numbers but in person!

**I believe it was my first session of Hebrew Bible in seminary with the amazing biblical scholar Judy Fentress-Williams when she wrote in large letters on the white board: “Shiphrah” and “Puah” and solemnly charged us to remember their story and tell it. And, I have.**

Recently, a colleague suggested a reading list of biographies about women who conducted deep espionage missions throughout Europe during World War II. He knows that I am always interested in true stories of female courage and adventure to pass along to the young people with whom I work. *Carve Her Name With Pride* (R. J. Minney, 1956), the story of Violette Szabo and *A Woman of No Importance* (Sonia Purnell, 2020), the story of Virginia Hall, are the two most recent ones that I have read. Giving many more details and using lots more words than Exodus 1: 8-21, these two extraordinary twentieth-century women stepped directly into the footsteps left by Shiphrah and Puah in the Late Bronze Age.

The critical aspect of these stories—from Pharaoh’s Egypt to Hitler’s Germany—is that the women acted decisively from who they were where they were, fearlessly exploiting their advantage in proximity privileged by their socially assigned roles, and, as a result, altered the course of history. And, again in beautiful literary and theological symmetry, the women who helped other families grow were rewarded by God with families of their own. They not only saved others’ lives; they also managed to save their own. The story then moves from the wide public initiative taken by the midwives

to the particularity of one family; that is, “a man from the house of Levi who went and married a Levite woman (2:1).” Moses’ birth, miraculous recovery from the Nile River as an infant, and his subsequent formation as Israel’s advocate against her enforced slavery all proceed from the choices of these two Egyptian women who recognized their common humanity with the Hebrew people out of reverence for the One God in whose image they were all created.

The brave actions of two individuals saved the one person who would grow and prosper under the same regime that would have had him murdered as an infant. And then, through his own confusing and violent discovery of his true identity as one of the Hebrew people, Moses ended up murdering an Egyptian who was beating a Jew, forcing him to leave behind both cultures for a time, before finally meeting God in the wilderness fire on holy ground. Then, finally, after all of that, returning to Egypt to collaborate with God in freeing the captive Hebrew people.

**The most recent U.S. Census yielded the data to support anecdotal evidence that, in many parts of this country, the population demographics reflect a transition to a “minority majority.” And, as in Pharaoh’s Egypt, the destabilizing of the entrenched political system that has existed for so many decades based on favoritism and privilege is rocked by chaos. And public violence against the “other” has increased significantly in its wake. For the first time in almost two hundred years, credible rumors of a civil war are rumbling.**

## Storytelling Tips

The biblical storyteller has an incredible opportunity in the face of our current civil unrest to gather the beloved community around sacred story. Consider, for example, an evening with telling this story, and then exploring its layered themes: social tension; racial divide, reactive response by the ruling hegemony; a moral dilemma; the decisive choice; the implications; the hope and the promise.

The theo-poet Amos Wilder noted that, “It is at the level of imagination that the fateful issues of our new world-experience must first be mastered. It is here that culture and history are broken, and here that the church is polarized. Old words do not reach across the new gulfs, and it is only in vision and oracle that we can chart the unknown and new-name the creatures (*Theopoetic: Theology and the Religious Imagination*, 2001, 6.)”

If we consider “the way things have always been” -- that is, before a new king comes to power -- as Wilder’s “old words”, and the example of Shiphrah and Puah as the imaginative solution, then we too can do our part to restore equilibrium in the wake of chaos and violence in our own time.

Hear, if you will, the echoes of Shiphrah and Puah in another story of feminine bravery. Recall Mordecai’s challenge to his niece Esther’s reluctance to intercede on behalf of the entire Jewish population: “Have you not considered that it was for such a time as this that you were born? (Esther 4:14)”

**After all, someone has to be the one, who saves the one, who saves the rest.**

**Remember their story  
and tell it!**

*Your Gift*  
will let  
biblical  
storytelling  
continue  
to shine the  
light of God  
to future  
generations.

Please  
include the  
Network of Biblical  
Storytellers, Int’l  
in your will or  
estate planning.

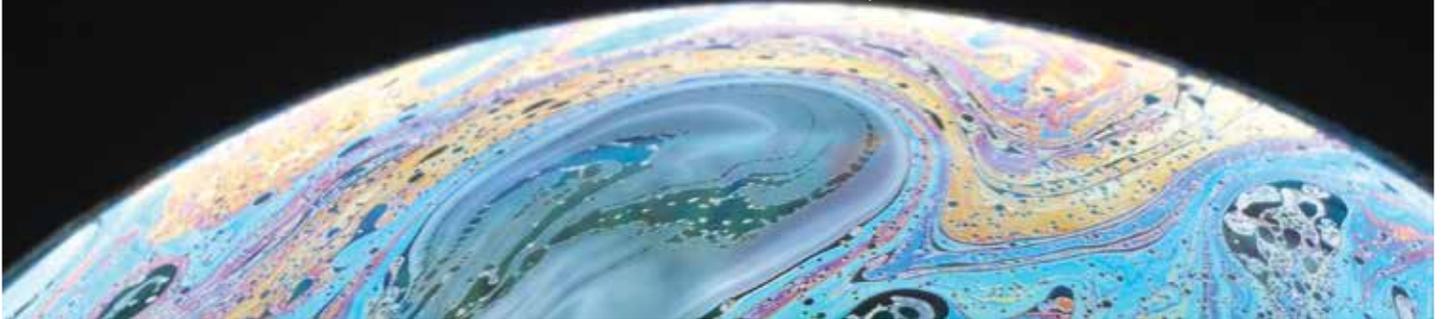
*Thank You!*



# patterns, pathways, and play

The primacy of story for life, growth, and community

An Interview with our 2022 Festival Gathering of Biblical Storytelling  
KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Dr. Tracy Radosevic



**Q.** *As the first (and only!) Dean of the NBSI Academy for Biblical Storytelling, you have mentored many students over the years. You're also a professional storyteller yourself, and a seminary professor. You've devoted your life to the biblical stories, so my first question is: Why do you think biblical storytelling is 1) relevant and 2) important in our modern world?*

**A.** Let me first answer by talking about the relevance and importance of storytelling in general. Those of us who are storytellers of any genre know that spinning a tale is a powerful experience but, up until recently, any proof we could offer for that belief was largely anecdotal (appropriately enough). In fact, when I was writing my master's thesis in the mid-90s, I found very little published data to support my claim that storytelling was an effective educational tool. Thankfully, in the ensuing decades, a slew of research has been conducted—across a number of disciplinary fields—and we now have hard evidence to prove those claims. Hallelujah! So, why is storytelling relevant and important? It's how we learn, make meaning, remember, connect, etc.

But just because something is powerful doesn't mean it's necessarily right, good, healthy, or just. We're currently

experiencing a barrage of false narratives, told and retold in powerful ways, that are harming the environment, minorities, public health, even the very foundations of our democracy. And, sadly, some of the loudest voices in these camps ground their views in religion and the Bible.

So, why is biblical storytelling relevant and important in our current world? Well, for many of the same reasons listed above, just placed in the context of faith traditions and spiritual journeys. But also because of the way NBSI encourages this artistic practice: a disciplined and responsible exploration that tries to understand and take into consideration the context, the ambiguities, the contradictions, and challenges inherent in most biblical passages and then to wrestle with all that in community, being OK with unanswered questions, things we don't like, and more than one possible interpretation.

**The Bible has been co-opted—and distorted—to undergird doctrines and dogmas. The individual stories and metanarratives have gotten lost in the process.**

If storytelling is how we learn, make meaning, remember, connect, etc., then for people of faith it's crucial that biblical storytelling be the key to their religious and spiritual formation, hopefully providing a counter-narrative that is more just, healthy, moral, and compassionate.

**Q.** *Our Festival Gathering theme this year is Patterns, Pathways, and Play: the primacy of story for life, growth, and community. Can you give us a glimpse into how your keynotes will unpack that theme?*

**A.** Much of the research mentioned above points to how all of life's experiences register within us as stories, divided into different domains and mapped out in ways that help us to make meaning of those immediate events, as well as any future events.

The more experiences we live through, the larger our bank of stories from which to draw in order to understand (i.e., discover recognizable patterns) the current situation and then discern how to best move forward (i.e., what "pathway" to take). The problem is that we're rarely given all the necessary information, so the stories we end up telling ourselves (a nod to Brené Brown) require us to fill in the gaps using the story maps that we've inter-

nalized. Sometimes the data we use to fill the gaps is accurate but many times it's not [think of what happens when someone exhibits one or two characteristics of a stereotype but is then assumed to possess all of those characteristics, so is pegged as a full-blown (fill in the blank)]. Filling in the gaps happens all the time. Sometimes it's harmless. Many times it's not. In fact, I would contend that much of the division in our world today, and a good bit of what's preventing the bridging of those divisions, is rooted in narrative pathways created by faulty, or incomplete, narrative patterns. So, we're going to play around with some archetypal patterns and see if we can't learn how to be more intentional about choosing pathways that lead to healthier life, growth, and community.

**Q.** *In the first theme story for the 2022 Festival Gathering, (1 Samuel 16: 1-13a) Samuel is sent by God to the home of Jesse to anoint the Lord's chosen to be the next King of Israel. Samuel sees the tall, handsome, eldest son of Jesse and assumes "he's the one!" What natural fallacies (or neurological patterning) in our human thinking holds us back from God's point of view in a story like this and is there a way to engage our own prejudices as we learn a story like this?*

**A.** That's the goal! One of the expected patterns that consistently gets turned on its head in the Bible is the understanding of birthright, or at the very least birth order. To the first-born son does not necessarily go the "spoils" ... or honor ... or glory ... or well-known legacy ... or even "right of first refusal," as it were (like with Jesse's eldest, Eliab). Firstborn Esau is tricked out of his birthright and blessing by younger twin, Jacob; Joseph ends up ruling over his many older brothers; Judah was the fourth son born

to Jacob and he's the one who, other than Joseph, gets the most air time, and even a kingdom named after him; Solomon wasn't even close to being David's firstborn but he's the one who succeeded his father as king (helped by some deaths of older brothers!).

But the Bible is full of all kinds of expectations being reversed—God's mind being changed about the acceptable parameters for destroying Sodom and Gomorrah; mandates to welcome the immigrant, love your enemy, pray for those who persecute you; inclusion of the marginalized; a savior who doesn't fight back militarily; etc.—so it's a wonderful resource and playbook for glimpsing God's point of view



(POV) and beginning to shift our default patterns and pathways.

Let's be clear, our neurological defaults exist because they're what helped our ancestors survive, especially when they had a split second to make a life-or-death decision. The evolution of civilization has made those kinds of perilous scenarios less frequent but there is still the residual story map-

ping within us that can have a more myopic, superficial, and/or narcissistic view. God's outlook is certainly broader than that and it's incumbent upon people of faith to actively seek out that perspective.

**Q.** *What performance suggestions would you have for a storyteller who is presenting this story in worship or in concert?*

**A.** Play with it!

Do your research and see if you can find material for non-verbally filling in the gaps in such a way so that you can best communicate your message. Of course, zeroing in on precisely what that message is (i.e., the Most Important Thing, or MIT, a la Doug Lipman) is job one. In fact, Lipman would say that the Most Important Thing is the Most Important Thing!

So, let's say that you've decided the MIT is: God's point of view is different (and preferable) to human's point of view. Maybe start by comparing translations to see which one uses words/phrases that best convey that message. For those who don't know, biblegateway.com gives the option of comparing over 50 different translations on one page (making the comparison easier, in my opinion). The caveat is that you can only do that with one verse at a time. But just looking at 1 Samuel 16:1, you can see that the end of the verse is mostly translated as "I have provided for myself a king among his sons." Some say, "I have chosen/selected a king for myself among his sons." But a few home in more on the idea of seeing, using "found" or "I see/have seen a king for myself among his sons," with *The Message* choosing, "I've spotted the very king I want among his sons."

*continued on page 12*

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Regardless of what translation you use for the rest of the story, substituting one of these alternative sentences for the end of verse 1 would help to establish God's POV. While it might be tedious to do this exploration separately with every verse, you could at least concentrate on the verses where sight/seeing/appearance are prominent like 6, 7, and 12 (but maybe even 3 where God shows Samuel what to do).

Then, experiment with different ways to convey (and emphasize) seeing/sight/POV. An approach to this that's kind of fun is "Goldilocking" where you try one extreme, then the opposite extreme, then find something in between. (Don't rule out the extremes as possible options; sometimes they're the best at providing a different POV that can still maintain the integrity of the story.) One extreme might be squinting (like you're trying to focus in on something). The opposite extreme could be a Gloria-Swanson-as-Norma-Desmond "Alright, Mr. DeMille, I'm ready for my close up" face. And there are all sorts of options in between!

And if you're really trying to get the audience to see what God sees, how might that play out with the embodiment of the various brothers?

Maybe have the line-up of brothers with their backs to the audience in various "Mr. Universe" poses but as Samuel passes by each and expresses his belief that this one must be God's choice, that brother could turn around and embody something undesirable, preferably an inner trait like greed (counting a wad of money); aggression (pounding fist against palm); cowardice (slumped posture, knees knocking, biting fingernails, etc.). This would be easier if you had a troupe of tellers but a single teller could probably figure

out a way to do a version of this. You get the idea!

**Q.** *Your second keynote will deal with pathways in story. What is a pathway and how do we recognize it in a biblical story?*



**A.** Again, I'll be using "pathways" more as an outgrowth of "where do I/we go from here" as a result of having encountered and processed a biblical story. From the genesis of the Network of Biblical Storytellers, our storytellers have been encouraged to make personal connections with the stories they're preparing to perform, as well as the stories they receive as an audience member.

"Doing the work" can increase the chances of eventually heading down a path that is more congruent with

God's point of view.

It can be fruitful to compare our lives with the lives of the characters and scenarios in the stories we experience and internalize.

Because we have a bank of life experiences, overlaying our stories with biblical stories can not only help us comprehend the biblical story but to learn from it and then apply those lessons to our own lives going forward.

For instance, maybe one of my life stories is the reality of having felt boxed in by cultural expectations and I did nothing about it. How did that ultimately work out? What were the long-term ramifications or ripple effects of that decision? If I were to have a second chance, would I do anything differently? What can I learn from the way the characters in this story handled a similar situation? Would it be appropriate/advantageous/moral for me to act in like manner if I were in that position again? Are there ways I could improve upon their example? Are there ways that my initial response was actually better? What might God's POV be in relation to this issue?

**Q.** *In the theme story from Exodus 1:8-21, Shiphrah and Puah are trapped by a patriarchal pattern. In the learning and telling of this story, how would you suggest the storyteller engage the listener so they can feel the entrapment of this pattern? How can the storyteller help the listener walk with the women on the pathway they must take to escape it?*

**A.** With descriptors like "deal shrewdly with," "taskmasters," "oppress," "forced labor," "dread," "ruthless," "imposing," "bitter," "hard service," and "labor," the first seven verses of

this passage are fraught with tension, foreboding, misery, and tyranny as the context is set. And those emotions don't really go away in the next four verses once Shiphrah and Puah enter the story. In fact, the climax of this little pericope is when Pharaoh confronts the midwives head on: "Why have you done this and allowed the boys to live?" Oh, no! What are they going to say? How are they going to get out of this? Will they get in trouble? Could they be killed? Or tortured? (And what might that look like, especially as females? Yikes!) All that is to say, there is no shortage of opportunities for conveying a sense of entrapment!

And the sky is the limit for how that might be embodied. You could tell this from the viewpoint of Pharaoh and be all blustery and red-faced, somewhat unhinged like Al Pacino in "Scarface." Or perhaps you could invoke a much more controlled evil, like Lucius Malfoy from "Harry Potter" or Christoph Waltz's chilling (and Oscar-winning) performance as Col. Hans Landa in "Inglourious Basterds." Or something in between, a la Goldilocks.

The key is to make it clear—through sinister tones, steely-cold stares, and threatening postures—that you mean business, that authoritative power rests in your hands and your hands only, and that there is no room for discussion about this.

Or you could embody this as the enslaved Hebrews with somewhat stooped shoulders and imploring glances, communicating fear, apprehension, resignation, exhaustion (but a moment of victorious pride in verse 12a when all of Pharaoh's efforts fail to prevent the Hebrews from multiplying). Or something in between.

Any of these options set up the audience for the climatic tension's resolution. And oh, what a resolution! These clever midwives outwit the Pharaoh so

that they not only aren't punished but are ultimately rewarded by God with families of their own. The key here is to really lean into that tension mentioned earlier and not be afraid to use a nice long pregnant pause there, making eye contact with as many people in the audience as possible, non-verbally asking them to put themselves in the



shoes of the midwives, perhaps even conjuring up similar situations from their own lives, appealing to their better natures to have empathy for these women and righteous indignation at the appalling injustice, and to summon their collective energies and sense of morality to right this wrong. But is that what's going to happen? The stakes are really high here. **"Why have you done this and allowed the boys to live?"** The pause that follows this question almost can't be too long to create a sense of tension ... that ... just ... has ... to be ... resolved!! For practical purposes, we had to keep our FG passage a manageable length but the

very next verse—Ex. 1:22—shows the horrific ultimate outcome: all people now have the authority, and mandate, to kill Hebrew baby boys.

The next 10 verses, the beginning of Chapter 2, then proceeds into the birth, potential demise, and eventual rescue of baby Moses—at the hands of three more females!—so I encourage a learning and telling of Ex. 1:8-2:10 for a fuller narrative of five amazing women, most of whom didn't know each other but who still managed to work together in a way that broke the oppressive patriarchal patterns and forged amazing and salvific new pathways.

*Q. The third theme story for the Festival Gathering of Biblical Storytelling comes from Romans 7:15-25a. In this text, Paul rails against his own sinful nature. How do you think texts like this have been used to form unhealthy viewpoints and destructive community narratives?*

*A.* Oh boy ... where to begin! First of all, I want to say upfront that I absolutely believe that sin exists and that it should be acknowledged, confessed, and efforts made to choose a different pathway going forward. That said, I do think that an unhealthy emphasis has been placed on sin over the centuries that has overshadowed what I believe was the core of Jesus' message: Loving relationships.

*Does "sin" prevent us from achieving loving relationships? Sure. But as most teachers and parents know, you'll probably get better behavior from your students and children if you frame the "rules" rather than being heavy handed with the "thou shalt nots."*

*continued on page 14*

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Can you feel the difference between “Honor your father and mother” and “Thou shalt not kill/steal/commit adultery/covet”?

This goes beyond political correctness and protecting “snowflakes;” it’s sound psychology. No one likes to be beat over the head with their mistakes, short-comings, and wrong-doings. And I feel like Paul is somewhat dipping into this methodology in Romans 7. So, we’re going to play around with alternate viewpoints of this passage to see if we can maybe come to a healthier understanding for ourselves and our communities.

**Q. The church is often criticized for being a closed, judgmental group that does not tolerate different points of view. For a retreat or Bible study, what narratives could storytellers use to encourage a faith community to develop greater self-awareness of their own hard and fast opinions in order to foster a more welcoming and non-judgmental community?**

**A.** One of the podcasts I enjoy listening to is Malcolm Gladwell’s *Revisionist History*. Rather than rewriting the facts or truth about history, as the name might seem to suggest, he actually shares facts and truths that aren’t well known about a certain story, thus “filling in the gaps” in a way that brings more integrity to it. His re-visioning is an invitation to not see something the way we normally would.

This is just another version of what our own Richard Swanson calls provoking the scriptures. In fact, in his original

*Provoking the Scriptures*, p. 30, he has a very helpful perspective on this, stating that, in essence, scriptural interpretation should surprise everyone because if our interpretation ends up being what everyone expected, why go to the trouble in the first place? Of course, this is easier said than done!

There needs to be an atmosphere that’s



conducive to provocation for this to have any kind of lasting impact and many churches, sadly, don’t have that sort of openness.

That said, I’m often brought into churches as a guest teller, and I can get away with pressing the envelope (and even stepping on some toes!) because

I’m the guest and not the in-house pastor or religious educator or Sunday school teacher. So, perhaps one pathway toward fostering a more welcoming and non-judgmental community would be to bring in an outsider who could plant the provocative seeds (that would then need to be carefully nurtured by the in-the-know church leader).

But a real basic narrative place to start is the Bible itself.

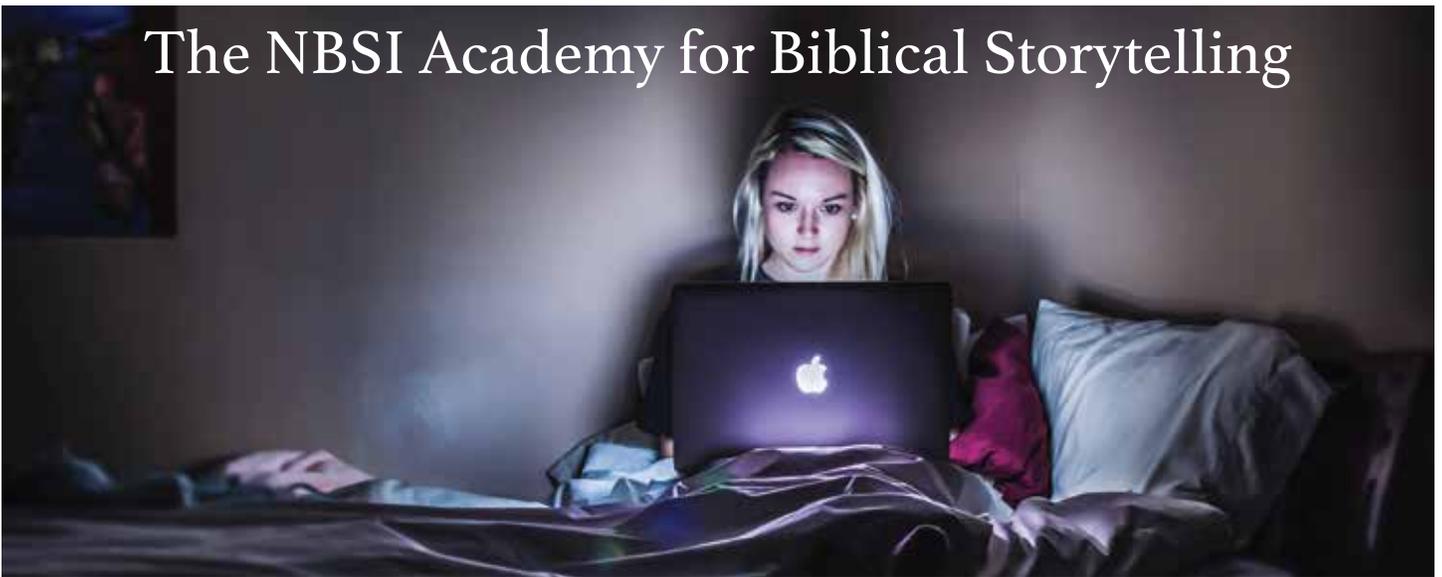
**There are four versions of Jesus’ life depicted in the four gospels and they don’t always agree. In fact, sometimes they are drastically different.**

There are two very different versions of creation in Genesis (and a third if you include the beginning of John’s gospel).

Even Noah’s story is full of contradictions that point to more than one source (or “interpretation”). So perhaps start with having participants write down or share their pre-conceived understandings of a given story. Then offer a telling of that story. Better yet, offer more than one telling. (This is something our slowly growing online storytelling library—<https://biblicalstorytellinglibrary.com/>—will make easier to do.) Which one is “right” ... or could there be more than one “right” way to

interpret a given biblical story? Again, this is easier said than done, but pointing out the multiple versions of the same story already canonized in the Bible might make this challenge a bit more palatable.

# The NBSI Academy for Biblical Storytelling



The purpose of the NBSI Academy for Biblical Storytelling, frequently referred to as “ABS,” is to provide a process of support and training in both the performance and teaching of biblical stories that encourages individual styles as well as an appreciation for the stories in the form they’ve been “traditioned” to us.

The Academy is overseen by Dr. Tracy Radosevic, who also serves as a mentor, and her mentoring is supplemented by a team from within the NBSI community—those who have undertaken advanced degrees, evidenced a depth of knowledge from training and independent study, demonstrated significant experience in teaching and leading workshops, distinguished themselves as performers, and shown themselves to have attained a level of spiritual awareness through the discipline of biblical storytelling.

The word “Academy” was chosen intentionally; this program is rigorous, requiring the reading of a variety of books, the writing of several papers, and a multitude of recorded performances (including one 90-minute workshop). ABS is a “school without walls,” meaning that the majority of the work is done from home with most assignments sent via email or uploaded to a Google Drive account. Several online teleconferencing sessions via



*“She (Tracy) is a stellar storyteller, dedicated educator, meticulous manager of the Academy, wise, strong and funny.”* Sandhya Rubin, India

Zoom—both for instruction and ongoing community building—are also periodically scheduled throughout the year.

Two face-to-face meetings are also required: the summer Festival Gathering of NBS (as well as the immediate 2.5 days afterwards), and a late-fall, two-night meeting, the location of which is determined by the geographic location of that year’s students. This structure works best with students who are self-motivated, disciplined, committed and open to constructive criticism.

The Academy offers two levels of certification: a one-year (January to December of even-numbered years) program culminating with the grant-

ing of a Biblical Storytelling Certificate (BSC), and an optional second-year program (January to December of odd-numbered years) concluding with a Master of Biblical Storytelling Certificate (MBSC). Candidates commit to a process of reading, course work, coaching, reflection, repertoire development, and training in pedagogy.

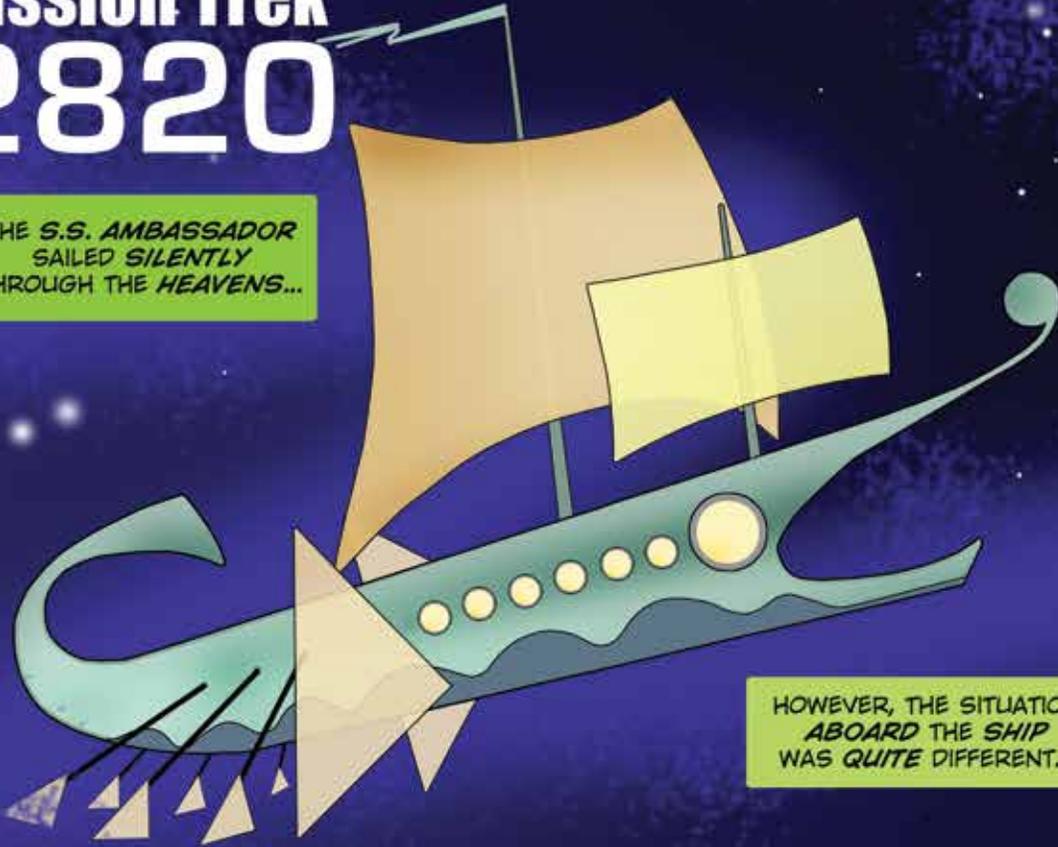
Maybe this will be the year you decide to take your storytelling to the next level!



*“Tracy teaches with wisdom, grace, and humor out of her own vast experience as a biblical storyteller. Her compassion for the world takes her own storytelling to a deeper level. My own work with Tracy strengthened my storytelling as a spiritual practice, as an interpretive approach to the Word, and as a way of engaging audiences with the power of a story well told.”*  
Phil Ruge-Jones, PhD

# Mission Trek 2820

THE S.S. AMBASSADOR  
SAILED SILENTLY  
THROUGH THE HEAVENS...



HOWEVER, THE SITUATION  
ABOARD THE SHIP  
WAS QUITE DIFFERENT...

**POL APOSTOLOS,**  
CAPTAIN OF THE AMBASSADOR

**JOSEF AREN BARNABAS,**  
LT. COMMANDER

LET ME BE PERFECTLY CLEAR, AREN.  
JEAN MARC CANNOT BE ENTRUSTED  
WITH RESPONSIBILITIES.

HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN WHAT HE  
DID TO US ON PAMFILIA IV?

NO, POL, I HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN.  
BUT YOU OF ALL PEOPLE  
KNOW THE NEED FOR  
SECOND CHANCES!



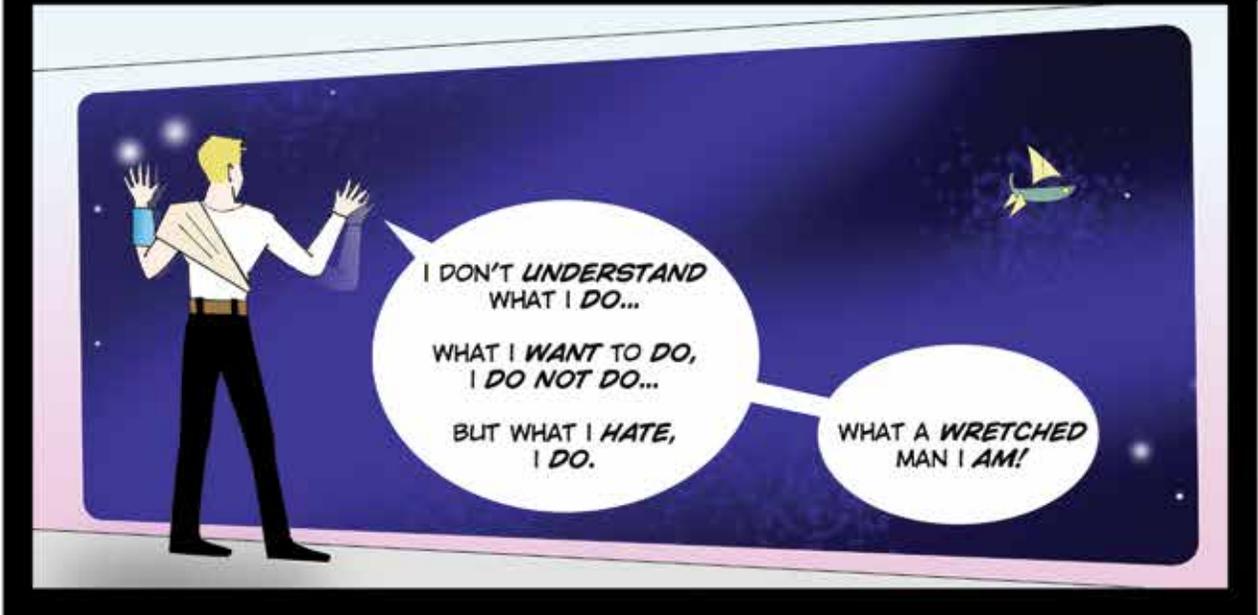
I AM SORRY.  
THE ANSWER IS NO.



THEN I RESIGN MY  
COMMISSION, CAPTAIN.



SO BARNABAS TOOK OFF... WITH JEAN MARC. AND A SHUTTLE. THEY SET OUT TOWARD THE CYPRIOT STAR CLUSTER.



I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT I DO...  
WHAT I WANT TO DO, I DO NOT DO...  
BUT WHAT I HATE, I DO.

WHAT A WRETCHED MAN I AM!



SILVIA VAN NUYS, COMMANDER

WORDS OF WISDOM... BUT DON'T FORGET THE VERSE THAT COMES NEXT: "THANKS BE TO GOD, WHO DELIVERS US THROUGH JESUS THE CHRIST."



I LOST MY TEMPER... AND I LOST MY ASTROGATOR...



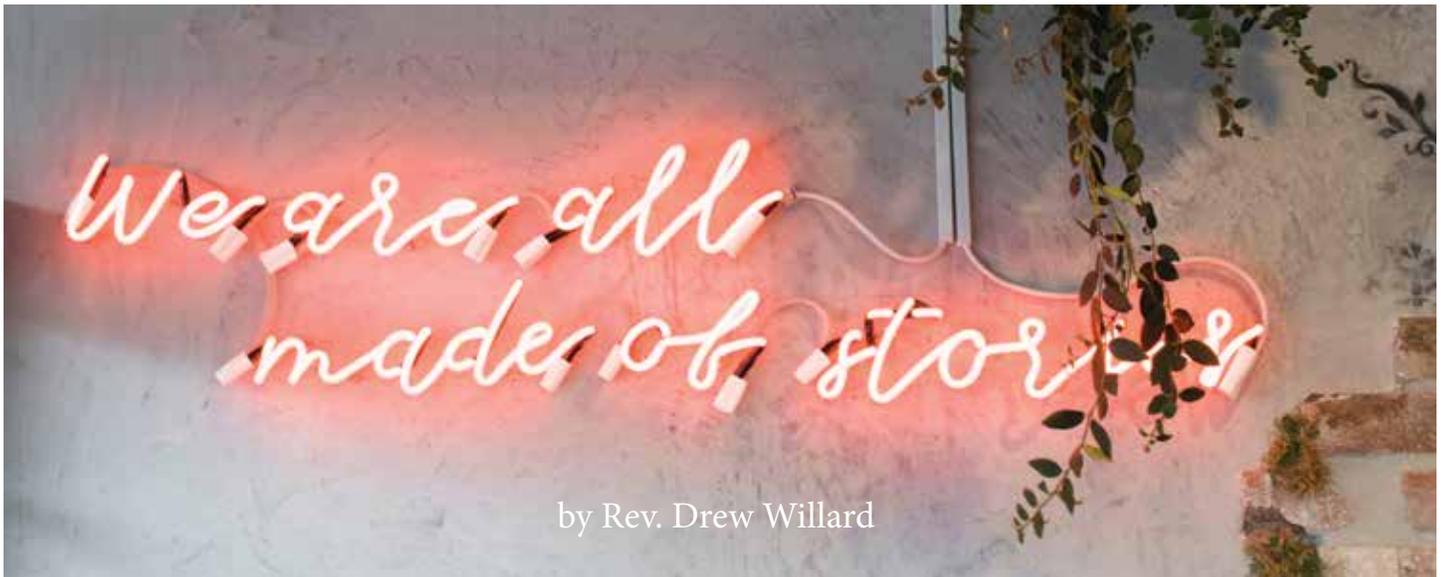
YOU CAN REPLACE YOUR ASTROGATOR... BUT YOU CANNOT REPLACE YOUR FRIEND.



I THINK YOU KNOW WHAT YOU NEED TO DO, CAPTAIN.

YES, I DO.

The adventures of Captain Pol Apostolos and the crew of the S.S. Ambassador continue online at [missiontrek2820.weebly.com](http://missiontrek2820.weebly.com).  
MissionTrek 2820 is written and illustrated by Pastor Tom Pairan



by Rev. Drew Willard

Two thousand years ago, Jesus sent out his disciples two by two, into the towns and villages, to drive out the evil spirits of fear, deception and hatred; to heal people in their distress of body, mind, and spirit; and to plant seeds of “beloved community” with the songs and stories and prayers of faith.

Fr. Edward Sanders, SJ was the spiritual director for Lancaster Theological Seminary when I was a student there. When I told him about my experiments with biblical storytelling, he said, “Be aware of the stories that come to you to tell.”

Over time, his words have come to mean being aware of the stories that have shaped my “narrative” of belief. By that, I mean a way of interpreting the times in which we live and suggesting a way forward through them.

An example is an intriguing detail in the midst of Jesus’ instructions to those 72 of his followers being sent out ahead of him on his journey to Jerusalem, when he said in Luke 10:4 (RSV),

**“Carry no purse,  
no bag, no sandals;  
and salute no one  
on the road.”**

Don’t greet others on the road. Don’t get side-tracked. Keep your focus on the homes of landowners in the towns

and villages where you will be staying. Why? Because the disciples were not simply homeless wanderers. They were trained missionaries and this was how Christianity would move out the Middle East into the wider world.

The disciples were trained to do three things – which I will put in terms of our post-modern vernacular:

- Drive out evil spirits of fear, deception, and hatred.
- Heal people in their distress of body, mind, and spirit.
- Plant seeds of beloved community through songs, stories, and prayers of faith.

This is exactly what is needed these days – though admittedly not so easily



done during a pandemic of virus and epidemics of violence and addiction. Yet it is what is needed by as many of us who are called for such a purpose,

to do what we can do. Here’s what I’m going to do: Though I am a retired pastor, I’m free to keep being a minister and that takes the form of supply preaching. I don’t have to be bound to the lectionary, but have the resource of the stories I have been telling for more than 30 years—with thanks to Tom Boomershine who got me started years ago. Sometimes it’s good to take stock of the stories that have “come to you to tell.” My “narrative” includes the following:

*Beginnings:*

Mark 1:1-12, Luke 4:2-15, John 1:43-51, Luke 4:16-30, John 2:1-11, Mark 2:1-12, Matt. 5:1-16  
*The Sermon on the Mount:*  
Matthew 5-7

*Sabbath:*

Mark 2:23-6:43 [including The Stilling of the Storms:  
Mark 5:35-6:20]

*The Other Side:*

Mark 7:14-8:10

*The Turning Point:*

Matthew 14:1-33, Mark 8:27-9:29

*The Passion:*

John 7:53-8:11, Luke 7:36-8:3, Luke 9:51-10:42, John 11:1-57, John 19:17-30

*The Resurrection:*

Luke 24:1-12, John 20:1-18, Luke 24:13-35, John 21:2-19, Luke 24:36-53



So, what are the stories that have come to you to tell?



# Biblical Story Insights from Other Cultures

by Jim and Janet Stahl, NBSI Seminar Members and International Bible Translators

*Q. You have been working with pastors and churches in South Asia for several years. Often, the insights they have into biblical stories are quite different from those of American pastors and scholars. Are there societal roles and expectations that form their insights and opinions?*

A. It could be that their roles are somewhat different than pastors in other parts of the world. Culture and shared experiences often shape the way we hear stories and people look at the story with different lenses. Sometimes there are cultural practices in South Asia that are similar to what is happening in the biblical story. And there are many different cultures and languages in South Asia. The questions asked are often not posed in commentaries because they are mostly written by people outside South Asia.

In a couple parts of South Asia, we worked with women who were either married to pastors or were church leaders.

They learned the biblical stories and

told them in their various languages. Typically, their roles as women limited them somewhat within the church settings. Biblical storytelling, however, gave them voice and confidence.

**For some women, those who did not live close to established churches, their storytelling became foundational for fellowship.**



And where there were churches, the biblical storytelling helped their communities engage with the scriptures.

There are many religions other than Christianity in South Asia. Often these majority religions set up a framework for the broader community. We've found even in areas where the intra-religious dialogue is scant or tense, biblical storytelling is a non-threatening way for various groups to engage.

We worked together with pastors and a few women Sunday School teachers recently as they learned to tell Luke 1-2. They found it very appropriate

for Mary to rush off to Elizabeth's home because in their society if a young girl or an unwed young woman becomes pregnant, her parents quickly arrange to send her to distant relatives who live far away for the duration of her pregnancy. All of them were very touched that God arranged for Elizabeth to give such a warm and encouraging welcome and blessing for Mary upon her arrival. And they were

overwhelmed by Joseph's willingness to raise someone else's son as his own even to the extent of becoming

*continued on page 20*

refugees in order to protect the child. This was unimaginable for them.

*Q. Jim, you told Matthew 1 to a group of church leaders from S Asia. I found it interesting that you said they quickly noticed the women named in the genealogy: Tamar, the mother of Perez and Zerah, Rahab, the mother of Boaz, Ruth, the mother of Obed, and the wife of Uriah (Bathsheba), the mother of Solomon. Were these pastors female? If not, how do you explain their interest in these women?*

A. This particular group had women church leaders, but they were not pastors. The women leaders were the ones noting the various women in the genealogy. It helps when the storyteller pauses when telling Matthew 1 when the women are listed. It struck me that this genealogy was meant to be heard, as the names pop out, the groups of fourteen, and there is a bit of suspense built up for Joseph and Mary.

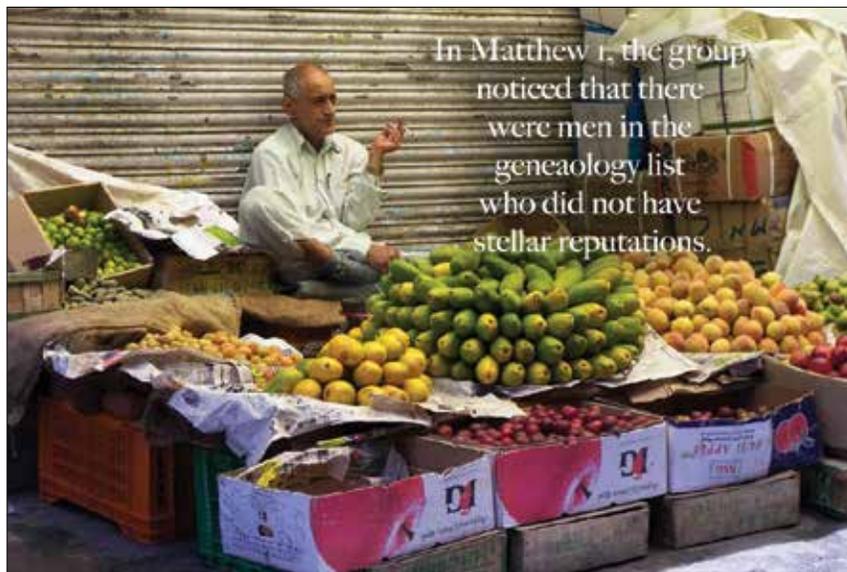
This group noticed that the women in this genealogy faced tough times. And they also noted there were men in the genealogy list that did not have stellar reputations.

So, when the genealogy ends, Matthew begins the story of Jesus' birth, and lists Joseph as "the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born." (CEB) The S Asian group noticed that part, that it didn't follow the rhythm or pattern of the others. Something was definitely marked here. And was all this going to be another scandal?

One of the things the group noticed was that Joseph played a crucial role

in the story and that he was not a flat character or as they put it, "a disposable cup." Joseph went to great lengths to look after Mary, listening to what God told him in a dream, taking her safely to Bethlehem and helping the family escape to Egypt, and then traveling back to Nazareth.

*Q. The women listed in Matthew's genealogy stories are interesting, complex, and sometimes show desperation and scandal. How do the cultural differences between America and S Asia create different understandings of some of these stories? Will you give us some examples?*



A. Perhaps the understanding comes from what women experience rather than cultural differences.

Janet said that when she was leading a group of S Asian women storytellers, they had something of an acceptance or understanding of what those situations for the biblical women were like. For example, in the story of Ruth, men tended to want to change Ruth's environment to "clean up" the story to say Ruth went to Boaz house rather than to visit Boaz on the threshing floor. The women were more accepting or understanding of what Ruth's situation might have been.

There are cultural differences for sure, but there are many cultures in S Asia, and many in the US. So, it's difficult to make a generalization. However, there are some, like the relationship between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law in S Asia is often troublesome or tense since the young couple live with the boy's parents and the young wife becomes a servant for her in-laws. Some of the women in S Asia who learned to tell Ruth found her story very helpful in keeping this relationship healthy or giving them a positive point of view for that relationship as a healthy one.

Another insight we gathered from Ruth had to do with women gleaned the harvest. This is not an easy task. Gleaners often have to really dig to get anything worth using as the grains are trampled and muddy, and of course not plentiful or of good quality. And young women as day laborers or gleaners are easy targets for abuse. So, for Ruth to go home safely with an abundance of grain spoke of amazing blessing

to these S Asian women, some of whom were from farming communities. They could feel the depths of the relationship between Ruth who was willing to face such danger and hard labor and for Naomi who received the abundant gift of grain with grace and appreciation.

*Q. How do your S Asian storytellers see Mary, the mother of Jesus and her relationship with Joseph? Is it scandalous to them, as it often is to American listeners?*

A. Yes, I think they also see the story as scandalous if they hear the Luke

story. However, Matthew gives Mary subtle prominence in how he referred to Joseph, the husband of Mary in the context of the genealogy. Fortunately, Joseph listened to God's prompting to marry Mary and not to let her go as he was going to do, which would have been tragic. Matthew calls him righteous.

**Many of the South Asian women we work with who hear this story are very sad for Mary, who has to give birth to her first baby without a female family member with her. This seems to reinforce their appreciation of this story as a scandal.**

*Q. You and Janet are Bible translators for the Seed Company and as such travel all over the world! What are the greatest rewards in your work and what are the greatest challenges you face?*

A. Where do I start? One of the greatest rewards to us is simply that the groups we train find biblical storytelling useful, enjoyable, educational, and challenging. We usually encourage the storytellers to think of ways they can tell the biblical stories in their circles and current ministries. It's rewarding to hear how these stories have helped their ministries and their audiences.

Janet reminded me of storytellers who tell the stories they've learned in a nearby hospital, sort of like a chaplaincy. The patients looked forward to listening to these stories.

Other ministries that people have used storytelling for include prison visitation, youth groups, guilds, outreach and church planting, bible study, new church members, couples wanting to get married, seminary interim courses, and sharing with other religious practitioners who don't know much about the Christian scriptures.



In some cases, the storytellers become bible translators; in others they work in parallel with the translators. In one case, a translator became a storyteller and in so doing improved the quality and quantity of his translation output. He commented that storytelling helped him pick his head up and see the whole text, which greatly aided his translating.

It is also very rewarding to see the storytellers grow in confidence and in their storytelling techniques and repertoire. The stories they tell us of how the Bible stories were received are rewarding.

Like the time one S Asian woman saw a young couple on their way to court. They looked troubled and she asked what the problem was. The wife was not able to have children and so they were going to divorce. After asking permission, the storyteller told them the creation story from Gen 2. They were moved by the story to give their relationship another chance. The husband's mother was moved, too, and ultimately became a Christian.

**The people we train to do biblical storytelling train others in their communities. It becomes more a movement or lifestyle than a project.**

This part of oral bible storytelling (OBS) is very rewarding. Our first project in SE Papua New Guinea was in Alotau, back in 2009. When we revisited three years later, we found the participants were mostly continuing with biblical storytelling in their communities. They wanted to be further trained to run OBS training in other parts of PNG where they speak languages unrelated to their own. They have completed that other project. Similar outcomes have happened in Ethiopia, parts of Asia, Mexico, and SE Asia.

Another rewarding aspect of biblical storytelling is to see how storytelling quickly inspires people to add other art forms.

**We've really enjoyed the creativity storytellers have shown by adding music, dance, drama, poetry, chants, laments, ballads, bamboo clicking, digital storytelling, and kathaprasangam (an artform from Kerala) to storytelling. It's rewarding to see people feel inspired to create.**

Of course, the greatest challenge now is similar to what we all face, not being able to be in person due to Covid-19. Training others via Zoom has been something of a silver lining, being able to be effective albeit while working remotely, and not ideally in person.

We also are challenged to keep the storytelling as a discovery process, and not something like a Bible teaching, or "this is what you need to know from this story." Lastly, it's always a challenge to try to get the story right, which is something we'll probably always be in the process of doing. Storytelling, like translation, is an iterative process. We've found it's a great tool for Bible translation work.



**NBSI**  
NETWORK OF  
BIBLICAL STORYTELLERS  
INTERNATIONAL

# Board of Directors

President  
Simone Rollings



Simone Rollings, a native Marylander, has served on the NBSI board since 2017. She tells biblical and non-biblical stories throughout the Baltimore-Washington area in various venues. Her favorite stories inspire others to make a difference in their lives and the lives of others. Her first storytelling concert series, “When Faith Meets Water,” shared Old Testament and New Testament stories rich with images of water symbolizing peace, comfort, deliverance, healing, and salvation. She’s taught biblical story-learning workshops for organizations such as the Baltimore-Washington Conference United Methodist Congregation Southern Region. She created and directed “Women of Grace” a creative arts show introducing five unique women from the Bible who were catalysts of change. She holds an MBA and has over 20 years of experience in talent management and government acquisition & contracting.

Treasurer  
Dina Ferguson



Dina Ferguson, member of NBSI since 2003, was introduced to the network when her sister Patsy returned from a Christian Education conference where Tracy Radosevic was the keynote presenter. Patsy gave her a copy of *The Biblical Storyteller* and after reading it, Dina immediately felt she had “found her people.” She has been a storyteller as long as she can remember, and NBSI pulled together the threads of this past with her deep love of scripture. She completed a D. Min. in Biblical Storytelling with Tom Boomershine and Dennis Dewey as mentors. She was president of the NBSI board of directors from 2010-11 and has served NBSI as treasurer since 2014. She is also a member of the NBSI Scholars’ Seminar. Dina is an Episcopal priest and has been rector (lead pastor) of St. Michael the Archangel Episcopal Church in El Segundo, CA since 2014 where she regularly tells the gospel in Sunday worship.

Secretary  
Debbie Weir



Debbie holds a Master of Theological Studies degree from Wesley Theological Seminary. She is on staff at Huntingtown United Methodist Church in southern Maryland. She enjoys the theater and loves to travel. She was able to combine her love of storytelling and travel by participating in the 2020 NBSI mission trip to India. Debbie received a Masters of Biblical Storytelling Certificate from the Network of Biblical Storytellers’ Academy for Biblical Storytelling in 2012.

Cliff Barbarick



Cliff Barbarick is an Associate Professor in the Department of Bible, Missions, and Ministry at Abilene Christian University. His initial appreciation for biblical storytelling came from its usefulness in his college classes. When he told biblical stories to students in class, they listened more closely and noticed the subtleties of the biblical compositions. When he asked his students to learn and tell with him, the experience not only gave them a more nuanced understanding of the stories; it also cultivated a learning community that enhanced every other part of the class. Since these initial experiments with biblical storytelling in the college classroom, Cliff has also witnessed the power of biblical storytelling to build community and encourage spiritual formation in other settings, including retreats for missionaries that he has led in Asia, Europe, and Africa. He lives in Abilene, Texas, with his wife and three children.

### Marti Steussy



Marti Steussy grew up with *My Book-House*, a cross-cultural selection of folk tales and children's literature. Her love for stories about distant times and places eventually led to two science fiction novels, published by Del Rey, and a Ph.D. in Hebrew Bible. When Dick Davies introduced her to biblical storytelling in the early 1990s, her reaction was, "of course!" She keynoted the 1996 Festival Gathering and has been a member of the NBSI Seminar since its creation. She emphasizes that the Network's mission is "for everyone to learn and tell [not just hear!] biblical stories," and that it's worth

doing regardless of the level of one's storytelling skill. Marti lives in Indianapolis; her hobbies include part-time seminary teaching, walking for miles, wood-splitting, animal training, and computer solitaire.

### Rachel Doll



Rachel Whaley Doll serves as the Pastor for Faith Formation at Winter Park Presbyterian Church in Wilmington, NC. She enjoys playing ukulele, drums, piano, and singing along to all kinds of music in the car! Rachel has been sharing biblical stories for over ten years, and is grateful to the Network, filled with mentors, who saw gifts in her she didn't believe were there. She looks forward to passing that love for our shared story to siblings in faith that she meets on her journey. You can connect with Rachel on Twitter @rachelwhaleydoll or at [www.rachelwhaleydoll.com](http://www.rachelwhaleydoll.com).

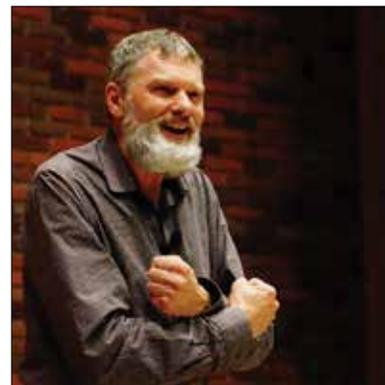
### Mike Cantley



Mike Cantley is a graduate of Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC and is a United Methodist pastor serving churches in the W.Va. conference. Before seminary, Cantley served

as Director of Christian Education and Family Ministries at a United Methodist Church in Arkansas. He also worked as a Communications Specialist at American University and was a professional firefighter and paramedic before completion of his seminary degree. Mike and his wife, Brooke, have three grown children.

### Ken Quiring



Ken Quiring has been active in NBSI for quite some time. He serves Grace Mennonite Church in Brandon, Manitoba, Canada and leads workshops about biblical storytelling in Canada.

### Michele Walton



Michele Walton currently serves Asbury United Methodist Church in Albuquerque, New Mexico as Family Life Coordinator. She holds a MDiv from Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington DC in theology and worship arts and has also served as a chaplain. She is a NBSI Certified Biblical Storyteller.

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