

INTRODUCTION TO SHARING YOUR SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

By Rev. June Begany

The following are instructions for creating a tool that can be used for mapping out on paper your spiritual journey. This exercise can be used in a workshop for older adults and offers an opportunity to involve younger generations.

Using a 11"x14" sheet of paper, fold it in half the short way. Then fold it in half again, then one final time. When you unfold your sheet, you should have 8 columns.

Now, fold the sheet into thirds the long way. The top 1/3 will be for listing events in the community, nation or world, For example, in the block under the column headed 1940-1950, you might list World War II. In the square in the middle third, list events of a personal nature such as graduations, weddings, moves, job changes. In the blocks in the bottom third and under the appropriate years list faith/God experiences

Opening your sheet, so that the eight columns are open in front of you, move to the column farthest to your right. At the very top, label it 2010-present. Now move one column to the left. Label it 2000-2010. Move to your left once again. Label that column 1990-2000. Continue moving one column to the left labeling each column with the previous decade. The column furthest to your left should be labeled 1940-1950.

Turn your sheet over. Now starting with the column furthest to your left, label it 1930-1940. The next column to the right of the first would be labeled 1920-1930. The next column to the right would be 1910-1920. You may not need another column, depending on the age of those participating.

Now have each participant place an X at the top of the column which contains the year they were born. For example, if someone was born in 1935, they would place an X at the top of the column labeled 1930-1940.

Filling in the blocks at the top third of the page can be done as a community discussion. Different members may remember events in the community or the life of the church. Conversation may develop around some of these larger community and world events. For example someone may mention the Great Depression - or the 2008 housing bubble - and conversation can be encouraged around the effect of these events. Be sure to encourage people to make notes in the blocks at the bottom of the page if those larger events affected a person's faith, values etc. This sharing might be done as an intergenerational activity. Younger people might hear about events that they know as history from people who experienced those events. Younger people might share more about events that they consider significant with those who may not be as aware of things going on in the community or world today.

While the middle set of blocks are more personal, the leader may suggest a number of items that might be noted (i.e. graduations, honors, marriages and divorces, loss of parents, etc.). While individuals will have different markers, they can be encouraged to tell some stories about significant events in their lives.

The blocks in the bottom third will be much more personal. These may need to be completed alone with sharing to come at a later time. Some things might include, Sunday School events, joining a church, experiences of answered prayer, sensing a call to service, serving as a church officer.

Perhaps on the back of the sheet in an unused section or on a separate piece of paper, individuals can be encouraged to look for any patterns in their life of faith. They can also be encouraged to look at what values have become important and which they want to share.

If people took these sheets home to complete, suggest the following week they share their faith stories and journeys. Encourage them to share with each other, then with the wider congregation how they have experienced God at work in their lives and in the world.

Some of these stories could form the basis of the sermon for Older Adult Sunday. Perhaps an all church event at coffee hour or a potluck supper around the time of the church's anniversary could provide a time to share stories of the church's history as well as individuals' stories of their faith journey. Younger members might also be encouraged to interview older members for a more complete story.

1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	
							community, national world events
							personal events
							faith church, spiritual events

Rev. June Begany served as an Associate Pastor for 24 years at a downtown Cleveland church, as an interim pastor for 2 years and is now retired. She is also a licensed social worker, has taught history in the Cleveland school district, and is certified to administer the Myers Briggs Type Indicator. She completed her capstone project for certification in the Older Adult Ministry program in 2014. She has recently served as secretary to the POAMN Executive Committee.