
Story Ministry - Listening

Story is fundamental. Story is sacred. Story connects all of us.

Everyone has a story to share. We need to be able to listen attentively and without judgment to the stories of the people who invite us into their lives. We want to humanize or tell the human story that gets at the heart of the issue being explored by Story Ministry. They have invited us to meet with them, and want to be a part of the story project and have something they need and want to share. One of the most important things we can do is create a safe space for that sharing.

Here are good story-listening practices.

- A Story Ministry Listener needs to be able to make a long-term commitment (minimally 6 months, possibly 1-2 years or longer) in order to build a trusting relationship with the community.
- We only go where we are invited. The invitation to do Story Ministry work must come from the community and they are our directors, guides and field producers.
- The Story Listener must be flexible and available to spend as much time as necessary with each community for meaningful conversations to occur. This is not a “delegation visit” – story ministry takes time.
- Conversations and relationship building begins months or weeks before a listening deployment may take place. In these conversations an overall vision, purpose, “hopes” for the project, and tentative schedules are developed with the community leaders/partners.
- Similar to all other aspects of Story Ministry, we let them lead us in conversations. “Where do you want to start?”
- Story sharing and listening can be an intimate experience, often involving only 2-3 people.
- The Story Listener lets the community member lead us through the conversation. What is important to you? What do people need to know? What is at the heart of all of this?
- After interviews, we brainstorm with the community members to talk about how to capture or represent their story visually and let them direct us to locations, events, and visual b-roll ideas.

- Once the story projects are complete, we always bring them back to the community for community sharing, an important event that the Story Listener will want to be a part of.