
STORY MINISTRY OVERVIEW

The Mission of the PDA Story Ministry Team

“Story is as basic to human nature as eating and sleeping. Our life experience has narrative quality. We live life and share our stories.” Dr. David Rhoads

Storytelling is the social and cultural activity of sharing stories. Narratives or stories have been shared in every culture as a means of education, cultural preservation, and instilling moral values.

PDA has always recognized and valued the power and importance of Story, and having a Trauma Informed framework when working alongside communities impacted by natural and human caused disasters. When we truly listen to our community partners, we learn that these disasters do not happen in a vacuum: There are layers of systems, policies, structures, and underlying issues that make communities more vulnerable that have often been ignored and silenced, and these voices must be part of the story.

PDA affirms and encourages storytelling as a form of ministry that comes alongside impacted communities to heal and amplify voices that have been silenced and enable wider community and congregational engagement around justice issues.

In coming alongside community partners, Story Ministry is rooted in listening, relationships, and decentering ourselves to allow a collective creative process to amplify voices/stories that have been silenced by dominant systems and structures. We are co-creators in this process that amplifies counter-stories that challenge dominant narratives and speak truth to power.

As such, listening is at the core of Story Ministry and we are invited into these sacred spaces and relationships with community partners and they guide us to what voices and stories need to be amplified and centered in the film.

An essential part of Jesus’s mission and ministry was *Story*. He used parables and counter-stories to challenge dominant systems, laws, and structures that separated and dehumanized people to cultivate the Beloved Community. Stories, narratives, and parables carry the seeds of community and are powerful tools for connection.

How Story Ministry works:

- Partnerships – Relationships are the root and foundation of our ministry
- Local ownership – Listening and Decentering guides our process
- Long Term Commitment – Deep commitment to community partners over the long haul.

The Power of Story: Story is fundamental

Story is sacred

Story connects us

Why film? Film can influence perception and inspire action through...

- Providing education
- Identifying a base
- Mobilizing an existing base
- Changing hearts and minds

The widening circles of support around a film continue to grow in the Screening Campaign and Distribution Phase as communities and congregations across the country host screening events and panels. These are not just “films” for passive viewing. They are resources for congregations and communities to mobilize and “gather around story” to amplify voices/stories that have been silenced and cultivate wider engagement around justice issues.

This model/practice of “gathering around story” in community is nothing new for the church and in some ways is a return to our roots as a community grounded, formed, and transformed by “Story.”

Projects either in pre-production or production include:

1. A film or series focused on industrial pollution and environmental racism
2. A new GA mandated feature documentary focused on gun violence
3. A series in collaboration with Migration Accompaniment Ministries
4. A series or documentary focused on Climate Change with International partners
5. A Matthew 25 Systemic Poverty short documentary or series
6. A project on Historical Harms and church fire with MLK Community Presbyterian Church

Films, trailers, posters, screening kits and study guides for many of the PDA films are available at this link:

<https://pda.pcusa.org/situation/story-productions/>

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The Trouble the Water docuseries was delayed in its release while accompanying study materials were developed, but even with a limited release, we are thrilled that we have already received more than 450 different organizations and groups, who have registered to use the series. This includes a wide spectrum of colleges, universities, historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), seminaries, congregations, racial justice coalitions, community groups, presbyteries, among others.

Link to a short 2-minute preview clip from episode 2:

<https://vimeo.com/423691191/bb9aed972c>

To register and access the Trouble the Water documentary series:

<https://pda.pcusa.org/page/TtW/>

The Flint and Trigger documentaries have received wider distribution across streaming services like Amazon, Apple, Tubi, Comcast cable, and all major cable providers On Demand - reaching more than 60 million households through Cable and 225 million through Amazon and Apple. Here are the Amazon links for both films:

Flint: The Poisoning of an American City - feature documentary (85 minutes):

https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B07YBLSM4Y?pf_rd_r=PHJ27PC5KSNE7PG3AYRX&pf_rd_p=edaba0ee-c2fe-4124-9f5d-b31d6b1bfbee

"Trigger: The Ripple Effect of Gun Violence" (2017):

<https://www.amazon.com/Trigger-Ripple-Effect-Gun-Violence/dp/B07VH1LQSB/>

The Flint film website also has articles about the work, reviews, community screenings, and more info:

<http://www.flintpoisoning.org/>

Before, During and After:

Before Disaster: Story Ministry comes alongside communities “before” disaster by focusing on root causes, systems, structures, policies, and historical contexts that make communities more vulnerable and historically marginalized.

During and After Disaster: Story Ministry comes alongside communities “during” and “after” disaster by listening and decentering the process and allowing a collective creative process to amplify the voices and counters-stories that have been silenced and need to be at the table, widening the circles of support and community engagement.

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