

## What is your story?

- Fill out the timeline with the significant events in your life. If you need to you can add more spaces. Include positive events and negative events. Significant events are those which shaped the course of your life or had an impact on your beliefs.

Walter Brueggemann, a well-known Bible scholar, talks about the life of faith as one of orientation, disorientation, and reorientation. The period of orientation is your early faith...you accept scripture at face value, things are pretty black and white, and everything makes sense.

Disorientation is when something happens that shakes that early faith. Doubt is often a response, although anger, confusion, and bewilderment are some others. Life doesn't make as much sense and you're less sure of everything you thought was true.

Reorientation is a resurrection-like experience...your faith re-emerges and grows again. But it's not the same as the early faith. It's more capable of dealing with paradox – the idea that two apparently opposite things are both true. For example, in this reoriented faith, you can believe that both the creation stories in the Bible are true and that scientific discoveries about the origins of the universe are also true. Things are no longer so clear cut, but you're able to find peace and beauty nonetheless.

- What were the important events and institutions in the formation of your early faith? Can you remember how you sensed God then? Who were the important people in that early faith formation?
- **What are the events in your life that triggered a sense of disorientation?**
  - **Who played important roles – positive and negative – in the disorientating episodes?**
  - **Looking back, are you able to see what God was doing in the disorienting episodes? (Don't worry if you can't – sometimes it can be hard to see. And be gentle with yourself – don't jump right to "God was punishing me." I don't think God works that way, but God is willing to let consequences play out.)**
- **Have you moved through to reorientation? If so, who and what helped shape that reorientation? What is your sense of God's role in that reorientation?**
- What do you believe now that you didn't believe earlier in life?
- What don't you believe now that you did earlier in life?

Your own story is your most important witness. Witness in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century isn't probably going to be like it was in the early church, where the apostles stood in the public spaces and started speaking about Jesus' resurrection as a crowd gathered. Too many street corner preachers and other unhelpful and even harmful Christian witnesses over the centuries have had an impact. Your opportunities to witness will more likely come in the course of a conversation with someone just about life.

Do you think your story of moving through orientation, disorientation, and reorientation might help someone you know who is in a very disorienting phase?