



Sharing the Good News!

Penn Northeast Conference of the United Church of Christ

The Power & Importance of Story

by Alan C. Miller, Conference Minister

Last Friday morning my stepfather died at the age of 96. His name was Carl Sauerland. Although he was my stepfather, he was affectionately known to all of us as “Pop-Pop.” Carl and my mother enjoyed 34 years of marriage after they met at a support group for widows and widowers; they had both lost their spouses to death in 1971.

Carl loved to play games, particularly Pinochle. He was an avid gardener and always planted a section in the garden for each of the local grandchildren. Then when they would go see Pop-Pop for a visit, together they would work in the garden. (This usually meant they would sit in their row and eat all of their strawberries.)

Carl was extremely introverted and seldom talked about himself or his past. Thus as we gathered at the funeral home and worked on his obituary, I was shocked to learn things that I never knew. While a student at East Greenville High School, he held the Pennsylvania High School Track Record in the half mile for a number of years. I had known that he was a veteran, but I did not know that he was classified as a Disabled Veteran due to an injury he suffered while serving in the U.S. Army Air Force. I had also known that he was an Eagle Scout, but I never knew about all of the years of service he gave as a scout leader which culminated with his receiving the highest award that is awarded to scout leaders. I was fascinated with all of these stories and suddenly wished that I had probed and encouraged him more to talk about his life while he was still with us.

Stories are important; they inform us, motivate us, and encourage us to dream about things we never thought possible.

Jesus came to tell and live a story. He came to tell us the story of the depth of God’s love for us, a love so intense that God was even willing to give Jesus’ life for us. The story is good news to all who hear it; but especially good news for the poor, the neglected, the lonely, and the forgotten. The story is about forgiveness, mercy, grace, hope, and resurrection.

I hope you have heard this story, not just the details, but you have heard and felt God’s presence in your own life. And I hope that you and your church are so excited about this story that you have made the re-telling and living of this story to those who have not heard it, the mission and ministry of your church. And I particularly hope that you, as grandparents and parents, will take the time to tell children the stories of your life, and especially, how God helped you to live a life of gratitude and service.

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