



FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP

## Narrative Assignment

What stories do you tell? Stories are powerful tools for individuals as well as for organizations: they reveal our values and assumptions and depict their consequences in daily life. Our institutions and organizations are places of memory and imagination. As such, they are brimming with stories. These stories are typically filled with dilemmas and humor, traditions and forces of change, chaos and grace.

**The Assignment:** We invite you to write a 1-2-page narrative that tells a story of your first encounter with the organization where you serve. As a part of this story, reflect on your initial reactions and perspective of the place and the people. What were your expectations, and how were they met or changed by the encounter? What did you learn about these people and who they are, who they have been? (Note that this is not a case study, which is more linear and controlled, but rather a story, which lends itself to more creative thinking.) This story should embody your organization's day-to-day existence — the particular successes and challenges, or the things that drive you up the wall. You should consider your own perceptions and interpretation of the situation.

Reflect: How does history inform what you experienced in your initial interactions? What intersections exist between your personal story and the collective story of that place and its people?

This story will become a building block for your first week at Foundations of Christian Leadership. Your audience is the small group of three Foundations participants who will serve as supportive conversation partners or “holy friends” throughout the week. Your story will not be shared outside of our circle of participants and staff. Write this story in the first person.

**The Purpose:** The purpose of the narrative is two-fold:

1. The narrative should focus on a question that serves as a window into a variety of issues for you: personal, professional, institutional and ecological.
2. It helps you identify and articulate a situation, challenge or turning point that you want to address in the life of your own organization.

**The Form:** Your story should have both a setting — a particular time and place — and a purpose: the reason you choose to tell this particular story. Dilemmas, confusion, changes or quandaries provide the action for your story. The tension may be between characters or groups, or between conflicting values or traditions. Some stories have resolutions, but yours may not. You should

start from a real event, but the narrative can be a fictionalized account. Let your imagination fill in the details! Include dialogue and a brief, catchy title.

**Please submit your narratives [here](#). Please contact Mycal Brickhouse at [mbrickhouse@div.duke.edu](mailto:mbrickhouse@div.duke.edu) with questions. We are glad to help you brainstorm or provide feedback during your writing process.**