

Ten Ways

TO REDUCE THE PROFESSION OF FAITH “FEAR FACTOR”



Publicly professing our faith is an important milestone in our Christian formation. But for many people the idea of sharing their faith in public produces anxiety. And for some of these people the “fear factor” may keep them from ever making a public profession of their faith.

These 10 ideas offer a starting point for creating profession of faith practices that are welcoming and that lessen the “fear factor.” You’ll find many more ideas in our *Professing Our Faith* toolkit at crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits.

1 BUILD A STORYTELLING CULTURE IN YOUR CHURCH

Sharing our faith stories is one of the most important ways we grow together as the body of Christ. If sharing faith stories and testimonies is a natural and frequent part of your church’s worship, sharing one’s testimony in profession of faith may become less intimidating. For dozens of ideas on how to provide storytelling opportunities, see our *Faith Storytelling* toolkit at crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits.

2 TALK ABOUT PROFESSION OF FAITH EARLY AND OFTEN

From an early age, members of your congregation should hear the message that making faith commitments is important throughout life. Talk about profession of faith regularly in church school, kids’ clubs, youth group, catechism class, announcements and sermons in worship services, and elsewhere.

3 OUTLINE THE PROFESSION OF FAITH PROCESS CLEARLY

Create a prominent section on your church’s website called “Taking the Next Step in Your Faith Journey.” Include information about your church’s practices and traditions for baptism, the Lord’s Supper, profession of faith, entering into confessing membership, and other faith formation milestones.

4 DESIGNATE A “FIRST CONTACT” PERSON

Consider including a note in the weekly worship bulletin (or run a note at least once a month): “If you are considering publicly professing your faith in Jesus Christ to your brothers and sisters in this congregation, *[name]* would love to talk with you about it.” (Add the email or phone number and a small photo of that person.)

5 OFFER AN ACCESSIBLE PREPARATION CLASS

Consider how your pre-profession class practices will serve those who are young, those (like high school and college students) whose schedules are full, those who have intellectual disabilities, and those who are new to the church or to Christianity. Check out our *Professing Our Faith* toolkit for ideas (crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits).

6 REIMAGINE THE "COUNCIL INTERVIEW"

The fear of the traditional council interview keeps some people from making a public profession of faith. Consider designating two people (for example, two elders, a pastor and an elder, a youth pastor and an elder, etc.) to meet with the professing person, hear that person's testimony, and then report back to the council.

7 VIDEOTAPE EACH PERSON'S TESTIMONY

Recording the testimony beforehand can go a long way toward reducing people's fear of profession of faith. You can play the recorded testimony during the worship service rather than asking an already-nervous person to speak it. One CR church invites a videographer to attend on the evening that people who are preparing to profess their faith will have their conversation with council members. After that conversation they videotape the testimonies.

8 OFFER ALTERNATIVE WAYS TO EXPRESS ONE'S TESTIMONY

Recognizing that public speaking is difficult for many people, some churches encourage people to choose an expression that fits them better by using specific gifts God has given them: composing a song, creating a painting, and so on, and writing a short introduction to it.

9 STAND TOGETHER

Our faith grows in community. During the worship service in which profession of faith is celebrated, invite parents, siblings, grandparents, friends, teachers, mentors, and others who have played an important role in the faith journey of the professing person to stand with the person rather than making him or her go it alone in front of the congregation.

10 DEVELOP JOYFUL CELEBRATION TRADITIONS

A profession of faith is cause for great rejoicing! Let that joy spill into the worship service, and continue the celebration afterward with a festive reception for the professing person. Develop traditions that your congregation, especially those considering profession of faith, will love and look forward to with anticipation.

The Faith Formation Ministries team is available to consult and brainstorm with you on these ideas and more. We'd also love to hear your faith formation stories so that we can share them with others. You'll find our contact information at crcna.org/FaithFormation.



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