

Accommodating Those with Special Need in Profession of Faith

Introduction:

Profession of Faith is a time of joy for a congregation. It is done rooted in desire by the one who makes profession. Profession of Faith is not done out of coercion. This is something done out of invitation. It is a wonderful process. And it is primarily done in joy out of a desire to share fully in the life of the church.

There are people who, due to illness, will not be able to participate in our normal procedure for Public Profession of Faith. One quarter of all Canadians, and we are Canadians, will suffer anxiety in their lifetime to the point anxiety is harmful. Of those suffering, many cannot find work or work poorly, have multiple other issues, and so on and about one third of all costs for mental illness relate to anxiety. And anxiety is but one disorder of the human mind.

Some within our community may not be able to stand before a crowd due to this sort of illness. In our normal procedure one would be confronted by a crowd a number of times. Usually they would meet with a class, then be presented before Elders or potentially all of Council, and finally stand before the entire congregation. This is enough to prevent some from approaching Public Profession of Faith, from fulfilling their wish to become a full member of our congregation.

Our community of Christ wants to recognize the impact and the apparent impacts of these disorders of the mind. GCRC offers counselling assistance via Shalem at present through the CAP program. This additional step, is possibly an outcome of the care, or may be the vehicle by which Shalem can most effectively reach the need. As such the motions proposed align with the purposes of the CAP initiative we already have taken.

We want to make it possible for the person to be full members of our congregation. And we want those with anxiety and other disorders able to be joyful as they are invited into this wonderful process.

Theological Grounding:

Romans 19:9 and 11 - Professing with your lips is vital in a Christian's walk. This should continue to be an expectation of membership.

John 8:18 - This seems to speak of a need for 2 witnesses. If Jesus gives two witnesses, could that potentially be enough for Profession of Faith when illness would prevent otherwise.

Hebrews 12:1 - There are always many Christian witnesses present in the cloud of witnesses. Can this body be considered to be present when one gives profession if the congregation would make one unable to participate?

Ephesians 4:1-3 - The passage points us to our action toward the other, not at the action of the other towards us. We should make "every effort" to accommodate those with disability in our community.

Luke 19:1-10 - God meets people where they are and he seeks them out to their safe place. We are doing something which Jesus has shown us.

2 Kings 5 - We see here, a profession of faith in a safe place away from the boss who might harm him, and Naaman also takes back soil for his safe place to worship even though he will still go into the temple of false gods but he is concerned. Elisha alleviates that concern of the mind and tells Naaman to go in peace. The point is that we can give a similar assurance of peace to those whose earth and safe place is their home.

Appendix A: potential modification of form for Profession of Faith to be used with individual

The CRC material, with minor adaptations, we might adapt proceeds as below:

SCRIPTURE PROMISES If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. The Scripture says, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame." Romans 10:9-11

Let us pray. O Lord, source of all light and life, illumine us with your wisdom, that what we do at this time may be pleasing in your sight; that your church may be strengthened and increased; and that your name be glorified among your people in both the church and the world; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE QUESTIONS - The minister or presiding elder continues:

_____, you and we are beloved in the Lord. In baptism, we are grafted into Christ, received into the household of faith, and made inheritors of the covenant of which baptism is the sign and seal. In grace and mercy, God, by the Holy Spirit, has implanted faith through Word and sacrament. You have come now before God and the church to profess your faith in Christ.

The following questions are written here so you may know the question, hear it, and respond. Feel comfortable knowing the God of Salvation is in your court.

Do you believe in one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord? **I do.**

Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the rule for faith and life? **I do.**

Do you, relying on the grace of God, promise to confess Christ publicly before others as called from time to time in your life, to serve Christ daily, and to walk in Jesus' way as you cooperate with the Holy Spirit and GCRC, this church? **I do.**

Do you promise to exhibit the joy of new life in Christ; to share fully in the life of the church; to be faithful in worship and service; and to offer your prayers and gifts as you cooperate with the Holy Spirit and GCRC, this church? **I do.**

Do you promise to accept the spiritual guidance of the church; to walk in a spirit of Christian love with this congregation; and to seek those things which make for unity, purity, and peace as you cooperate with the Holy Spirit and GCRC, this church? **I do.**

Be assured that as you declare your faith, God will be faithful to strengthen you, and to renew you by the Holy Spirit, that you may grow in grace and knowledge, and may keep this covenant faithfully all your days.

We welcome you into our fellowship. Let us pray.

Almighty God, we praise you that by the death and resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ, you have overcome sin and brought us to yourself; and that by the sealing of your Holy Spirit you have bound us to Christ and his service.

We thank you for the baptismal covenant you make with all your servants. As your grace has drawn name(s) of candidate(s) to you, continue to strengthen and sustain them. By your Holy Spirit, daily increase in them your gifts: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the reverence of the Lord, the spirit of joy in your presence, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Motions:

Motion 1: that GCRC Pastoral Council authorize a team of a pastor, elders, or deacon to visit individual people in their own safe space, to hear the people's profession of faith, and that they can welcome the person into our faith community.

Motion 2: that Pastoral Council publish the names of those who do public profession of faith by the safe space method above.

Approved Pastoral Council Nov. 24, 2015 - Classes should still be held and elder visits should be made. Pastoral Council should still approve candidates who are presented as wanting to make profession of faith. It should only be used under great discretion. **Approved Full Council Jan. 12, 2016** - It was noted that if this process was required, the recommendation would come from the Pastoral elder with solid reasons given as to why it was necessary. Pastoral council will make the final decision whether this process would be used.