



**USER'S GUIDE**

TO THE PROFESSING OUR FAITH

*Toolkit*



Christian Reformed Church  
**Faith Formation  
Ministries**

[crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits](http://crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits)

“EVERY TONGUE SHOULD  
CONFESS THAT JESUS CHRIST  
IS LORD, TO THE GLORY OF  
GOD THE FATHER.”

—PHILIPPIANS 2:11 (NRSV)





The brochure you're holding is a user's guide to the online Professing Our Faith toolkit.

Open the toolkit at [crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits](http://crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits) and check out all the great resources we've gathered there!

The online toolkit is designed to help your church craft profession of faith practices that will encourage members of your congregation to affirm their baptism by publicly sharing their love of and commitment to Jesus with the community of believers in Christ.

In the toolkit you'll see ideas for

- \* building a culture of commitment in your congregation.
- \* encouraging and inviting people to profess their faith.
- \* preparing people of all ages to publicly profess their faith.
- \* celebrating professions of faith in worship.
- \* considering how to usher people into the full responsibilities of confessing membership.

We encourage you to choose and adapt the resources that will work best in your context.

## How to Use Our Toolkits

The Professing Our Faith toolkit, like others designed by the Faith Formation Ministries team, was created in collaboration *with* CRC church leaders *for* CRC church leaders.

With your particular needs in mind, we've done the work of gathering great resources on a variety of faith formation issues into online locations organized by topic. Visit [crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits](http://crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits) to see what's available or in development.

**WE'RE HERE TO HELP!** For assistance with faith formation challenges in your church, contact one of our Regional Catalyzers at [crcna.org/FaithFormation/coaching](http://crcna.org/FaithFormation/coaching).



Bookmark our toolkit page for easy reference:  
[crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits](http://crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits)

# EMBRACING COMMITMENT

BY SYD HIELEMA

A missionary friend told me this story: One day, while he and his family were on home leave in North America, his wife went grocery shopping. She turned her cart into a long aisle that contained nothing but breakfast cereals—dozens and dozens of varieties. She stopped, paralyzed, and began to weep right there in the aisle. The extravagance of choice broke her down.

Exercising limitless personal choice that allows us maximum personal autonomy and freedom is one of the chief spiritual disciplines of our age. It especially works its power on teens and young adults, because their identities are more amorphous as they live into their adult selves.

Sociologists tell us that many in this age range live by FOMO (fear of missing out). To make a commitment is to say yes to one path and no to all other paths. But what if something wonderful is waiting for me on a path I just said no to? In this way FOMO advises me to avoid all commitments and keep my options open—or, more accurately, to commit to being uncommitted. (If this sounds like picking on one

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age group, I should note that many church leaders observe weakened commitment to congregational life in all age groups.)

This spirit has also complicated the place of baptism, marriage, public profession of faith, and other significant milestones in the life of the church. Because this spirit continually whispers in our heart that we must live by limitless personal choice, it's easy for us to forget that we are a body whose very being is embedded in commitments.

Strengthening our commitment practices, including the practice of profession of faith, calls us to name the idolatries that tempt us and intentionally embody a different way of being.

Our prayer is that the resources in the Professing Our Faith toolkit will help spark a culture of commitment in your church that will encourage people to affirm their baptism by publicly professing their faith in Jesus Christ.

*“This spirit continually whispers in our heart that we must live by limitless personal choice.”*

Looking for resources to strengthen profession of faith in your church? Visit the **Professing Our Faith toolkit** online at [crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits](http://crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits).

# BUILDING A CHURCH CULTURE THAT ENCOURAGES PROFESSION OF FAITH

Traditionally we have seen profession of faith as a one-time action, but the Bible describes professing our faith as a way of life. We are a people of commitment, and affirming our baptism through a public profession of faith is an important step on the lifelong journey of faith.

The combination of our culture's fear of commitment and the CRC's decision to open the communion table to those who have not yet made public profession of faith challenges us to reexamine how we embody profession as a way of life and weave this throughout our life together as a congregation.

Here are some ways to encourage members of your church to take this important step and to strengthen the culture of commitment in your congregation.

1

## Craft a strong milestone ministry in your church.

It's important to cast a vision for a lifelong journey of faith that includes the celebration of multiple milestones, beginning with baptism and extending beyond profession of faith. Continually encourage church members of all ages to take the next steps in their faith life. For more, read *Celebrating the Milestones of Faith* by Laura Keeley and Robert J. Keeley, or visit [MilestonesMinistry.org](http://MilestonesMinistry.org).

For more ideas on how to encourage people to make profession of faith and to create joyful, welcoming profession of faith practices, see the Professing Our Faith toolkit at [crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits](http://crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits).

2

## Explore the Building Blocks of Faith.

Is your church a place where people know they belong, understand what they believe, have hope for their future, and are called and equipped for service? These four building blocks are vital to building faith and commitment in people of all ages. Learn more and find tools to evaluate the health of these building blocks in your congregation in our online Building Blocks of Faith toolkit at [crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits](http://crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits).

3

## Talk about public profession early and often.

Make a point of explaining profession of faith to young children each year in children's ministry classes. When a profession of faith is celebrated in worship, extend a special invitation to those who have not yet professed their faith to consider doing so. Include a yearly session on profession of faith in all youth ministry settings, and present a sermon series each year on faith commitments in the Bible.

4

## Create joyful celebration practices.

While profession of faith is a serious commitment, it needn't be a solemn occasion. If there ever was a cause for celebration, this is it! Gather a group to brainstorm joyful celebration traditions that people in your church, including those professing their faith, will look forward to participating in. (See the back cover of this brochure for some ideas.)

5

## Be inclusive and welcoming.

Make sure your profession of faith practices welcome everyone, including those with differing abilities and faith backgrounds. Identify and eliminate any barriers to profession of faith in your church, and take seriously people's fear of public speaking. Do everything you can to make it easier, not harder, for people who believe in Jesus Christ to publicly profess their faith.

# 10 WAYS TO CELEBRATE PROFESSION OF FAITH

- 1 Offer a story-crafting workshop** where participants learn new ways to tell their faith stories and share them publicly. For ideas, visit our Faith Storytelling toolkit at [crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits](http://crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits).
- 2 Plan an intergenerational pre-profession of faith retreat** filled with fun, fellowship, mentoring, and reflection.
- 3 In advance, record on video the testimonies of the persons who are professing their faith. Then play those testimonies during the worship service** when profession of faith is celebrated.
- 4 Organize an intergenerational art project** and invite your entire church to create a special profession of faith banner together.
- 5 Schedule profession of faith on the important, festive occasions of **Easter Sunday or Pentecost Sunday**.**
- 6 Create community by inviting those who have been important influences or mentors to **stand with those who are making profession of faith** and to bless them by the laying on of hands during a prayer.**
- 7 Present to those who profess their faith a Bible in which members of the church have **highlighted their favorite passages** and written personal notes of encouragement.**
- 8 Ask an artist in your congregation to create a special piece of artwork that the church can reproduce and give to people who profess their faith, so they will have a **reminder to display** in their home.**
- 9 Invite those who profess their faith to write their names and the date in a **“church family Bible”** in your sanctuary. (Other milestones in church members’ lives can be recorded in this register also.)**
- 10 Plan a special after-church coffee time or potluck lunch to **continue the celebration after the worship service**. Profession of faith is a cause for great joy!**

## Learn More in the Online Professing Our Faith Toolkit

The Professing Our Faith toolkit is an online resource designed to help your church craft profession of faith practices that will encourage members of your congregation to affirm their baptism by publicly sharing their love of and commitment to Jesus with the community of believers in Christ. You can access this toolkit and others at [crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits](http://crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits).

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