

GROW

by one* summit

“Getting Comfortable with Professing Faith”

1. Welcome

2. Our Task

Increase your comfort level with professing faith so you can help your church be poised to grow by at least one profession of faith every year.

3. Reflecting on Professing Faith

1. Why do over 50% of the congregations in the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church fail to have at least one profession of faith each year?
2. What does it mean to profess faith?
3. How is your faith different now from when you first professed it?

4. What is Professing Faith?

Perspective # 1: Professing Faith in Scripture - Matthew 16:13-19

¹³When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” ¹⁵“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” ¹⁶Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸And I tell you that you are Peter and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

1. Professing faith is not the same as having an opinion.
2. Professing faith is a gift from God by grace.
3. Professing faith ultimately changes who you are and how you live.

5. Perspective # 2: Professing Faith Through The Church's Liturgy

The pastor addresses those candidates who can answer for themselves:

On behalf of the whole Church, I ask you:

1. *Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of your sin?*
I do.
2. *Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves?* **I do.**
3. *Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior, put your whole trust in his grace, and promise to serve him as your Lord, in union with the Church which Christ has opened to people of all ages, nations, and races?* **I do.**

6. Perspective # 3: Professing Faith in Simple Terms

1. **It's given.** You give your assent to a particular content of the Christian faith that has come to us through Jesus, the Apostles, Holy Scripture and the Church:

The Apostles' Creed (Traditional)

*I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth;
And in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried;
the third day he rose from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.*

Basic Affirmations

- God: God is Trinitarian - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
 - Humanity: We are created in God's image. We are God's beloved. We have free choice. We are made to live in relationship with God.
 - Sin: It is real. It destroys life. Remember, God is God and we are not.
 - Grace: God loves us unconditionally, transformationally and invitationally.
 - Jesus Christ: Jesus is Savior and Lord of individuals, the church and, ultimately, of all creation.
 - Eternal Life: Nothing ever will separate us from God's love in Jesus Christ.
 - Salvation: We literally become a new creation in Christ Jesus. This begins now and continues into eternity.
 - Discipleship: Life is radically shaped by our identity as Jesus' disciple. We join Jesus' mission in carrying out his mission in the world.
 - The Church: The Body of Christ continues Jesus' presence in the world. There is no such thing as a solitary Christian.
 - Ultimate Things: God's Will shall one day become as real on earth as it already is in heaven.
2. **It's owned.** You have to claim the faith you are given as your own, even if you don't know all the answers when you do. While professing faith is absolutely essential (perhaps even more than once!), it's only one stop on a journey that previously began and will later continue.
 3. **It's lived out.** You make a commitment to grow in this faith given and claimed so that it shapes your life as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

7. Why Professing Faith Matters

1. It's the essential holistic 'Yes!' that we say in response to God's 'Yes!'.
2. It's becoming a greater challenge in a post-modern world that is cynical about religion. The culture seems to share much more in common with the world of the Apostle Paul than the world of our parents.
3. It's an essential ingredient of spiritual revival.
4. It's the single most important thing we have to work on right now if we are going to carry out our mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples equipped to transform lives, communities and the world.

8. What You Can Do

1. You have to believe it is important, be willing to commit to working on it and be willing to take risks in its pursuit.
2. Your motivation in wanting others to profess faith is not to make them like you, but to help them experience the same love of God that you do. It allows you to act with bold humility.

9. Preparing to Grow by One

1. If you don't believe it already, get so passionate about how Jesus loves those in your community who don't yet love him that you're willing to do something about it.
2. Pray, read Scripture and reflect about the power of professing faith.
3. Listen to people talk about their personal professing faith stories.
4. Talk with your pastor about what she or he is doing to lead your congregation to grow by at least one more profession of faith every year.
5. Find at least one other person with whom you can talk about all things related to professing faith.
6. Discover those in your congregation already working on growing by one at least one profession of faith and connect with them.
7. Work with others to develop a specific plan for your congregation that:
 - understands how 'professing faith ready' your congregation currently is.
 - defines the context in which your congregation is located.
 - assesses the relationship your church has with the community.
 - measures how welcoming you are as a congregation.
 - identifies ways you already are reaching out.
 - discovers new ways for connecting with people in your community.
 - equips people to move from a relationship with someone to engaging that person in the kind of relationship in which they feel comfortable inviting them to experience God's love in Jesus Christ.
 - provides discipling for those who profess their faith.

10. Blessing