

Pre-Profession of Faith Conversations

June 21, 2015

First CRC, ON

This week you'll be given the opportunity to meet with several individuals from our congregation who will be making a public profession of their faith.

It's important that you, with them, realize that this isn't a final step in their discipleship here at First CRC. Rather, it marks the beginning of a new chapter in their faith life as they walk with God and learn to walk alongside of His church.

You know as well as they do, that growing in faith is a constant struggle. It's by God's grace and providence that he calls us into community with Him and each other. For together, God works to make us strong.

I encourage you as office-bearers to see the meeting on Tuesday, June 21st at 7:30 as a chance to help our new professing members to take this step in confidence. Offer them your love and support – nothing less. For Christ himself held nothing back from you.

Open yourself and your story to them so that through this time together you both might grow in fellowship and faith.

The Meeting

I encourage you to arrive early and pray for the meeting you are about to have. Ask that God fill you with his Spirit, put words on your tongue, and be seen throughout everything that is about to happen. After praying be sure to decide among you who will welcome the group and kick off the meetings together with prayer.

It would be appropriate that as our new professing members arrive you invite them to have coffee and share in the treats provided. Make them comfortable and welcome! Introduce yourself and share with them your excitement for the short meeting about to happen.

Once everyone has had a chance to settle in, whoever was voluntold, should start up the meeting. I might suggest saying something like:

It's a real blessing to be here with you this evening. Pastor Joe was keen to see us have this conversation tonight, but I personally am truly honoured to have this opportunity.

The point of this meeting as you may already know, is to encourage you in taking a step forward into a new chapter of your faith and walk with our Lord. It's my prayer then that you feel encouraged and welcome not only tonight but as we learn to grow in faith together.

We'll be sure to finish by 8:30 tonight as some of you have exams or other commitments. So, I'll begin with a word of prayer and then we can sit together and wrestle with some of the questions before us.

Let's pray

Naturally, you can say anything, but try ensure that in what you say you set the tone for the meeting and also re-affirm the expectations of the night.

Here are the suggested pairings but feel free to re-arrange before the meeting if you believe another connection would be more beneficial:

- A & B
- C & D
- E & F
- G & H

Questions

Each professing member was asked the majority of these questions. I've added a couple since meeting. Some of them sound similar, but as you talk encourage the participant to become increasingly specific in their answers.

I've encouraged each participant to feel free to ask questions of you. I've even encouraged them to turn some of these around on you. Don't give them answers unless they are genuine and remember, "I've never thought about that before" is an okay response too.

Be curious about their faith and their experience in the church. It's NOT the time to correct or argue. Listen and be inquisitive. Again, be willing to open yourself up to them and share honestly about your faith and experience in the church.

Lastly, even though you may know their names, or you know them as friends of your children, you very likely don't really know them. Take this time to start learning about them! They are each remarkable servants of our Lord!

- How do you try and nurture your relationship with God?
- How can I keep you in my prayers today and in the year ahead?
- What are you nervous about this coming year either as life goes, but especially as life will impact your faith?
- You've had the opportunity to do things like "catechism" and different programs in the church that are focused on teaching you something about the faith. But, what do you feel like you want to know more of?
- Where in the church would you be the most interested in getting involved?
- What parts of the church are you interested in but a bit nervous about participating in?
- Faith isn't just something we know in our minds, but something we come to know in our bones. It's something to be studied as much as experienced. What experiences would you hope to pursue in the years ahead to grow in your faith and come to "know" God more deeply?
- How do you envision you living out your faith in church?
- What do you hope the church will offer you?
- How would you like to see the church encourage you in your faith?
- Do you have any questions for me?

Wrapping Up

Feel free to finish in your own time. Each pair of elder/professing member should close in prayer together when the conversation is over or 8:30 comes.

Reflect in your prayers some of the things they have shared with you. Bless them as you pray and celebrate that they are committing themselves to a life as part of this body! They truly are gifts to the church! If it seems appropriate you can invite them to share in the prayer also.

Thank them for sharing their stories and inner thoughts. A warm handshake or embrace is appropriate. But then let them leave as several of them will have commitments following this meeting.

After those professing their faith have left it might be beneficial for each of you to reflect on the experience together and just celebrate the testimonies you've heard. Just remember, there is a level of confidentiality to this meeting. Their stories are not necessarily yours to share, so be wise in how you speak and carry them in your hearts!

In Christ,

Pastor Joe