

Alto Christian Reformed Church – Statement on Children and the Lord’s Supper

In an attempt to respect the covenant standing of young children within their families, and keeping in line with the Christian Reformed Churches’ Manual of Church Government (see pp328-329), the Elders have decided to entertain professions’ of faith made by baptized children of the church.

The process of a younger child making such a profession of faith will require parental involvement. The child will be taught the meaning of the sacrament in a simple and appropriate manner for their age level. Following the time of instruction the child and his/her parents will meet with two of the elders to hear the child’s private profession.

Following the profession, the child in the presence of his/her parents and the entire congregation, will celebrate the Lord’s Supper. Full membership responsibilities will be assumed upon a full public profession of faith.

Grounds:

- a) **Children may attend the Lord’s Table not because of their good behavior, mastery of church teachings, or their high level of maturity. They belong there because God invites them. Through baptism God makes clear that he accepts and claims them as his own covenant children.**
 - In Matthew 26:27-28 Jesus tells his disciples: “Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” As the covenant meal of the New Testament, all who are in Christ belong there.
 - Peter confirms this in Acts 2:39: “The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

b) God calls his covenant people, young and old, to respond to his gracious invitation by confessing his name. Because they share this obligation, the church asks children to profess their faith and then also participate in the Lord's Supper.

- Luke 22:19 records Jesus' command that we celebrate the Lord's Supper "in remembrance" of Him. So when they participate, our children need to know what the covenant meal means.
- In John 6:35 Jesus declares, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty." Confessed faith, however simple, is required of those who participate.

c) Not only our children, but also our whole church continues to grow as the Spirit leads us into deeper insight into God's Word. One example of this is the growing recognition among us that our children rightfully belong with us at the Lord's Table well before they have the ability to make an informed, mature commitment to the teachings of the church. After years of study, reflection, and debate, Synod 1988 adopted four declarations that modify and now guide our procedures.

- The church is warranted in admitting to the Lord's Supper covenant children who give evidence of faith and are able to discern the body and remember and proclaim the death of Jesus in celebrating the Lord's Supper.
- The church is to assure itself of such faith through public profession of faith on the part of covenant children.
- Covenant children should be encouraged to make public profession of faith as soon as they exhibit faith and are able to discern the body and remember and proclaim the death of Jesus in celebrating the Lord's Supper.
- The profession of faith of covenant children required for admission to the Lord's Supper is not necessarily an acceptance of adult responsibilities within a congregation; therefore:
 1. The church shall continue to instruct these children in the Word and in the Reformed doctrines;
 2. Adult responsibilities of membership are to be granted by the church council and assumed by professing individuals at age eighteen or as granted by the Articles of Incorporation of the congregation.

- d) **The decision of 1988 was reaffirmed by Synod 1995 and we have been encouraged to implement the decision by using this four-step process.**

Step 1: **The child expresses interest in participating in the Lord's Supper** to his/her parent(s) or perhaps to a church school teacher or another faith mentor within the church.

Step 2: **The parent(s) discusses with the child the meaning of the sacrament** and assesses the motivation of the child for participating. Convinced that this inquiry arises from a genuine stirring of the Spirit in the heart of the child, the parent(s) contacts an elder and/or pastor.

Step 3: **The elder and/or pastor meets with the child and parent(s) to hear the testimony of the child with respect to his/her faith and desire to participate** in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. It is recommended that the child then participate in a short process of preparation for profession of faith taught by a pastor, elder church school teacher, or potential faith mentor. This training will focus on the nature and meaning of the sacrament and on the basic explication of the Apostle's Creed, Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer. It will be carried out at the cognitive level appropriate to the child. When satisfied with the faith commitment of the child, the elder and/or pastor will recommend to the council that this child be admitted to the table of the Lord. If the elder or pastor is unable to make such a recommendation, he will provide clear counsel and advice to the child and parent(s) on how to address the area(s) of concern. It may also be helpful to assign an adult faith mentor to nurture a child toward full adult responsibilities in the church after he/she is recommended for profession.

Step 4: **The child makes a public profession of faith in a simple and appropriate manner** during a regular worship service. Since baptism is commemorated during a worship service, the appropriation of the baptismal promises should also be celebrated during a public worship service. Furthermore, a regular worship setting offers an opportunity for the people of God to celebrate a child's first communion and to make public promises of support.

- e) **The decision of Synod 2006 seems to have further opened the doors to child communion. It called to invite "all baptized members" to the Lord's Table, as consistent with the CRC's covenant theology.**

This would make a verbal affirmation unnecessary. Synod instructed the Board of Trustees to appoint a task force to study the best way to include children in the sacrament. Because this would require changes to the Church Order, it will take at least two years, and the concurrence of two more synods, to implement.