



Bundoora Presbyterian Church Policy on children (who've been baptised but not made a public Profession of Faith) taking the Lord's Supper

Introduction

Session (The elders of the church) encourages parents in their responsibilities to teach and disciple their children (Eph 6.4), nurturing them in the faith, encouraging them to know, trust and follow Jesus. We know that parents cannot convert their children but their salvation is by God's grace.

Session also wants to make clear that the Lord's Supper is only for those who have been baptised and made a credible profession of faith.

What if your child is trusting and following Jesus and is wanting to partake of the Lord's Supper? Session strongly encourages parents to allow their children to voluntarily attend the Profession of Faith Classes offered (usually for older primary and secondary age children), and then at their request and with Session's permission, to make a public Profession of Faith.

If your child is too young for that and they trust in Jesus and want to partake of the Lord's Supper, permission must be obtained from Session for this. Session will usually have a pastor visit and speak with the parents and child, and where the child is baptized, has an age-appropriate faith and an age-appropriate understanding of what they are doing in eating and drinking (as required by 1 Cor 11.27-29), Session is happy to encourage their participation, and to encourage the parents in the continuing instruction and nurture of their children in the faith.

The process can be started by such parents writing to Session to ask for permission for their child to take the Supper.

Policy

1. The **children partaking must be baptized**. The Lord's Supper is the meal of the New Covenant and is for those who are included in that covenant by faith in Jesus. The visible sign of that inclusion in the visible covenant people is baptism, and so all those partaking should be baptized.

Session's strong encouragement is that parents wait until their children can participate in Profession of Faith Classes (usually in later primary school or secondary school) and then make a Public Profession of Faith.

2. The children must have a credible, **age appropriate, trust in the Lord Jesus**. 1 Cor 11.28 says people partaking of the Supper must 'examine themselves'. We understand that to mean that they recognize their own sin and that they trust in Christ crucified for the forgiveness of their sin. The Westminster Confession of Faith 29.7, which the Presbyterian Church of Australia holds to, requires faith in all participants. As children get older this faith is witnessed by making public confession of faith in church membership, but with younger children we agree that this is best determined by the parents and confirmed by session.

3. **Understanding is important**. In participating in the Lord's Supper Scripture tells us that those participating in the Supper must 'discern the body' (1 Cor 11:29). We take this to mean that those participating need to understand that the bread is a sign of Christ's body given in death for them on the cross, and what they are doing in the Supper is remembering our Lord Jesus' death for

their sin in the way Jesus has commanded. With children they must not think that what they are doing in eating and drinking is satisfying any physical hunger, or even just sharing in a group activity that can include them. They need to understand, in an age-appropriate way, that they are remembering Jesus' death for their sins. We believe that parents are in the best place to discern their child's understanding of the supper and what they are doing in eating and drinking.

We also believe that to 'discern the body' refers to a person having an understanding that we are all part of the one body of Christ, all brothers and sisters in Christ. 1 Cor 10.16-17 supports this, as does the abuse of some in the Corinthian church (11.20-22), and the language of eating together (11.33) (see also Westminster Confession of Faith 29.1). Thus an age-appropriate level both of faith and understanding of the Lord's Supper in the child themselves needs to be demonstrated.

4. As the Lord's Supper is the common meal of the congregation, and as Session is responsible for the common life of the congregation and in particular in safeguarding the supper from inappropriate participation which is harmful to those who eat and drink 'without discerning the body' Session wants parents not to allow their children to participate in what is the common meal [and not the private meal of any individual family in the congregation] based only on their private decision. Rather Session wants parents to communicate their request that their children participate in the Supper to Session. **Where the parent can assure the Session that their child is baptized, has an age-appropriate faith and an age-appropriate understanding of what they are doing in eating and drinking, Session welcomes and permits their participation. We also encourage the parents in the continuing instruction and nurture of their children in the faith, particularly by engaging them in the death of our Lord to forgive their sins and in an expectant waiting for His return.**

5. The role of Session in this also helps prevent confusion and the maintenance of unity in the congregation in relation to what is a central and fundamental aspect of our life together.

Should doubt arise in your mind about the child's faith and understanding, or should you consider their behaviour to be so inconsistent with their profession as to deny its reality, we would expect you to suspend the child's participation from the Supper and inform us of your action.

A pastor or elder shall visit and speak with the parents and child every 12 months to assess whether the child's faith and behaviour remains consistent (in an age-appropriate way) with their initial confession, and whether they are of age/ maturity to be encouraged to consider making a public profession. We do look forward to that day.

6. We ask that the child not be removed from Sunday School to participate in the Lord's Supper, as this could be disruptive and perhaps put other children under pressure. We recognise that this will mean your child only receives the Supper during school holiday periods, unless they do not attend Sunday School (at all) on the first Sunday of each month when we celebrate the Lord's Supper.

7. In line with the General Assembly of Australia Position (Sept 2019, Minute 73, Clauses 3-5), we reject the view of paedocommunion which asserts that children of one or more believing parents are automatically granted access to the Supper, irrespective of the faith and understanding they demonstrate (This is the third view outlined in the College Committee paper 'Concerning Communion' at the Sept 2019 GAA, and is supported by 1Cor 11.27-29). If members at Bundoora P.C. hold to this view they have freedom of belief and conscience in that, but not freedom of practise. BPC Session is committed to dealing carefully and charitably with such members (Clause 10).

Guidelines For Parents

1. Session encourages parents in their discipling of their children, and their nurture of their children's faith in the Lord Jesus. Session's strong encouragement is also for children to attend Profession of Faith Classes (offered regularly each year) and if they desire to (and have received Session's approval) they may make a public Profession of Faith (ordinarily in a Sunday service), at which time they are also baptised (if not already been so).
2. If your child is too young for that public profession in front of the congregation and they trust in Jesus and want to partake of the Lord's Supper, permission must be obtained from session for this. This involves you writing to Session (to Neil Chambers the Moderator, or Kevin Thorpe, Session Clerk) seeking permission for your child to partake of the Supper.
3. Therefore, Session asks parents not to encourage, prompt or pressure their child/children to take the Lord's Supper. A child's desire to participate is to be a voluntary choice, and may only be granted with Session's permission.
4. We encourage you the parents to read the Session's policies of the Lord's Supper and Children partaking of the Lord's Supper, noting that Session will look for an age-appropriate understanding of Scripture (regarding God, sin, Jesus and his death, salvation, and the church as the body of Christ), age-appropriate faith and trust in Jesus for salvation, and to confirm that their trust in Jesus is not contradicted by their lives.
5. Session will usually have a pastor then visit and speak with you and your child, and where the child is baptized, has an age-appropriate faith and understanding of what they are doing in eating and drinking (as required by 1 Cor 11.27-29, and outlined in Point 4), session will consider granting permission to partake of the Supper.
6. Questions the parent/s and child should be prepared to answer at that visit include:

What is needed to be understood (about God, sin, Christ's death, salvation, the Supper, and that all believers are brothers and sisters in the family of God and body of Christ)?

When does Jesus give us this meal?

What does Jesus mean when He says 'this is my body'?

What does Jesus mean when He says 'this cup is the new covenant in my blood'?

Why do we repeat this meal?

What is its relation to the Passover?

What must we have to participate rightly in this meal? Or when we examine ourselves what must we find to eat and drink properly?

What is involved in discerning the body? [1 Cor. 11:29]

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8. Be encouraged that it is faith alone in Christ alone which saves, and not what we do, nor our participation in the Lord's Supper. Keep praying that the word of the Gospel will bear fruit in your child's life in God's time, resulting in faith and a life of following Christ.