

Trinity
Presbyterian Church
(TPC)

Children and Communion Policy

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Believers' children within the visible Church, and especially those dedicated to God in Baptism, are non-communing members under the care of the church (BCO 57-1), that is, they are considered members of the church through the covenant relationship but who do not partake of all the privileges of membership. When they show evidence of saving faith and are able to understand the Gospel they should be reminded that it is their duty and privilege to seek admission to the Lord's Supper (BCO 57-1). The question under consideration then is at what age are children able to understand the Gospel and seek admission to the Lord's Supper (communion)?

There is no age limit given in the Bible for those who wish to participate in the Lord's Supper. There are, however, certain conditions that must be met. To partake of the Lord's Supper, the child ⁽¹⁾ must be old enough and advanced enough spiritually to meet those conditions. Since the Lord's Supper is a communion between Christ and believers, a child before being admitted to the Lord's Supper must give evidence of being a child of God through sorrow for sin, an understanding of and acceptance of the Gospel, and a life that shows some evidence of godliness. Also, the child should understand and be able to articulate the meaning of the Lord's Supper and its elements (Matt. 26:26-29, SC #96, Heb. 9:22 and Exodus 12:5-8 and must be able to "examine" or "judge" ⁽²⁾ himself/herself as to whether he/she is truly a believer and is prepared to partake of the Lord's Supper. (I Cor. 11:17-32, SC #97)

To the above end, the covenant children of believers who are members of this church should be examined first by their parents (or parent if only one is a believer), and then a committee of elders whose office it is to judge, after careful examination, the qualifications of the child in respect to his/her understanding of the above. Upon satisfactory evidence that the child understands those conditions, and upon recommendation of the committee of Elders, the Session will admit the child to partake of the Lord's Supper (BCO 6-2). The child then becomes a communing member of the church (BCO 57-2). An understanding of Lesson Seven of the EP Church's Children's Training Manual should adequately prepare the child for communion and examination by the Session.

Other believing children, whose parents are not believers, should either complete the Children's Training Manual or attend a membership class and then be examined by the Session as to their fitness to partake of the Lord's Supper without parental support or guidance. Upon satisfactory evidence that the child understands the above conditions, and upon recommendation of the committee of Elders, the Session will admit the child to partake of the Lord's Supper (BCO 6-2). The child then becomes a communing member of the church (BCO 57-2).

- (1) "Child" or "children" refer to those living with and under the care of a parent or guardian.
- (2) "examine" or "judge" means that the child should be able to determine that he/she is a Christian, confess all known sin, ask forgiveness of people he/she has wronged, has forgiven people who have wronged him/her and is behaving in a godly manner.