**Communion and Our Children**

It is our joy to receive children to the Lord’s Supper as early as they are able to profess their faith in Jesus and show the fruit of his Spirit in their lives. Scripture requires two things to come to the Lord’s Supper:

1. You need to be a Christian because Communion strengthens your relationship with Jesus.

**1 Corinthians 10:16**  16 The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?

**John 6:56**  56 Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.

1. The person needs to be able to understand what the Lord’s Supper is.

***1 Corinthians 11:27-29***  *27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.*

In context, eating and drinking worthily means sharing Communion with the whole church family because Communion strengthens the family bonds within the church. But the principle of eating and drinking with discerning also applies to understanding what the Lord’s Supper is.

**Signs Your child is Ready**

**First**, do they understand and believe the gospel? Do they know that Jesus lived for them, died on the cross for their sins, and rose from the dead? Do they understand that God loves them and forgives them. Do they know that Jesus lives in them to give them His love and power? Look for age-appropriate expressions of the gospel.

**Second**, look for the evidence of God’s Spirit in their lives. Do they ever manifest spontaneous love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, or self-control (Galatians 5:22-23)? We’re not looking for perfection, but for some evidence that they have the Holy Spirit. It’s not asking, “Do they manifest the Holy Spirit perfectly?” It’s asking, “Do they manifest the Holy Spirit at all?” The evidence will look different depending on their age. Communion is not for the perfect, but for those who are trusting in Jesus, and need more of Him. It’s not for those without sins, but for those who are confessing their sins—with kids it’s the same as with adults.

**Third**, make sure they understand the basics of communion. “Discerning the body”(1Corinthians 11:29) also means understanding what the Lord’s Supper is. Use the questions on “Helping Our Kids Understand Communion” on the next page.

There’s no set age for when the kids are ready. It could be 13, 8, 6, or even younger. A lot depends on the parents and the child. Once a child can express their own faith, shows signs of the Holy Spirit in their lives, and understands the basics of communion, they are ready.

**The Process of Taking Communion**

**First**, the parents talk with the pastor or an elder to let them know that you think your child is ready. That conversation will help the parents and the church leadership get on the same page to make sure that your child is ready for the next step.

**Second**, the pastor or one of the elders will interview your child. This interview is a friendly, low-pressure conversation that enables your child tell the pastor or elders what they believe about Jesus. We will ask version of the questions below, looking to make sure the kids understand the answers they are giving, that it’s their own faith. When we ask yes/no questions, we'll follow up with other questions looking to ensure the child understands what they are saying.

**Communion Membership Questions for Kids**

1. Do you believe that you are created by God to serve him, and love him in every area of your life?
2. Do you believe that you are a sinner? In what ways do you sin? Do you believe God must punish sins?
3. What did God do to deal with our sins? Do you believe Jesus died for your sins and rose from the dead?
4. Do you believe that Jesus is the only way to have your sins forgiven?
5. Does God say you have to earn his forgiveness, or is his forgiveness a gift?
6. Is Jesus your King? Will you try to obey him in everything?
7. Do you promise to come to Harbor? To love the people here, and to help out when you can?
8. Will you listen to and obey the pastor and elders and pray for them? They are a gift from God to help you follow Jesus!

***Third***, if your child hasn’t been baptized, then now that they are making their faith public, it’s time!!

**Helping Our Kids Understand Communion**

**“Discerning the Body and Blood of the Lord” (1Cor 11:29)**

* + 1. **What is the bread a picture of?**

Jesus’ body.

* + 1. **Why is it broken?**

Because Jesus’ body was broken when he died on the cross for our sins.

* + 1. **Why do WE get to eat it?**

 Because we believe in him.

* + 1. **What happens when we eat it?**

 We become more like him. His perfect self fills our hearts and lives.

* + 1. **What is the wine a picture of?**

 Jesus’ blood.

* + 1. **Why is it poured out?**

 Because Jesus’ blood was poured out when he died on the cross for our sins.

* + 1. **Why do WE get to drink it?**

 Because we believe in him.

* + 1. **What happens when we drink it?**

 We become more like him. His blood washes us clean of all our sins.

* + 1. **How can eating bread and drinking juice/wine make us more like Jesus?**

 It reminds us how close he is to us and how much he loves us. He covers us and fills us. He lives in us.

**Gospel-Centered Parenting**

**Teach** your children the gospel! Help them understand what Jesus came to do for them, what he does in them, and how they can experience a relationship with him. Share your experience of Jesus as often as you can. Share the good times when He feels close, and share the bad times, when life is hard. Be real.

**Encourage** them in the gospel as you parent them:

1. Assure them that they have God’s forgiveness and acceptance because of what Jesus has done for them. He lived the life they should have lived. He died the death they should have died. Now they are accepted by God!
2. Assure them that they have God’s presence in them through the Holy Spirit. This is Jesus in them. This is the spiritual power and presence of God they need to grow spiritually—to be able to honor and obey you, to love their siblings, to stop complaining, to do their chores, etc…

Encourage them in these ways as often as you can, and especially when you discipline them. Make sure that they know you forgive them and love them. The Lord’s Supper can be a good visual picture of the gospel that can help them apply this to their lives.