

# ROCK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (EPC)

## *Guidelines for Parents in Aiding the Children to Participate in the Lord's Supper*

The Westminster Confession of Faith (XXVII) states,

*I. Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by God, to represent Christ, and his benefits; and to confirm our interest in him: as also, to put a visible difference between those that belong unto the church, and the rest of the world; and solemnly to engage them to the service of God in Christ, according to his Word.*

*II. There is, in every sacrament, a spiritual relation, or sacramental union, between the sign and the thing signified: whence it comes to pass, that the names and effects of the one are attributed to the other.*

1. The sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist are our Lord's gifts to the Church as it seeks to follow him and discover God's kingdom in the world.
2. In Baptism we are assured that we are God's children and become part of the Body of Christ, the Church. The sacrament of Baptism is received once and cannot be repeated. Although Confirmation offers an additional opportunity to experience God's grace and provides for the public confirmation of a young person's faith, *it does not make up anything which is lacking in Baptism.*
3. The Eucharist is essentially a mystery which even the most sophisticated human minds cannot fully comprehend, but we believe it is given to us as food for our journey through life. It is an encounter, in bread and wine, with our crucified, risen and ascended Lord. It binds Christ's people together in love. It offers a foretaste of the heavenly banquet that we will enjoy on the Last Day.
4. In the 1970's American Presbyterians began to realize what Christians of other traditions have long known: that there are no valid *Biblical* grounds for requiring that the baptized must also be confirmed or be enrolled in communicants class *before* they may share fully in the Eucharist.
5. The Evangelical Presbyterian Church reserves the right to govern the place of Children at the Lord's Table to discerning parents and the oversight of the Session. [NB: With regard to the presence of covenant children at the Lord's Table, see Article III of the Rock Presbyterian Church Constitution, *addenda*, 2-- We affirm the Pastoral Letter "Children and the Lord's Supper" as well as the *Book of Worship* (3-3)].
6. We at Rock Presbyterian Church welcome the opportunity to include children in the Eucharist which we believe is their birthright as members of Christ's body. We recognize that the church has a responsibility to guide them on their way as they grow in this awareness.

## **PARISH POLICY**

We want to hold as very precious the sense that the Eucharist is God's open, free gift to all the baptized and does not have to be earned or deserved. However, we also recognize that all Christians are to receive the Eucharist in a manner consistent with its significance in holiness and humility in the Presence of God.

Our desire, therefore, is to enable the point of entry into communicant membership to be as open as possible, alongside effective and relevant ongoing support and nurture for parents and children. This is driven by our conviction that children learn first of all by “doing” and by following example, absorbing the unspoken lessons, and then benefit from reflection on what they are doing.

### 1. **Becoming a Communicant:**

- 1.1 We believe that, ideally, at least one parent should attend church regularly and be a communicant member, in order that the child has a supportive environment at home. Where this is not the case a suitable sponsor would be appointed, parental permission having been given.
- 1.2 We believe that age should not be the determining factor. Children as baptized members of the covenant should make regular use of the sacrament at their parents’ discretion. A child’s baptismal record should be on file in the church registry.
- 1.3 At an appropriate age, covenant children should be brought to the Pastor and enrolled in the Catechumenate for instruction in the Apostles’ Creed, the 10 Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer and the Sacraments to aid their growth as young Christians in the public worship of the people of God. Upon completion of instruction and approved by the minister, these catechumens will *formally* be considered “communing members” of the church.

### 2. **Implications for Worship:**

- 2.1. Baptized children, being members of the *catholic* or universal church are communicants; they are welcome to receive Holy Communion at every Eucharist they attend.
- 2.2. We recognize that children who *become* communicants need to be involved in the whole worship of the church, which is what the catechumenate is about.

### 3. **Confirmation:**

- 3.1. We see Confirmation as a bringing into consciousness and a public expression of what has already been received in Baptism.
- 3.2. Confirmation or the older Puritan “Communicants Class” is not the “gateway” to receiving Communion, we hope that this will give Confirmation even greater significance in its own right.
- 3.3. There is no fixed age for Confirmation; it will depend on the candidate’s desire for it, but we would expect it to be at some time during the secondary school years. A young person who has become a communicant and has not sought Confirmation by the age of sixteen will be encouraged to consider it, but will in any case continue to receive.