

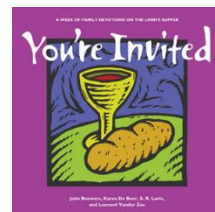
CHILDREN AT THE TABLE AT GCRC

Background: In the past, profession of faith was the path not only to participation in Communion, but to “full life in the Body, its joys and responsibilities”, usually at high school age and older, and those people become Confessing Members of the church.

In 2017, after a couple of years of reflection on welcoming younger children to the Table of the Lord, Council together and with our members, with the help of our denomination's conversation and study, decided to start a journey towards inviting children, with the support of their parents, to make age-appropriate professions of faith in Jesus and participate in the sacrament of Communion.

When the church encourages young children to make an age appropriate confession of faith, the invitation to the Table is separate from the invitation to and expectations of adult membership.

One piece of this journey is the Sunday School's use of *You're Invited*, a five-lesson devotional on the meaning of the Lord's Supper, on the Sundays when the congregation is celebrating communion. Since *You're Invited* is primarily designed for families, and since our aim is to partner with parents in discerning faith in our children, copies of the book have been made available for each household that has children at home - Sunday School aged and older.



Our church values, supports, encourages and includes youth and children. When children are baptized, God surrounds them with his love and they are adopted into God's family, his church, because of the saving work of Jesus Christ. As a church family, we do all that we can to teach these children the doctrine of salvation. Children are invited, with the support of their parents, to make age appropriate professions of faith in Jesus and then are invited to participate in the sacrament of Communion.

Parents are invited to speak to their elder at any time to request a conversation between their child, an elder and/or pastor, and the parents. At least two pastoral elders are chosen and trained and take on the role of speaking with younger children in order to conduct the Communion conversations with children and their parents.

The elder will then welcome these children to participate in Communion and inform Pastoral Council.

The Path by Which a Child May Join the Body at the Table

Invitation: Every Lord's Supper includes a call to faith in Jesus.

Our Aim: To make the Lord's Supper celebration child welcoming (without making it child centred).

Path for the Child

Step 1:

- Parents discuss their faith and encourage questions from their children on the Lord's Supper. "What is the Lord's Supper all about? Tell me about the piece of bread and the glass of grape juice. Why do you do this?"
- In the event that a child speaks to an adult other than their parents, the adult brings this to the attention of the parents.
- Parents encourage the child to consider Jesus and Jesus' invitation.
 - Deuteronomy 6:4-9, I Corinthians 11:23 – 34
 - A devotional guide entitled, "You're Invited: A Week of Family Devotions on the Lord's Supper" will be used in Sunday School during Communion services, as a helpful discussion tool.

Step 2:

- The parents and the child meet informally with an elder or two to have the same discussion with the child. This is a conversation that may include the following questions as the beginnings for conversations:
 - Do you love Jesus?
 - Are you sorry for your sins?
 - Is this God's family?
 - Is this God's meal?
 - Do you want to participate?

Step 3:

- Children are invited and welcome to participate in Communion.

Frequently Asked Questions about Younger Children and Communion at GCRC

1. Are we changing who is invited to Communion?

No. We still adhere to the words of the 1985 Communion form (p. 975 in the *Psalter Hymnal*): All who are sorry for their sins, who believe in the Lord Jesus as their Saviour, and who desire to live in obedience to Him are invited to come.

2. What is changing, then?

We acknowledge that younger children can meet those criteria, in a way that is appropriate for their age.

3. How young are we talking?

At this time, we are training elders to hear faith statements of children in grade 1 or higher.

4. How do you decide which children to have conversations with?

Their parents will contact the pastor or their elder if they discern that their child is a believer in Jesus.

5. Will the elders meet with my child by him or herself?

No. One elder will meet with the child and the child's parents/guardians.

6. How are the elders being trained?

They are meeting with the Sunday School classes when they are going through the *You're Invited* devotional on Communion Sunday mornings. They will also receive training as to how to prepare for, conduct, and follow up on this faith conversation with parents and children.

7. How many elders are being trained?

Two pastoral elders are chosen and trained to be prepared to have faith conversations with young children.

8. What are examples of the questions the elders will ask be given to parents in advance?

Do you love Jesus?

Are you sorry for your sins?

Is this God's family?

Is this God's meal?

Do you want to participate?

9. Will Catechism still be taught?

Yes. The Confessions of the church are taught at Youth on Fire through the 7th and 8th grades, and then reinforced through the high school years. Sermons are also frequently based on the Confessions.

10. Can a child profess her faith in Jesus later in life, say, in high school?

Yes. In fact, those who study faith formation argue that regularly having an opportunity to express what we believe, at all stages of life, is essential for the development of healthy Christian identity. We will encourage children and adults alike to give expression to their faith in Jesus. In particular, members in Jr. High and High School will be taught the Scriptures and the Confessions of the church, be given opportunities to explore their sense of calling in ministry, encouraged to build relationships with peers and others in the Body, and be mentored in the development of spiritual habits and disciplines. They will be encouraged to articulate their own sense of identity in Christ and profess this publicly.

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