

Children and the Lord's Supper at DPC

Prepared by the DPC elders

1. At DPC we baptise the children of believers because we consider them to be precious members of God's visible church, his covenant people, and therefore, they are proper recipients of this outward sign and seal of being a member of God's covenant people (see Mark 10:14-16; Acts 2:38-39).
2. That said, although we believe the children of believers are members of God's covenant people, we do not believe they should enjoy all the *privileges* of being members of God's covenant people.

While not a perfect analogy, this distinction is something like children being considered full citizens of Australia, but not yet being permitted to enjoy the privileges of driving or voting. They are rightly excluded from those privileges because they do not have the personal understanding or maturity to exercise them.

3. With that in mind, historically in the Presbyterian Church adults and children have been required to become official members of a particular Presbyterian church, by doing a formal Profession of Faith, if they wanted to share in the Lord's Supper. That is why some churches still refer to Presbyterian membership as "*communicant* membership" – that is, it is via a public Profession of Faith people become "official members of the *communion* of Christ" and can thus share in the Lord's Supper or Communion.
4. In contrast, DPC's position is that all baptised adults who love and trust the Lord Jesus, and his death on the cross in their place, can share in the Lord's Supper. We do not require them to be official members of our church, or even regular attendees. However, we do hope that all believers will commit themselves to a local church for their own good and God's glory.
5. When it comes to the children of believers, DPC's policy is that ordinarily, baptized children of believers may start partaking in the Lord's Supper after making a public Profession of Faith, which would typically happen after completing a suitable course. This is an acknowledgement that to commence sharing in the Lord's Supper is not merely a private decision, because the Lord's Supper is about communion with both Christ and his people. This Profession of Faith would ordinarily be accompanied with membership vows, causing the child to become a member of the church.

In light of Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 11:28-29 this Profession of Faith needs to demonstrate that the child has the capacity to both "examine themselves" and "discern the body."

6. We take "discern the body" in these verses to include two things:
 - a. A genuine awareness that they are members of the body of Christ – that is, the family of Christ
 - b. A genuine awareness that they are members of the body of Christ solely because Christ's body was broken, and blood was shed, for *their* sins, on the cross.
7. We take "examine themselves" in these verses to include the ability to:
 - a. Prayerfully search their own heart for sin
 - b. Repent of that sin
 - c. Seek the forgiveness of God and their brothers and sisters in Christ as required
 - d. Have the wisdom to know when it might be best to *not* take the Lord's Supper

To promote this process of self-examination it is the practice of DPC to announce on the Sunday prior to the Lord's Supper, that we will be sharing in the Lord's Supper the following Sunday, and that people ought to examine themselves in light of Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 11:27 - 29.

8. Until baptized children of believers have made a public Profession of Faith, typically after completing a suitable course, they will be present at the Lord's Supper as valued members of God's covenant people, and will be encouraged to learn about the meaning of the Lord's Supper by taking an age appropriate teaching card or, even better, to take Christ in faith, rather than partaking of the bread and juice.

Please let Pastor Aaron, Pastor Adam, or one of DPC's elders know, if you have any questions about this.