



Communion is a beautiful part of our weekly gatherings that helps us to experience our union with God and each other through what Jesus has done for us¹.

When thinking about Children and Communion, we believe that the people who should make the decision and guide the participation of children are their parents or carers. In some cases that might be a grandparent or some other adult who has a position of spiritual nurture for the child.

Therefore our communion helpers are instructed to not serve communion to young children. This is not to exclude them, but to allow the parents/carers to choose if and how they will take and serve the communion elements for their children.

This guide is intended to help parents and carers in this training opportunity with their children.

What is Communion?

It is significant to notice that the Lord's Supper was instituted as Jesus celebrated the Passover with His disciples². It was a family meal which was full of symbolic references to the past actions and future promises of God's saving work for His people³. The meal was itself an object lesson in which truths were taught and savoured in very tactile ways. Jesus explained how He fulfilled the promises of the Passover when He declared that the bread represented His body and the cup His blood⁴. These two elements have been used by Christians ever since in obedience to the Lord's command to eat and drink in remembrance of Him and the new covenant He made between God and humanity⁵. This covenant is that we can all be children of God through faith in Jesus, whose death has atoned for the sins that separated us from Him⁶ and whose resurrection has guaranteed our eternal life⁷.

How should we participate in Communion?

There are many different ways that Christians have celebrated communion throughout history. Regardless of the method, these two things are essential: a recognition of the body and blood of Jesus that was given for us⁸; and a hospitable welcome to God's assembled people⁹. Those who participate in communion should examine themselves to ensure they recognise both these aspects of communion¹⁰. That's why we usually have a short time for reflection on the meaning of communion before we partake together. Children may find it hard to understand or focus on a talk that is usually delivered at a more adult level, so their parents/carers should give more personal, age/appropriate guidance.

What are some signs that a person is ready to take Communion?

- An age-appropriate understanding of what Jesus' death and resurrection means.
- A personal expression of faith in Jesus.
- Evidence of wanting to live in right relationship with God and others.

¹ Ephesians 2:11-21, Colossians 1:13-23

² Eg: Luke 22:15

³ Exodus 12

⁴ Luke 22:19-20

⁵ 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

⁶ Romans 3:23-26, 5:1-21, 1 John 2:1-2

⁷ 1 Corinthians 15:50-56

⁸ 1 Corinthians 11:27,29

⁹ 1 Corinthians 11:33

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 11:28-34

What are some reasons to delay giving Communion to Children?

- To teach the sacredness of participating
Partaking of the communion elements is not a right, it's a privilege! The anticipation of waiting might reinforce this and prevent children from being flippant or demanding, which is an offense to God and spiritually harmful for the child.
- To provide a spiritual marker and something to look back on
The earlier a child begins taking communion, the less able they are to comprehend the gravity of it or to remember how significant it was when they first took it.

What are some reasons to not delay giving Communion to Children?

- To teach that the family of God really is a family
Jesus included children in His ministry and even used them as examples for adults, saying that "whoever does not receive the kingdom like a little child will never enter it"¹¹! Being included in community can make a big impact on people and is a powerful reminder to all of us that every member of the Body matters.
- To take advantage of a family discipleship moment
We encourage parents/carers to be building into the spiritual life of children all week¹², but by providing you with the opportunity to take communion as a family we give the space to talk and pray together about the core Christian gospel that is the foundation for life.

Conclusion

Communion is not magical! There's no special merit in being allowed to take it.

Communion is not a snack! To treat it like one would be a repeat of the offense that Paul addresses in 1 Corinthians 11.

When you consider what Communion means and prayerfully guide your child to participate in a worthy manner, it can be a source of spiritual nourishment that will be a great blessing in their lives.

We encourage you to discuss the issue with people who have guided their children in this way to learn from what was helpful and what wasn't as we each seek to bring up our children in the training and instruction of the Lord¹³.



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¹¹ Luke 18:17

¹² Eg: Deuteronomy 6:4-9,
Ephesians 6:1-4

¹³ Ephesians 6:4