

CHILDREN AT THE LORD'S SUPPER

Suggested Procedural Guidelines for Boards of Elders

The *Book of Church Order (BCO)* gives to the elders of the church responsibility for the spiritual care of its members and responsibility to see that its members are making faithful use of the means of grace. In furtherance of these responsibilities, boards of elders are encouraged to implement the following procedures for children at the Lord's Supper.

1. When parents and a baptized child of the church come to the board of elders requesting that the child be allowed to participate in the Supper, then the elders may proceed as follows:
 - a. An elder with the pastor or another elder may call on the family in the home. During the course of the visit, the elder should seek to guide the conversation through an explanation of the Supper and an exploration of the child's faith. Attention given to the following is suggested:
 1. Explanation of the Supper at a level the child will be able to understand;
 2. Discussion of the child's participation in the life of the church and the meaning of membership in Christ's body;
 3. Exploration of the child's faith;

(For pre-elementary and early-elementary children, such questions as "Do you know Jesus died for you because he loved you?" and "Do you love Jesus?" may be used.)

(For upper-elementary and older children, the substance of the questions and answers from "The Heidelberg Catechism," numbers 65-80, may be used.)
 4. Encouragement of questions from the child and from the parents;
 5. Encouragement of further family discussion before and after each celebration of the Supper; and
 6. Leaving the family some educational material.
 - b. Following a visit, the elders shall bring a recommendation to the board of elders.

- c. Following the board of elders' approval, two elders shall then inform the child and the family that the child is welcome at the next celebration of the Lord's Supper. Although some form of recognition may be appropriate, a formal welcoming ceremony or announcement is discouraged.
2. When a baptized child in the church whose parents attend requests participation in the Lord's Supper, then the elders shall approach the parents and proceed according to the steps outlined above.
3. When a baptized child in the church whose parents do not attend the church requests participation in the Lord's Supper, then the elders may proceed as follows:
 - a. An elder with the pastor or another elder may call on the family to determine if there is interest in and permission for the child's participating in the Supper.
 - b. If permission is given, then the elders may assign a person within the church membership to serve as a "sponsor" to the child.
 - c. Then, with the sponsor, the elder may follow the steps outlined above.
4. For resources to help in the implementation of the above, boards of elders are encouraged to contact:

The Discipleship Office
Reformed Church in America
4500 60th Street SE
Grand Rapids MI 49512-9670
(616) 698-7071 or (800) 968-3943

These suggested procedural guidelines for children at the Lord's Supper were adopted by the June 1990 General Synod.