

## **CHILDREN, COME AND EAT OUR CHILDREN'S FAITH**

The Chapel's practice of including covenant children in the Lord's Supper has caused some confusion concerning the place of the tradition of "Making a Profession of Faith" -- the practice by which many churches admit young people to this sacrament. The Chapel Council wants to address this confusion and make clear what we believe should be happening as children grow to adulthood within the Christian Faith. Toward that end we offer this explanation.

### **PERSONAL FAITH**

No one can be saved by someone else's faith. Children born into Christian families are members of the Church and enjoy the blessings of God's Covenant; but they are also under obligation as God's covenant people to repent of their sins, believe the gospel and trust in the Savior for their salvation. This saving faith is always personal.

### **NO CONFIRMATION**

The Bible does not mandate a rite of confirmation for covenant children who are growing as disciples of Christ Jesus. In the Bible, the profession of one's faith is the life-long, continuing testimony that believers give by their words and deeds before the church and the world.

### **SIGNIFICANT STEPS**

As Covenant children grow in grace, learning more what it means to trust and obey the Savior, they will experience milestones of faith -- times when they have come to greater understanding of the gospel and have taken significant steps of commitment to Christ. Some will have many small steps of faith; others will experience overwhelming conversion experiences. It is important that the church recognizes these significant, but diverse, steps and encourages young believers to express their faith with increasing clarity and commitment.

### **DIFFERENT OCCASIONS**

As there may be many steps of varying significance along the way of faith, there are also many occasions when such steps might be recognized. As children become able to publicly testify of their faith, they should be encouraged to do so in every possible way: in family gatherings, in small groups, in the Sunday school, in informal gatherings of the church, and in the regular, formal worship services. The goal is to train these young believers how to openly speak words of encouragement in the church and how to boldly witness for Christ before the world.

### **PASTORAL OVERSIGHT**

God has ordained leaders to care for His church. Young believers wishing to publicly tell of Christ's work in their lives should speak to one of those leaders -- the Pastor or an elder -- who will sit down and review with them exactly what they intend to express. This is not meant to be an examination, but to be real help in formulating accurate

expressions of God's personal work of grace. The goal is that these expressions of faith will not breed a false assurance of salvation based simply on having stood before the congregation to "make profession of faith", but that formulating and expressing a public testimony will help solidify an accurate understanding of the gospel and a real trust of the Savior.

### **VARIED EXPRESSIONS**

The particular form of a public testimony may vary; it might be a personal statement of faith, a less structured interview by the Pastor, the presentation of a song or the reading of something written to express one's relationship to the Lord. The Bible tells us to expect that God's gifts -- the expressions of His Spirit working in us -- will be diverse.

### **BAPTISM**

Young people who have not been baptized will be welcomed to give similar expressions of their growing faith. But as the Pastor/Elder discusses their testimony with them, when it is obvious that the gospel is clearly understood and believed, they will be encouraged to be baptized.

### **PERSONALIZED DISCIPLING**

In all these matters the Pastor and Council will seek to deal with each child personally, taking into consideration the age of the child and taking seriously the significance of the growth at hand, while always striving to nurture further Christian maturity.

### **CAUTIONS!**

The Wiser Lake Chapel will strive to avoid some pitfalls:

- We will not take lightly the faith of a child, treating it as if it is nothing.
- We will not forbid a child to come to Christ, saying, "You're too young."
- We will not treat a covenant child as if he/she is outside the faith until some public profession is made.
- We will not assume that because a child is born in the church he/she automatically knows the gospel, believes it, trusts Jesus and is saved.
- We will not ignore the urgency to present the gospel within the church as well as outside it.