

Paedocommunion-Credocommunion Agreement Statement

1. We believe covenant children are part of the church family and ought to be treated accordingly. We desire to have covenant children to be present with the gathered community in worship and to participate in the service as much as possible (though we understand this cannot always be done). We want to do full justice to Jesus' declaration that covenant children are members of his kingdom and bearers of his name (Mt. 18:1-14; 19:13). We want to receive covenant children into the family of God as fully as possible, giving them needed nurture and care in the covenant community.

2. We recognize that the issue of including baptized children at the Lord's Table is one of great importance and varying conviction in the contemporary Reformed church (including our own congregation). Out of a desire to practice a charitable catholicity, our church welcomes families holding both paedocommunion and credocommunion viewpoints. We recognize that both paedocommunionists and credocommunionists are concerned to be faithful to Scripture and to the church's historic practice (with paedocommunionists pointing to the early centuries of the church, and credocommunionists pointing to the Reformational era). While individual officers are free to take a humble, conscientious stance on the issue as they see fit, as a session, we are neutral and inclusive, allowing both practices, as families desire. No one will be ostracized for practicing one view or the other. The session insists on cooperative agreement, even in the midst of possible differences on this issue within our church body.

3. Parents are free to choose according to their own conscience and understanding whether or not they would like to bring their child to the table on the basis of baptism (as soon as the child can ingest the bread and wine), or on the basis of a profession of faith (evaluated in a age appropriate way by the elders, when the parents request an interview). Parents may simply notify elders of their convictions at the time of their child's baptism, or when they join the church, and the session will make a note of it. Elders will be happy to serve as advisors if parents wish to have additional pastoral input in making a decision about bringing their child to the table.

4. Whatever practice parents decide upon, they are encouraged to raise their children up in the fear and admonition of the Lord. Those who practice credocommunion should not wait until their children are old enough to make a verbal profession to begin training their children in the faith. Even before children can talk, they can be positively shaped in all kinds of ways. Likewise, those who adopt a paedocommunion observance should not presume upon God's grace, but diligently instruct their children. They should not assume that because their children are already at the table that there is no need for them to be vigilant in the spiritual formation of the children. Paedocommunionists need to be reminded that their children need to be nurtured in other ways if they are to receive the blessings of the Lord's Table with a growing faith.

5. In sanctioning the practice of paedocommunion to families with paedocommunionist convictions, the elders are not sanctioning force feeding infants before they are physically ready to ingest the elements. Nor are elders handing over the keys of the kingdom to parents. The elders will still supervise admission to and exclusion from the table. Once a child has been admitted to the table (by baptism or by profession), only a process of discipline by the elders can remove that person from table fellowship (cf. Mt. 18:15-20). (Of course, we do not envision ever having to bring formal charges against a child! Rather, the point is that parents may not excommunicate their children on their own as a means of discipline since the table is under the oversight of the session, not fathers. Fathers hold the rod of correction, not the keys to the kingdom. We also expect our children to grow up to be faithful Christians, but if a child of the covenant did happen to grow up and reject the faith of his youth, he would be subject to church sanctions.)

6. The elders urge the members of Trinity Presbyterian Church to discuss the issue of paedocommunion-vs.-credocommunion charitably and peaceably, without arrogance or self-righteousness. This is an issue over which faithful, thoughtful Christians have disagreed. We will not allow varying convictions or practices to divide our body (cf. 1 Cor. 11:17ff). We will strive for like-mindedness on this issue, but will do so in a spirit of humility, prayerfulness, study, and winsomeness. Even if one particular view is taught from the pulpit or Sunday school lectern, those who hold a

different view should not feel attacked or ostracized. The truths we hold in common vastly outweigh our small differences.

7. Those who would like to pursue the matter further are invited to consult with the pastor and elders, as well as the online resource, <http://www.paedocommunion.com/links.php>. Other resources are available from the session as well. Because the tolerance of paedocommunion represents a substantive change in our local church's practice, we strongly suggest all families work through the issue carefully before making a decision about their own practice. Heads of households are responsible for communicating their family's position to the session when need arises.