



First Communion Preparation

[Date]

Dear [Parents Names],

At All Saints we seek to shepherd families, and particularly children who seek to become communicant members. Our elders have a wonderful opportunity to clarify and apply the gospel through personal interaction with congregants. In order that these opportunities might be as enjoyable and fruitful as possible, here are some guidelines for communicant interviews.

The most basic principle we apply in terms of communion is that as soon as a child is participating in the full worship service, we want them to consider participating in just that – the full worship service. This does not mean that the child can read everything or pay attention the entire time (many adults struggle with that!). It does mean that there is ongoing engagement with the service as a whole, with active assistance from parents (readings, songs/hymns, prayers, sermon). When a child begins to participate in the various aspects of the service, they usually become more curious and desirous to know more and participate more fully, which includes communion. This pattern is what we seek to encourage. Children learn about communion the same way adults learn about it, by participating in it. Thus, we look for budding desire in the form of participation.

Below is the process you can walk your child through at a pace that works best for you.

- Step 1: Please read and discuss the contents of this packet with your child
 - Handout A – Heidelberg Catechism, Question 1
 - Handout B – Preparing for the Communicants Interview
 - Handout C – Questions for children seeking admittance to the Lord’s Table (from PCA Book of Church Order)
 - Handout D – Helping Children Understand the Service
- Step 2: A parent can then email one of the elder’s listed below to set-up an interview after this information has been “digested”.
- Step 3: The interviewing elder will have a discussion with the parents.
- Step 4: If appropriate, the interviewing elder will recommend your child to receive their first communion and a vote will take place.
- Step 5: Typically, your child will take their first communion the Sunday after their interview.
- Step 6: On the Sunday of the first communion, your child and your family will be invited by the pastor to be first in line for communion in recognition of this special event

Elders’ Email Addresses

- Bob Donaldson – r.donaldson@sbcglobal.net
- Stephen Hurd – Shurd1@austin.rr.com
- Larry Ketcham – larryk@tec-knowledge.com
- Gene Kummerer – gmkummerer@sbcglobal.net
- John Rogan – rogan@sbcglobal.net

If you have any questions along the way, please do not hesitate to contact me.

In prayer for you and your child,

Melissa Kummerer
Children’s Ministry Director

Handout A
Heidelberg Catechism, Question 1

This just might be the most pastoral summary of the gospel out there. The content is a good example of what we want to hear and teach in an interview, as is the tone. “What is your only comfort...?” This assumes a need to be assured, to be shepherded, and to be pastored. That is the goal of these interviews, and, ultimately, of all ministry. Thus, we have included the question below for you to review with your child.

Q. - What is thy¹ only comfort in life and death?

A. - That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ who, with his precious blood, has fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head; yea², that all things must be subservient³ to my salvation, and therefore, by his Holy Spirit, He also assures me of eternal life and makes me sincerely willing and ready, henceforth, to live unto him.

¹Thy = your

²Yea = even moreso

³Subservient = work together for (i.e. Romans 8:28)

Handout B
Preparing for the Communicants Interview

Parents: Please review the following items with your children at a pace that works for you and your child. We encourage you to look up each Bible verse listed in its entirety. After review, ask your children the questions from Handout B to determine what they understand or know.

- 1) **Baptism** - Bible tells us that we are baptized for the forgiveness of sins. When we are baptized we show that we are part of God's covenant family. The outward element used is water. God accepts us as his "children" now. It is a public recognition of God's acceptance and grace. Jesus got baptized in order to take our sins from us. (Catechism for Young Children Q. 126-129). Parents, please refer to the booklet "Why do we baptize infants?" available on the book table.

1 Peter 3:18-22 - ¹⁸For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, ¹⁹in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, ²⁰because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. ²¹Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²²who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him."

- 2) **Discuss sin and its origins.** Discuss who sins and what the punishment is for sin (Catechism for Young Children Q. 37).

Romans 6:23 - "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

- 3) **Discuss who died and why He did that.** What happened after Jesus died? Death, resurrection, ascension to heaven, and eventual return to Earth.

John 3:16 - "For God so loved the world..."

Gal. 2:20 - "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me..."

Eph. 5:2 - "and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God"

John 1:17 - "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."

- He was raised from the dead so that you may have life.

Roman 6:4 - "We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

- He ascended into heaven.

Mark 16:19 - "...He was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God"

Acts 1:9 - "After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight"

- 4) **Talk with your child more extensively about Jesus.** Jesus loves you, and we love Jesus because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). Ask your child:

- Do you love Jesus? In what ways do you show Jesus that you love Him?

- 5) **Explain to your child about leaders in the church:** Elders and Deacons.

In addition to our pastors (the teaching elders), elders and deacons are appointed for the purpose of congregational (church body) oversight by attending to the spiritual and practical needs of the church. We must all promise to obey them. But how? What are ways that you can obey the elders and deacons?

6) **Talk about the importance of worship and work in the church**

Examples: Stay quiet when appropriate, singing loudly when it's time and by praying for the church, introduce yourself at passing of the peace, being honest with and loving towards other church members

7) **Discuss the Lord's Supper** – what happened on the night Jesus was betrayed?

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 - "Our LORD Jesus Christ, on the night in which he was betrayed, took the bread, gave thanks, and broke it and gave it to his disciples and said, 'Take; eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way he also took the cup after the supper, gave thanks, and gave it to them and said, 'Take, and drink of it, all of you. This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'"

8) **The Bread & Wine** – Discuss what each represents. Also talk about what tastes they may encounter & what it means.

- What does the bread represent? The body of Christ, broken for our sins (Catechism for Young Children Q. 134)
- What does the wine represent? The blood of Christ, shed for our salvation (Catechism for Young Children Q. 135)

Your child may ask you:

- What happens if you think the bread and/or wine tastes bad? Is it meant to taste good or is meant to represent something? This is an important difference.
- Have you tasted the bread? Salty sometimes. Tears shed.
- Have you tasted wine? Bitter. Bitterness of Jesus' death. When it's in a tummy it's warm, and that reminds us of the joy of the Holy Spirit.

Whenever possible, the interviewer will meet with a child and his or her parents in their own home. This puts the child at ease and it also communicates our desire to meet children "where they are."

If in an interview, a child has difficulty maintaining a pattern of thought, listening, or sitting still, then at some point we will confirm their age and school situation. If they are still eligible for Children's Worship we suggest that they continue to enjoy that and continue going through the material throughout the next six to twelve months. This is exactly why we have interviews, to talk and to determine "readiness", and encourage families in reading and talking together as time goes on. We usually suggest they read the story Bible (by Catherine Vos) to their children (or as a family) on a regular basis.

"If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" 1 John 1:9

"In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit..." Ephesians 1:13-14

The Lord visits us by His Holy Spirit and strengthens our faith in Him (Westminster Confession of Faith 29:7)

Handout C

Questions for Children Seeking Admittance to the Lord's Table

(Based upon PCA Book of Church Order 57-5)

Membership Questions:

1. Do you acknowledge yourselves to be sinners in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope save in His sovereign mercy?
2. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel?
3. Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes the followers of Christ?
4. Do you promise to support the Church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?
5. Do you submit yourselves to the government and discipline of the Church, and promise to study its purity and peace?

Communicant Questions:

1. What is sin?
2. What does God think of sin?
3. Are you a sinner?
4. Can you go to heaven as a sinner?
5. Who is Jesus Christ?
6. What did Jesus Christ do for sinners?
7. Did Jesus Christ die for you?
8. What is a Christian?
9. How do Christians learn what makes God happy?
10. Do you promise to live like a Christian?
11. Why do you come to church on Sunday?
12. How are we supposed to act in church?
13. How can you help all the other people worship God on Sunday?
14. Do you know what the word "tithe" means?
15. What are Elders in the church supposed to do?
16. Do you promise to pray for the Elders and the church?
17. Do you know why you were baptized when you were a baby?
18. Why do we have the Lord's supper?
19. What does the Lord's supper remind us of?
20. What do the bread and wine represent?
21. If you are getting ready to have the Lord's supper and you remember some bad thing that you said or did recently, what should you do?

Handout D
Helping Children Understand the Service

Ideas to help children learn to listen to the reading of the word

Using next Sunday's lectionary readings for corporate worship (or the previous Sunday's)*

- Read and "narrate" (summarize in your own words) lectionary readings
- Read and discuss the lectionary readings
- Read and discuss Catherine Voss Children's Story Bible or Sally Lloyd Jones' The Jesus Storybook Bible selection corresponding to the lectionary readings (where applicable)
- Memorize a verse from the lectionary readings

*Find Sunday Eucharistic Revised Common Lectionary readings at <http://www.cresourcei.org/RCLmenu.html>

Ideas to help children learn to take notes

Younger Children

- Have a special "church only" notebook and pens
- Draw a picture of something in the service
 - The pastor preaching
 - Musicians playing
- Draw a picture of something you hear in the homily
 - Homily illustration
 - Homily point
 - Application point

Elementary School Age

- Write words you hear in the homily
 - Random words
 - Repeated words
 - Emphasized words
- Copy biblical texts from the daily lectionary readings
- Copy the biblical text the message is based upon
- Copy mom's or dad's notes—actual notes or summary/simplified notes

Older Children

- Outline the homily
- Two column (left column "what he said"/ right column—my questions, objections, "what he should have said")

Ideas to help children understand and interact with the homily

- Ask questions about the homily
 - What was your favorite part of the homily
 - What was the sermon about
- Discuss specific quotes from the homily
- Discuss the main idea of the homily
- Identify and discuss how the homily applies to you and your children's daily lives
- Set-up and have a debate on the homily topic
- Guess the topic for next Sunday's homily and discuss how you would present it

Ideas to help children who have trouble concentrating or get "fidgety"

- Give the child exercise to do before church so he/she can expend some energy and focus better (studies have shown that exercise right before a "sitting" activity truly helps them to focus better)...they could even run around right before the service begins
- Give child a stress reliever ball—sometimes having children "doing something else" (doodling, drawing, etc) during the service can help them to stay focused better.