

## THE APPROACH TO CHILDREN & MEMBERSHIP AT NPC

There are a number of different ways that churches handle children and membership. Our approach at North Park is certainly guided by our Presbyterian distinctives; yet even within that framework there are several ways to wisely and lovingly shepherding our covenant treasures. Here is the approach we are looking to follow:

I. **Covenant Baptism** - As Presbyterians we view our children as essentially being part of the church family until such time as they may opt out by their own choices. Therefore, we apply to our children the covenant sign of water baptism. This is preferably done as soon as possible after delivery. Lengthy delays to get entire extended family here are not recommended. Parents of unbaptized children are encouraged to make arrangements for their baptism by contacting the Sr. Pastor. Once baptized, a child is regarded as a "baptized member." Note that we only baptize children who have at least one parent who is an active member of our church.

II. **Confirmed or communing membership**

It is our longing to see our covenant children come to a place where they are able to personally confess faith in Jesus. When a parent feels a child has reached this point and is able to make a credible profession before the elders, this is the time for an interview to be admitted to the Lord's Table and to the confirmed membership of the church. Parents may call the office, contact the Sr. Pastor or approach any elder about this.

For parents who desire to assist their children in preparing for confirmed membership, a children's membership manual has been developed. This is a home-study version of a communicants class, covering the basics of the gospel, what baptism and the Lord's Supper are about, and what church membership involves. The use of this material is offered at no-charge and is entirely optional.

When the parent feels the child is ready, an interview will be arranged involving at least two elders. This interview will focus on the child's understanding and ability to confess accurately who Jesus is, what He has done for us, his/her personal belief in or commitment to Jesus, his/her recognition of personal sinfulness and some reasonable grasp of what the Lord's Supper is about. It is permissible for one parent to accompany (not coach) the child for this interview. If the interview is satisfactory and the child has previously been baptized the child will be admitted to the Lord's Table and the roll of

confirmed members. If the interview is not satisfactory, an explanation of the grounds for this judgement will be provided to the parent and/or the child including some direction about how to compensate for the deficiency.

### III. **“Adult” teen expectations**

Young people at NPC, once they turn 16, will be encouraged to attend either the regular membership courses or special teen membership classes, if offered. Upon completion of the class requirements, a teen will be interviewed by at least two elders. If the teen has already been approved for communion and membership this will simply be a teen shepherding checkup, otherwise it is a regular membership interview. If a teen reaches 19 without fulfilling this requirement, his/her name will be removed from the roll of confirmed members.

The rationale for this requirement is rooted in two recognitions: 1) a great deal changes as children advance thru adolescence so that there needs to be an additional spiritual check-point; and 2) by late high-school years a young person is at a place to grasp more thoroughly what membership in a church entails and to embrace that personally.

We hope this is helpful to you. This is our plan, the Lord is our hope. Psalm 144:12 is our heart's desire: *Let our sons in their youth be as grown-up plants, and our daughters as corner pillars fashioned as for a palace.*