

Since the Lord's Supper is a visual means, in a visual age, its message can be powerful. We must, therefore, pay attention to the messages we are transmitting in its celebration, for it is capable of either effectively communicating the message of the gospel or of seriously altering it. It is able to communicate a joyful invitation and a beautiful welcome to be experienced by all who come trustingly. Or it may signal an unwarranted exclusivism regarding those who might not be considered in the inner circle. Even the manner of its celebration can carry important messages that must be carefully examined.

We call on each other to carefully and thoughtfully examine the messages of our observance of the sacraments in our current culture to discern their faithfulness of the intent of Scripture, and to identify any mistaken messages being conveyed.

We call on each other to make sure our observance of the sacraments is a clear proclamation of a worldview that brings all things under the rule of the living Lord, until he comes again and his glorious kingdom will be on display for all to see.

PART 5: CONCLUSION

5.1 Expectant Urgency

Faith, both its presence and its growth, is a gift of God given to us through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 16:14; 1 Cor. 12:3; Gal. 5:16-26). We do not produce it, but we should pray for it, long for it, participate in it, and be prepared to suffer in it—themes poignantly conveyed in Paul's description of his attitude toward the Galatians as being “in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you” (Gal. 4:19). This dramatic imagery challenges us to live, teach, pray, and worship with expectant urgency for the faith formation of all members of the body.

5.2 Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of Our Faith

In all our efforts from baptism through the life of full obedience, we celebrate the grace of God, which unites us with Jesus Christ. We affirm and proclaim that Jesus is the “author and perfecter of our faith” (Heb. 12:2) and we take comfort in the promise that “he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 1:6).

To him be all glory now and forever!

Appendix B Recommended Church Order Changes

I. Work of the committee and synod's responses

Since 2007 the Faith Formation Committee has engaged in a wide range of conversations with agencies, key leaders, pastors and other church staff, congregations, and more than half of all CRC classes. The committee has researched and formulated a variety of biblical, theological, and pastoral

materials that it believes are helpful to the churches. These resources are now posted on the Faith Alive website at www.crcna.org/faithformation.

The committee has been particularly grateful for the encouragement and instructive responses to our work by Synods 2008, 2009, and 2010. In each case, members have learned a great deal from informal discussions with delegates and from the advisory committee and plenary deliberations. These discussions point to a widespread desire for prayerful and intentional ways of deepening faith formation in our congregations and for faith-filled and expectant participation in the Lord's Supper.

At Synod 2010 the committee presented a key recommendation that would function as a basis for its continuing work. Following very constructive contributions by the synodical advisory committee, synod approved the following recommendation:

All baptized members who come with age- and ability-appropriate faith in Jesus Christ are welcome to the Lord's Table and called to obey the scriptural commands about participation (e.g., to "examine themselves," to "discern the body," to "proclaim the Lord's death," to "wait for others") in an age- and ability-appropriate way, under the supervision of the elders. The elders have responsibility to nurture in the congregation grateful and obedient participation through encouragement, instruction, and accountability.

The following statements clarify the guiding principle above:

- a. A formal public Profession of Faith prior to participation in the Lord's Supper is not required by Scripture or the confessions.
- b. A formal public Profession of Faith is a vital practice for faith formation and is one pastoral approach to consider prior to participation in the Lord's Supper.
- c. Professing faith regularly in and outside of corporate worship is a natural practice for lifelong faith formation which the church should encourage, enhance, and express.

(Acts of Synod 2010, pp. 810-11)

Seven grounds were included with the recommendation upon adoption:

Grounds:

- a. This position honors the covenant status of all who are baptized and affirms their membership in the body of Christ.
- b. This position is faithful to the instruction of 1 Corinthians 11, which calls for a response of obedience on the part of those that come to the table.
- c. This position acknowledges that, though members of the body of Christ respond to the promises of God in ways that are shaped by their age and abilities, their responses are nevertheless valid responses.
- d. This position implements the instructions of Heidelberg Catechism, Q. and A. 81, that those who come to the table must be repentant, trusting, and desirous of growth in obedience.
- e. This position honors the polity of the CRC, in which the sacraments of the church are to be celebrated under the supervision of the elders.
- f. This position allows for diversity of local practice within a standard principle.
- g. Adopting this principle will give the Faith Formation Committee sufficient guidance to continue to carry out its mandate by proposing Church Order changes and working with church agencies to develop pastoral resources for congregations.

(Acts of Synod 2010, p. 811)

The Faith Formation Committee was grateful for the unanimous recommendation of the advisory committee for this proposal, and for the overwhelming

positive voice vote by which this recommendation was approved. It was also grateful for the positive testimony of delegates to synod who previously were on opposite sides of the children at the Lord's Supper discussion, but who communicated to the committee their appreciation for the way this principle honors the Bible's invitation to, and instructions about, table participation.

As delegates noted, changes in the Church Order will be necessary for the implementation of this principle. However, it should be noted that Synod 2010 also agreed that changes in local practice should be delayed until the Church Order changes are adopted by the following action:

That synod remind the churches that changes in local practice arising out of this principle should be delayed until changes to the Church Order are adopted at a future synod.

Grounds:

- a. This approach reflects the covenant we share about changes to Church Order Article 47.
- b. This reminder is necessary because congregations have recently been confused about the status of synodical decisions on this topic.
- c. Working together as a denomination in discerning faithful practices for Lord's Supper celebrations is particularly important in an age of congregationalism.

(Acts of Synod 2010, pp. 811-12)

Synod 2010 adopted the following with regard to the necessary Church Order changes:

That synod instruct the Faith Formation Committee to submit any Church Order changes it will propose according to the study committee schedule so that those changes may be adopted at Synod 2011 instead of being proposed at Synod 2011 for adoption at Synod 2012.

(Acts of Synod 2010, p. 812)

II. Recommended Church Order changes

By way of this report, the Faith Formation Committee recommends the necessary changes to the Church Order. The changes were presented according to the time-line suggested so that they could be adequately considered by the churches before being presented to Synod 2011.

The recommended changes are designed to make clear both the principle by which baptized members are welcomed to the table and the pastoral significance of a public profession of faith. Other proposed changes are designed to ensure that our terminology for baptized and confessing members is consistent throughout the Church Order.

III. Recommendation

That synod approve the following changes to the Church Order and its Supplement as indicated.

Grounds:

1. These changes provide for the implementation of the decision of Synod 2010 about age- and ability-appropriate participation in the Lord's Supper.
2. These changes acknowledge that while profession of faith is a vital practice for faith formation, neither Scripture nor the confessions require that it take place prior to participation in the Lord's Supper.

3. These changes promote a consistency of terminology within the Church Order and of practice within the churches.

Note: Boldface text indicates changes from the current Church Order.

Current Article 25

a. The elders and deacons shall serve for a limited time as designated by the council. As a rule a specified number of them shall retire from office each year. The retiring officebearers shall be succeeded by others unless the circumstances and the profit of the church make immediate eligibility for reelection advisable. Elders and deacons who are thus reelected shall be reinstalled.

b. The elders, with the minister(s), shall oversee the doctrine and life of the members of the congregation and fellow officebearers, shall exercise admonition and discipline along with pastoral care in the congregation, shall participate in and promote evangelism, and shall defend the faith.

c. The deacons shall represent and administer the mercy of Christ to all people, especially to those who belong to the community of believers, and shall stimulate the members of Christ's church to faithful, obedient stewardship of their resources on behalf of the needy—all with words of biblical encouragement and testimony which assure the unity of word and deed.

Proposed Article 25

a. [Remains the same]

b. The elders, with the minister(s), shall oversee the doctrine and life of the members of the congregation and fellow officebearers, shall exercise admonition and discipline along with pastoral care in the congregation, shall participate in and promote evangelism, and shall defend the faith. **The elders also shall nurture in the congregation grateful and obedient participation in the Lord's Supper through encouragement, instruction, and accountability.**

c. [Remains the same]

Current Article 56

The covenant of God shall be sealed to children of believers by holy baptism. The consistory shall see to it that baptism is requested and administered as soon as feasible.

Proposed Article 56

The covenant of God shall be sealed to children of **confessing members** by holy baptism. The consistory shall see to it that baptism is requested and administered as soon as feasible. **Upon their baptism, children shall be designated as "baptized member."**

Current Article 59

a. Members by baptism shall be admitted to the Lord's Supper upon a public profession of their faith in Christ with the use of a prescribed form. Before the profession of faith the consistory shall ensure that there be an appropriate examination concerning their motives, faith, and life. Their membership shall be designated as "confessing member." The names of those who are to be admitted to the Lord's Supper shall be announced to the congregation for approval at least one Sunday before the public profession of faith.

b. Confessing members who have reached the age of eighteen and who have made a commitment to the creeds of the Christian Reformed Church and the responsibilities of adult membership in the church shall be accorded the full rights and privileges of such membership.

c. Confessing members coming from other Christian Reformed congregations shall be admitted to communicant membership upon the presentation of certificates of membership attesting to their soundness in doctrine and life.

Proposed Article 59

a. All baptized members who come with age- and ability-appropriate faith in Jesus Christ are welcome to the Lord's Supper and called to obey the scriptural commands about participation in an age- and ability-appropriate way under the supervision of the elders.

b. Baptized members shall be encouraged to make a public profession of faith with the use of a prescribed form in a public worship service. This public profession of faith includes a commitment to the creeds and confessions of the Christian Reformed Church. Before their profession of faith, they shall give an appropriate testimony of their faith, life, and doctrine to the elders. The names of those who will make a public profession of faith shall be announced to the congregation for approval at least one Sunday before their profession takes place. Upon their public profession of faith, they shall be designated as "confessing member."

c. Confessing members receive all the privileges and responsibilities of such membership. Privileges include but are not limited to presentation of children for infant baptism, the right to vote at congregational meetings, and eligibility to hold office. Responsibilities include full participation in the work, life, and mutual discipline of the local congregation and the universal body of Christ.

d. Confessing members coming from other Christian Reformed congregations shall be admitted to **confessing membership in the congregation** upon the presentation of certificates of membership attesting to their soundness in doctrine and life.

<p>b. Confessing members who have reached d. Confessing members coming from churches in ecclesiastical fellowship shall be admitted to communicant membership upon presentation of certificates or statements of membership after the consistory has satisfied itself concerning the doctrine and conduct of the members. Persons coming from other denominations shall be admitted to communicant membership only after the consistory has examined them concerning doctrine and conduct. The consistory shall determine in each case whether to admit them directly or by public reaffirmation or profession of faith. Their names shall be announced to the congregation for approval.</p>	<p>e. Confessing members coming from churches in ecclesiastical fellowship shall be admitted as confessing members of the congregation upon the presentation of certificates or statements of membership after the consistory has satisfied itself concerning the doctrine and conduct of the members.</p> <p>f. Persons coming from other denominations shall be admitted as confessing members of the congregation only after the consistory has examined them concerning doctrine and conduct. The consistory shall determine in each case whether to admit them directly or by public reaffirmation or profession of faith. Their names shall be announced to the congregation for approval.</p>
	<p><i>Proposed Supplement, Article 59-c</i> Each congregation shall determine the appropriate age at which a confessing member shall receive such privileges and responsibilities.</p>
<p>Current Article 63</p> <p>a. Each church shall minister to its youth—and to the youth in the community who participate—by nurturing their personal faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, by preparing them to profess their faith publicly, and by equipping them to assume their Christian responsibilities in the church and in the world. This nurturing ministry shall include receiving them in love, praying for them, instructing them in the faith, and encouraging and sustaining them in the fellowship of believers.</p> <p>b. Each church shall instruct the youth in the Scriptures and in the creeds and the confessions of the church, especially the Heidelberg Catechism. This instruction shall be supervised by the consistory.</p>	<p>Proposed Article 63</p> <p>a. Each church shall minister to its children and youth—and to the children and youth in the community who participate—by nurturing their personal faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, by nurturing their faithful participation in the Lord's Supper, by preparing them to profess their faith publicly, and by equipping them to assume their Christian responsibilities in the church and in the world. This nurturing ministry shall include receiving them in love, praying for them, instructing them in the faith, and encouraging and sustaining them in the fellowship of believers.</p> <p>b. [Remains the same]</p>

<p>Current Article 66</p> <p>a. Confessing members who move to another Christian Reformed church or to a church in ecclesiastical fellowship are entitled to a certificate, issued by the council, concerning their doctrine and life. When such certificates of membership are requested, they shall ordinarily be mailed to the church of their new residence.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">—Cf. Supplement, Article 66-a</p> <p>b. Members by baptism who move to another Christian Reformed church or to a church in ecclesiastical fellowship shall upon proper request be granted a certificate of baptism, to which such notations as are necessary shall be attached. Such certificates shall ordinarily be mailed to the church of their new residence.</p> <p>c. Ecclesiastical certificates shall be signed by the president and clerk of the council.</p>	<p>Proposed Article 66</p> <p>a. [Remains the same]</p> <p>b. Baptized members who move to another Christian Reformed church or to a church in ecclesiastical fellowship shall upon proper request be granted a certificate of baptism, to which such annotations as are necessary shall be attached. Such certificates shall ordinarily be mailed to the church of their new residence.</p> <p>c. [Remains the same]</p>
<p>Current Supplement, Article 66-a</p> <p>When a church council transfers memberships, it should note for the receiving church whether the confessing members have assented to the creeds of the Christian Reformed Church and accepted the responsibilities of adult membership.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(Acts of Synod 1995, p. 721)</i></p>	<p>Supplement, Article 66-a</p> <p>[Is unnecessary]</p>
<p>Current Article 79</p> <p>a. The members of the church are accountable to one another in their doctrine and life and have the responsibility to encourage and admonish one another in love.</p> <p>b. The consistory shall instruct and remind the members of the church of their responsibility and foster a spirit of love and openness within the fellowship so that erring members may be led to repentance and reconciliation.</p>	<p>Proposed Article 79</p> <p>a. [Remains the same]</p> <p>b. The consistory shall encourage a spirit of mutual accountability, calling the congregation away from favoritism, division, and selfishness toward hospitality, forgiveness, and unity within the body, especially in conjunction with participation in the Lord's Supper as mandated in 1 Corinthians 11:27-29.</p> <p>c. The consistory shall instruct and remind the members of the church of their responsibility and foster a spirit of love and openness within the fellowship so that erring members may be led to repentance and reconciliation.</p>

<p><i>Current Supplement, Articles 78-81</i></p> <p>a. Discipline shall be applied by the consistory only after an adequate investigation has been made and the member has had ample opportunity to present his/her case.</p> <p>b. A person who persistently rejects the admonition of the consistory shall be suspended from the privileges of communicant membership [with explanatory footnote].</p> <p>c. A person may be excluded from membership only after the consistory has secured the approval of the classis.</p> <p>d. The role of the classis in giving approval is</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To judge whether proper procedure has been followed. 2) To assure that adequate pastoral care has been extended to the person. 3) To determine that the consistory has advanced adequate reasons for proceeding with discipline. <p>e. The approval of classis does not obligate a consistory to exclude a person from membership since repentance and restoration to the full fellowship of the church are always possible.</p> <p>f. The liturgical forms and announcements for admonition and discipline may be used if the consistory judges that these will further the purposes of discipline and will serve the welfare of the congregation.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(Acts of Synod 1991, p. 718)</i></p> <p><i>Note:</i> See <i>Acts of Synod 1991</i>, pp. 720-23, for revised announcements and forms for exclusion from membership and for readmission.</p>	<p><i>Proposed Supplement, Articles 78-81</i></p> <p>a. [Remains the same]</p> <p>b. A person who persistently rejects the admonition of the consistory shall be suspended from the privileges of membership. The privileges of confessing membership include but are not limited to the right to present children for holy baptism, the right to vote at congregational meetings, and eligibility to hold office.</p> <p>c. [Remains the same]</p> <p>d. [Remains the same]</p> <p>e. [Remains the same]</p> <p>f. [Remains the same]</p>
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Note: The Faith Formation Committee will also submit an annual report to synod with additional recommendations and resources, which will be distributed by way of the *Agenda for Synod 2011*.

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Appendix C

Children at the Table: Toward a Guiding Principle for Biblically Faithful Celebrations of the Lord's Supper, Revised Edition

Note: Synod 2010 received this document “as a sufficient foundational basis for the adoption of the guiding principle” about children’s participation at the Lord’s Supper and “refer[red] it to the churches for study and feedback, with the understanding that the Faith Formation Committee [would] continue to incorporate changes and suggestions to the document.” Synod also “specifically encourage[d] the Faith Formation Committee to include (1) a more detailed study of the command to ‘examine oneself’ as stated in 1 Corinthians 11:28 and (2) a comparison and contrast with the ‘confirmation’ process of other Christian traditions” (*Acts of Synod 2010*, p. 812). This revised edition incorporates these recommended changes.

Report outline

I. Report overview: Key ideas

II. Background

- A. *Pastoral concern*
- B. *Mandate*

III. 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

- A. *Central theme: Confronting inhospitality, promoting unity*
- B. *Obedient participation at the table*
- C. *A word of judgment*
- D. *Three errors to avoid*
- E. *Church practices: Pastoral care and church discipline*

IV. Debate about children at the Lord’s Supper

- A. *The two basic positions*
- B. *Reformed confessions*
- C. *Inconclusive arguments*
- D. *Substantive arguments*