

Redeemer Church Statement on Youth Baptism and Membership

At Redeemer Church, we rejoice when a young person turns from sin and places their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. Scripture teaches that heaven rejoices over one sinner who repents (Luke 15:10), and we long to see many of our children come to a genuine saving knowledge of Christ.

However, with this great joy comes the responsibility of shepherding young believers with wisdom and care. Children raised in the church grow up hearing the gospel, learning to love Jesus, and being surrounded by Christian influences. This is a tremendous blessing and grace from the Lord. Many will naturally desire baptism and church membership at an early age. Yet, the Bible does not provide a specific age for baptism, calling us instead to exercise biblical prudence in assessing genuine faith.

Our Approach

Redeemer practices believer's baptism, meaning that those who are baptized must give a credible profession of faith in Christ—one marked by genuine repentance, trust in Jesus, and evidence of spiritual transformation. Because baptism is closely tied to church membership (Acts 2:41; Matthew 28:19-20; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 6:4; 1 Timothy 3:15), we seek to affirm the authenticity of a young person's faith before welcoming them into the covenant community of believers as we would with any adult pursuing baptism and membership.

Rather than setting a fixed age requirement, we encourage a thoughtful and patient approach to this matter. We desire to see faith that is not merely shaped by family influence or youthful enthusiasm but one that perseveres through life's trials and temptations (Matthew 7:22-23). While we never want to discourage sincere faith, we also do not want to give a child a false assurance of salvation.

Partnering with Parents

We believe that God has given parents the primary responsibility of discipling their children, raising them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). As a church, we seek to come alongside families, supporting and equipping parents to fulfill this sacred calling. Our goal is not to replace the family or encourage parents to hand over their God-given responsibilities to ministry professionals, but to complement their efforts. By fostering a culture where parents feel empowered and encouraged, we desire to see the next generation grow in the knowledge and fear of the Lord. We recognize that the decision to baptize a child is a significant one, and we walk alongside parents, offering wisdom, encouragement, and prayerful discernment throughout this process.

Questions for Discernment

Before a young person is baptized and received into membership, we encourage parents, church members, and elders to consider the following:

1. Has the young person demonstrated a consistent pattern of repentance and faith over time?

Genuine faith is not merely a one-time emotional decision but a lifelong commitment to following Christ. True conversion is evidenced by a heart transformed by the Holy Spirit, producing lasting fruit in one's thoughts, attitudes, and actions (2 Corinthians 7:10-11). While outward expressions of faith are encouraging, they must be tested by time and trials. A credible profession of faith includes a love for God, a hatred of sin, and a growing desire to live in obedience to His Word. Parents and the church should observe whether the young person consistently seeks righteousness and shows evidence of persevering faith.

2. Do they seek to follow Christ apart from parental prompting?

A true believer will pursue Christ not simply out of obligation or external pressure but from an internal desire to know and obey Him. While encouragement and guidance from parents are essential, faith that is dependent solely on external influences may not be deeply rooted. A young person should show a personal hunger for God's Word, an eagerness to pray, and a willingness to serve in the church. When their pursuit of Christ continues even in the

absence of parental oversight, it provides strong evidence of authentic faith (Philippians 2:12-13).

3. Have members of the church been able to observe and affirm their faith?

Church membership is a communal covenant commitment, and baptism serves as a public declaration of faith before the body of Christ. The church has a responsibility to affirm a young person's faith before welcoming them into membership (1 Thessalonians 1:4-5). This means the congregation should have the opportunity to witness their spiritual growth, their interactions with others, and their commitment to biblical truth. If fellow believers, especially those outside their immediate family, can testify to their genuine faith and godly character, it strengthens the case for baptism and membership.

4. Do they understand the meaning and significance of baptism and the Lord's Supper?

Baptism is not merely a rite of passage or a family tradition; it is a profound act of obedience symbolizing union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:4). Likewise, the Lord's Supper requires self-examination and discernment (1 Corinthians 11:27-30). A young person should have a clear, biblical understanding of these ordinances, recognizing their spiritual weight and significance. They must understand that baptism is not what saves them, but rather a declaration of their salvation through faith in Christ. Additionally, they should understand the responsibility of taking the Lord's Supper in a worthy manner, thoughtfully reflecting on their walk with the Lord.

5. Do the parents understand that Baptism and the Lord's Supper are given to the church, not individual families?

The ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper are gifts that Christ has given to His church, not to individuals or families. Because these ordinances are expressions of faith within the covenant community, the local church has both the privilege and the responsibility of discerning whether to receive a professing believer into membership upon their credible profession of faith. In doing so, the church also determines when to extend the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. While parents play a vital role in

discipling their children, baptism and the Lord's Supper are administered within the church as acts of corporate affirmation and participation in the body of Christ. These sacraments are not private, family-centered events but communal expressions of faith meant to be overseen by the local church.

6. Are they ready to embrace the responsibilities of church membership?

Church membership is not just about attending services; it involves active participation in the life of the church, submission to spiritual authority, and accountability to fellow believers (Hebrews 13:17). A young person must be prepared to contribute to the church community, engage in meaningful relationships, and even uphold the practice of church discipline when necessary. Maturity is an essential factor—membership requires a level of spiritual and emotional maturity that enables a believer to engage with the church in a responsible and committed way. If a young person is not yet ready to function as an independent member of the body, it may be wise to wait until they are better prepared to embrace these responsibilities. Parents should read our church covenant and ask, *"Can I say in good conscience that my child is ready to honor the Lord in fulfilling these God given responsibilities within a local church family?"* Since baptism, the Lord's Supper, and church membership do not impart saving grace, we are committed to carefully evaluating each child under our care. We gladly encourage a period of discernment—potentially spanning years—following an initial profession of faith, allowing time to observe genuine spiritual growth before administering the ordinances and welcoming them into membership.

7. Does the child understand the Gospel?

We are not expecting children to be master theologians, but we do expect them to grasp the essential truths of salvation. The thief on the cross likely did not have a deep theological vocabulary—terms like justification, sanctification, and propitiation may have been unknown to him. Yet, he clearly understood the core message of the Gospel: that he was a sinner under God's just wrath, unable to save himself, and that his only hope for salvation was in Christ alone. Likewise, a child must not simply repeat biblical phrases but demonstrate a heartfelt understanding of their sin, God's holiness, the sufficiency of Christ's atoning work, and the call to repentance and faith. Saving faith is not measured by the

ability to articulate complex doctrines but by a genuine trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

A Call to Patience and Wisdom

While we celebrate the faith of young believers, we recognize that waiting for greater maturity can be spiritually beneficial. We encourage parents to nurture their children's faith, engage in meaningful discussions about the gospel, and trust that the Lord will bring about fruit in His perfect timing.

It is important to emphasize that a child is not lacking in receiving God's grace if they have not yet been baptized. Baptism and the Lord's Supper do not impart salvation or supernatural grace but are symbols of a spiritual reality. A young believer is fully in Christ and secure in His saving work even before partaking in these ordinances. While baptism and the Lord's Supper serve as visible signs of an inward transformation, they do not add to or complete one's salvation. Therefore, a child who is waiting for baptism is not deprived of God's grace but is being shepherded toward a complete understanding of these sacraments in the context of the church. By exercising wisdom, we seek to glorify God, care well for our children, and maintain the integrity of Christ's church.

If a young person desires baptism and membership, we encourage families to meet with an elder for guidance and discussion. Together, we will prayerfully seek to discern God's work in their lives and shepherd them toward a strong and enduring faith in Christ.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is this a new teaching?

No. The biblical doctrines of believers' baptism, regenerate church membership, and the participation of believers in the Lord's Supper are clearly established in Scripture.

Redeemer Church holds to these long-standing convictions, understanding that baptism and church membership are for those who have made a credible profession of faith in Jesus Christ.

Why this statement?

There are several key reasons why this statement is important for our church family:

1. For the good of the children. In recent years, many churches have seen an increase in so-called 'rebaptisms' and rededications—cases where individuals who were “baptized” at a young age later realized they had not truly been converted. This trend highlights the importance of exercising discernment in the baptism process, ensuring that those who enter the waters of baptism do so with a genuine, Spirit-wrought faith. By carefully shepherding young believers and affirming their faith with biblical wisdom, we seek to reduce the occurrence of these situations and uphold the integrity of baptism as a meaningful declaration of saving faith.

Every child is personally accountable before God to respond to Him in faith. As a church, we desire to shepherd our children well as they begin to wrestle with the call of Christ.

Encouraging patience in the baptism process is not meant to discourage young believers but to ensure that they are making a thoughtful, enduring commitment to Christ. We have seen many individuals who were “baptized” at a young age later question the sincerity of their conversion. Church history and biblical wisdom both affirm that exercising careful discernment in this area is a loving and protective measure for the souls of our children.

2. For the good of the parents. Christian parents bear the weighty responsibility of discipling their children, guiding them in the truth, and modeling a sincere faith. This statement is meant to serve parents by providing biblical guidance, encouragement, and clarity as they shepherd their children toward a mature faith. By offering clear principles and thoughtful questions to consider, we aim to equip parents to engage their children in meaningful spiritual discussions and help them discern genuine conversion.

3. For the good of the church. The church is called to uphold a biblical understanding of salvation and regeneration. By carefully considering the spiritual maturity of those seeking baptism and membership, we safeguard the integrity of the church and its witness. This

approach does not make conversion an unattainable standard for young believers, but rather ensures that we, as a church body, joyfully affirm the work of God in the lives of those who are truly regenerated by His Spirit.

4. To glorify God. Above all, our goal is to magnify the greatness of God's work in salvation. By upholding a careful and prayerful process for baptism and membership, we honor the power of genuine conversion and avoid both hasty assumptions and unnecessary doubt. A church that values humility, discernment, and biblical faithfulness in these matters ultimately brings glory to God and fosters a culture of trust and reverence for His saving grace.

Why are we addressing this now?

As elders, we recognize that it would be unfaithful to take a passive approach to such an important matter. God has graciously entrusted us with many children in our congregation, and it is our responsibility to equip parents and guide the church in thinking biblically about baptism and membership. We pray earnestly that God will save and transform the hearts of every child in our church. As we anticipate His continued work among us, we offer this statement to help shape the conversation and shepherd families well in the years ahead.

What role do parents play in a child's baptism and church membership?

Parents are commanded by God to disciple, instruct, and raise their children in the faith (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21). They play an invaluable role in shaping their children's spiritual lives, but the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper have been entrusted to the local church (Matthew 16:18-19). Scripture teaches that baptism, the Lord's Supper, and church membership are responsibilities given to the gathered church, led by elders who are accountable for the spiritual care of the congregation (Hebrews 13:17). While parents should be actively engaged in the discipleship of their children, the church has the God-given authority to evaluate and affirm a credible profession of faith before administering baptism and welcoming a believer into membership.

Parents' perspectives and insights are highly valued in this process. However, the final decision regarding a young person's readiness for baptism and membership rests with the elders and the congregation, as they seek to steward the ordinances faithfully in accordance with God's Word.

What should parents do if their child desires baptism and membership?

We encourage parents to nurture and celebrate their child's desire to follow Christ while also approaching the matter with careful discernment. If a young person expresses a desire for baptism and membership, parents should begin by engaging them in meaningful conversations about the gospel, repentance, faith, and the responsibilities of church membership.

After prayerful consideration, parents should arrange a time for their child to meet with one of the elders to discuss their profession of faith. This will be an opportunity for the child to articulate their understanding of the gospel and demonstrate the evidence of God's work in their life. The elders will lovingly walk alongside families through this process, seeking wisdom, clarity, and affirmation before proceeding with baptism and membership.

Through this approach, we seek to uphold the biblical teaching on baptism, care well for the souls of our children, and glorify Christ in all things.