

Conversion and Inclusion in the Church

Guidelines for Ministry to Children



The following is being given to the church by the Elders. It is our carefully considered guidelines and commitments as we thought through the inclusion of children in the whole of the church life. It is our prayer that this reflects a wise, cautious approach that still encourages and receives children truly profession Christ.

1. Beliefs:

The following beliefs will provide the foundation for child evangelism and incorporation at Clearcreek Chapel.

1. We believe God sovereignly moves the heart to embrace Jesus Christ and the Gospel.
2. We believe that one submits to God in the Gospel in repentance and faith.
3. We believe that true repentance recognizes the reality and extent of one's sin, seeks forgiveness and commits to rejection sinful patterns of behavior.
4. We believe that saving (true, genuine, authentic) faith requires the understanding of the facts of the Gospel, assent to their truthfulness, and submission to Christ and the Gospel as the only remedy for sin.
5. We believe that the basic facts of the Gospel include, but are not limited to:
 - a. The right of God to rule;
 - b. The fact of our corporate and individual rebellion;
 - c. The reality of judgment (death) upon the sinner;
 - d. The plan of God to substitute the death of the Son for some;
 - e. The work of Jesus in living a perfect life and voluntarily sacrificing himself for those who would believe;
 - f. The resurrection and session of Christ on His throne as the judge of the universe;
 - g. The necessity of an individual response of repentance and faith to the Gospel for salvation.
6. We believe that God can change the heart of children to embrace the gospel.
7. We believe that because of our sinful nature, children are very easily swayed to please those in authority roles (parent, teacher, pastors...).
8. We believe that false professions and false hope are extremely detrimental to the later embracing of the Gospel and to spiritual growth.
9. We believe that believing parents should participate greatly in the spiritual mentoring and development of their children.
10. We believe that baptism is Biblically mandated and exemplified to be a public testimony declaring one's faith in Christ and the Gospel.
11. We believe that the New Testament teaches that only those who have been baptized have the right to a public declaration and acknowledgment of union with Christ.
12. We believe that baptism as the public declaration of one's faith confers the full benefit of participation in the community of believers, the church, and is requisite for membership.
13. Even though they may be too young to participate in decision-making, we believe that believing children can and ought to participate in the worship, praying, accountability, and service of the church.
14. We believe that accompanying the declaration of faith in Christ there is of necessity a change in life where one is motivated to live in obedience to Christ. This does not imply a perfect obedience but cannot be without some evidence of its truth.

2. Commitments:

With the aforementioned beliefs in place the evangelization and inclusion of children at Clearcreek Chapel will have the following character.

1. We will present the Gospel regularly and clearly to the children of Clearcreek Chapel.
2. We will present a comprehensive view of the facts of the Gospel.
3. We will challenge children to respond to the Gospel in repentance and faith, and a public declaration through baptism.
4. We will not coerce or manipulate the young, impressionable heart.
5. We will shepherd and work through the parents (if at all possible) to assist in the recognition of the effects of the Gospel.
6. We will be careful to assess the authenticity of the response to the Gospel but not to the extreme knowing our inability to know the heart.

3. Guidelines:

When a child (someone less than 18 years of age) attending Clearcreek Chapel indicates that they possess faith in Christ in response to the Gospel, the following procedures will be observed to facilitate their incorporation into the church community life.

1. If the child declares their faith in the context of a Chapel ministry the ministry worker should, with the child, inform the parents of the child's statement and its context.
2. If the child declares their faith in the context of the home or if the family has been informed of the child's profession, the parents should interact with the child to assess their basic understanding of the Gospel and its implications.
3. The parents should consider whether there appears to be evidence that there is a new heart and motivation for obedience and life.
4. The parents should contact their elder(s) for counsel and encouragement and fill out the baptismal request form available from the Chapel office with the child.
5. The elder(s) should set aside a time to speak with the child and the parents to validate the child's understanding of the Gospel and verify their testimony and life.
6. The elder(s) should clarify any point of confusion the child might have with respect to the Gospel and its implications.
7. The elder(s) should explain the meaning and purpose of baptism to the child and family.
8. The elder(s) should explain the concept of church membership and community at a level the child understands.
9. The elder(s) will then present the child for baptism and membership for the next available baptismal service.
10. The flock that the family is assigned to should make special effort to affirm and encourage the child in their participation in the community of the Chapel.