

*“Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me.”*

-Luke 9:48-

Dear Members of Hope Presbyterian Church,

As the Session called by God to shepherd this particular flock of God’s people, we are eager to share with you our understanding of, commitment to, and practice for a crucial, vital avenue of ministry within our church - the nursery. As you may be aware, one of the requirements of members of Hope is to serve regularly in the nursery. In what follows we hope to give you a window of insight into our rationale for this requirement as well as a practical explanation of how this policy works itself out in life together as a congregation.

Our understanding of the nursery’s role within the overall ministry of the church is rooted in Jesus’ care for and delight in children: In Mark’s Gospel, parents are bringing their children to Jesus that he might touch them and extend a blessing of gracious welcome upon them. The disciples were worried that such a demand on Jesus’ time and attention was too exacting and distracting, and they firmly rebuked the folks bringing the children. Jesus’ response makes plain his care for and delight in children: “But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, ‘Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.’ And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands upon them” (Mark 10: 13-16).

Let’s be honest: children are exacting and distracting. They demand attention, care, and love at great cost to those who attend, care, and love. Nevertheless, it is clear from Jesus’ example and teaching that how we treat children, make room for them in our church and our life together, defend/protect them, instruct them, and cultivate the gift of their presence are all indicative of how well we understand the Kingdom of God - how we enter into and abide within and express with our lives the glorious triumph of God’s grace in this world.

Our commitment to the nursery ministry flows not only out of Jesus’ practice and teaching but also our earnest desire to forge a covenant community here at Hope that creates room for the Gospel to permeate all of our of relationships. In harmony with Hope’s vision of “True Hope for Real Life”, the nursery ministry exists to give children and their families a glimpse of God’s gracious care and lavish love. It is our hope that this ministry allows children to experience a safe, loving community where they can grow in understanding and knowledge of Christ’s love. We also desire for this avenue of ministry to free parents to worship and learn - confident and assured that their children are secure in a nurturing environment while apart from them.

Our understanding of and commitment to the vital ministry of the nursery inform and drive our practice for this avenue of ministry. We are convinced that the Christian nurture and instruction of our children is a shared responsibility within the covenant community. As a congregation we take vows before the Lord and each other to this effect each time a covenant child is baptized into our fellowship. One of the ultimately practical and specific ways we fulfill those vows and support each other in the Christian nurture of our children is serving in the nursery. We acknowledge that this shared responsibility and duty is not always convenient, comfortable, or attractive; however, while not all of us feel particularly drawn to serving these young children, we are convinced that our service, even as it burdens and inconveniences us, honors the Lord, fulfills our vows, blesses our children and their families, and shapes within us the same heart of warm concern and welcome and delight that Jesus models for and enables in us.

While our practice is to require this service of Hope’s members, we are aware that there may be extenuating circumstances that complicate or prevent you from serving in the nursery. If you believe that you have such circumstances, please discuss your particular situation with one of the pastors and/or elders well in advance of your assigned nursery service so that we can find an equitable solution moving forward.

For the peace and the flourishing of Christ’s Church,

The Session