

## Child Baptism Policy

*Evangelical Community Church, Hong Kong*

*Updated: October 19, 2022*

ECC believes that baptism is an important commandment that the Lord Jesus Christ requires his followers to obey (Matthew 28:19). Christians are commanded to publicly profess their faith through baptism, and ECC regularly teaches and challenges professing believers to confess their faith through the baptism ordinance. Baptism services are typically held biannually in order to obey Jesus's teaching.

Evangelical Community Church is also a church that loves and values the gift of children. Jesus himself welcomed and blessed children (Matthew 19:14). Children are referred to as gifts from the Lord (Psalm 127:3). ECC wants to care for the children of our church spiritually, and ECC desires to assist parents in their responsibility to teach their children about God (Ephesians 6:4). To this end, ECC provides children's Sunday School and youth group programs in order to provide contextualized Biblical instruction to help all children grow in their knowledge of God.

In addition, ECC also believes that baptism is an ordinance of the church. Individuals at baptism testify publicly of the spiritual changes that have happened to them (Romans 6:3-4), and the local church provides the context where baptized Christians live out their new lives. When someone is baptized, they are declaring that they now have union with Christ and His people (1 Corinthians 12:13). So at ECC, normally speaking, baptism is associated with formally joining the church in membership.

When a professing Christian desires to either receive baptism or join the church, the elders of the church must discern whether the candidate is ready for both baptism and church membership. This requires the candidate to be able to both give a spoken understanding of the gospel and give evidence of a changed life. As ECC elders, we confess that it is difficult to discern whether a child's life has truly been changed by the gospel. Although we certainly believe that God can and does save children, we believe that it is best to wait to move forward with baptism and church membership until a child is older. We believe that problems may arise from baptizing children prior to fully understanding the gospel and giving clear evidence of a changed life. In some cases, children who have received early baptism have later become confused about their own assurance of salvation and have failed to give credible profession of faith in their adult years.

Out of spiritual care for all children at ECC, our policy is that we require children to wait until they are at least 16 years old before they consider moving forward with baptism and church membership. Although no age requirement is given in Scripture, we believe that in our context parents and church leaders can better discern a youth's understanding and obedience to the

gospel of Christ. As with adult baptismal candidates, candidates for baptism who are 16 years old and above will be required to attend the church baptism class, have an interview with church leadership, and must formally join the church as an adult member, thus being accountable to the whole church for his/her lifestyle. ECC members who have children ages 16-18 who fulfill all baptism requirements must give consent to their child's baptism. In the case of a candidate who has non-Christian parents, allowances for baptism without parental consent may be considered.

Upon successful completion of this process, the youth will be baptized at the next scheduled church baptism service.