



Children's Ministries Department
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A Child's Commitment Ceremony

An affirmation of faith for children
who want to make Jesus their best friend

The

Seventh-day Adventist Church
would like to recognise

promise to make Jesus their best friend.

Pastor

Because I know that God loves me - I choose to live my
life as one of his children and I want to learn more about
him.

Signed _____ Date _____

As your faith friend I promise to
support and care for you.

Faith Friend



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Children's Commitment

Background Information

- Research indicates that between the ages of 5 and 12, lifelong habits, values, beliefs and attitudes are formed and that at this age the brain is the most receptive to spirituality.
- Children at this age are generally discouraged from being baptised into the church, as some consider them to be too young.
- However, when faith is not affirmed, children are left feeling unsupported or valued. We need to show them that we take their commitment seriously and that we will be beside them in their faith journey.
- It is for this reason that the concept of a commitment ceremony has been developed by the Children's Ministry Department of the Seventh-day Adventist church.

The Children

- It takes until a child is about seven years of age to be able to understand abstract concepts - and to be able to distinguish fact from fantasy.
- A whole new world opens up to these children as they begin school and form close friendships apart from family members.
- Children of this age have acquired many new powers, and they are eager and excitable because they find themselves full of so many newly acquired skills.
- Their concept of God becomes much more personal at this age and they want to be a part of the church community.

Preparation

- Do not push the child- there is no merit in comparing your child to another and feeling pressure that they too need to make a public commitment.
- It does not mean that a child is not spiritual because they have not requested to make a public commitment.
- It may be through a Family Worship time at home, or school worship, or during a Sabbath School class, or even a church service that the Holy Spirit will convict them.
- There does not need to be anything formal about the preparation for a child of this age to make Jesus their friend - we are not trying



A Child's Ten Commandments to Parents

1. My hands are small; please don't expect perfection when I make a bed, draw a picture, or throw a ball. My legs are short; please slow down so that I can keep up with you.
2. My eyes have not seen the world as yours have; please let me explore safely; don't restrict me unnecessarily
3. Housework will always be there. I'm only little for such a short time - please take time to explain things to me about this wonderful world, and do so willingly.
4. My feelings are tender; please be sensitive to my needs; don't nag me all day long. (You wouldn't want to be nagged for your inquisitiveness) Treat me as you would like to be treated.
5. I am a special gift from God; please treasure me as God intended you to do, holding me accountable for my actions, giving me guidelines to live by, and disciplining me in a loving manner.
6. I need your encouragement to grow. Please go easy on the criticism; remember, you can criticise the things I do with out criticising me.
7. Please give me the freedom to make decisions concerning myself. Permit me to fail, so that I can learn from my mistakes. Then someday I'll be prepared to make the kind of decisions life requires of me
8. Please don't do things over for me. Somehow that makes me feel that my efforts didn't quite measure up to your expectations. I know it's hard, but please try not to compare me with my brother or sister.
9. Please don't be afraid to leave me for a weekend together. Kids need vacations from parents, just as parents need vacations from kids. Besides, it's a great way to show us kids that your marriage is very special
10. Please take me to Sabbath school and church regularly, setting a good example for me to follow. I enjoy learning more about God.

Adopted from Parenthood Without Hassles by Kevin Lemam

How to Encourage

Encouragement needs to be spoken, and is far more effective for modifying behaviour than criticism. When the word "good" is used repeatedly it can lose its impact. Here are fifty other ways to say "good for you!"

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| 1. That's real nice. | 20. Very creative. |
| 2. Wow! | 21. Good thinking. |
| 3. That's great. | 22. Now you've got the hang of it. |
| 4. I like the way you are working. | 23. Exactly right. |
| 5. Much better. | 24. Super! |
| 6. Keep it up. | 25. That's a good point. |
| 7. It's a pleasure to teach when you work like this. | 26. That's a good observation. |
| 8. Terrific! | 27. You've got it now. |
| 9. Excellent work. | 28. Nice going. |
| 10. I appreciate your help. | 29. You make it look easy. |
| 11. Why don't you show the others? | 30. I'm proud of you. |
| 12. Marvellous! | 31. Fantastic! |
| 13. Awesome! | 32. I'm impressed. |
| 14. For sure. | 33. Wonderful. |
| 15. Sharp. | 34. Way to go! |
| 16. How impressive! | 35. I appreciate your ideas. |
| 17. You're on the right track now. | 36. First rate. |
| 18. It looks like you put a lot of work into this. | 37. Good job. |
| 19. That's clever. | 38. You do nice work. |
| | 39. How fun! |
| | 40. I knew you could do it! |

Every child deserves to grow up
with a healthy mind and body.
You can be the one to let it happen!

- to make sure they know the 28 Fundamentals.
- Children simply need to understand the basics of the Gospel
 - God loves me
 - I am forgiven from the mistakes I make because Jesus took my punishment (do not dwell on the death of Christ -rather celebrate the new life we have through Him).
 - Being a son of daughter of God is very special
- You may want to discuss in more specific terms what it means to be a Christian - by focusing on our love response
- Help children find meaning in Bible truths as they relate to events in their own lives.

The Ceremony

- Include the child fully in all the preparations for the ceremony
- Help child choose a "faith friend", after explaining what role this person will play in their lives.
- Confer with parents, "faith friend", child and Pastor as to the best time for this special occasion.
- Pre-sign the commitment card.



Children's Commitment Ceremony

It is suggested that the ceremony take only 8-10 minutes during the Divine Service (a similar length of time as a Baby Dedication).

The following are mere suggestions - you may want to modify to suit your particular congregation.

Song

- allow the child to choose a song that is meaningful to them
- this does not need to be a song from the hymnal, but may be a song that they have sung at Sabbath School

Introduction

- the child should be seated or standing at the front and be introduced by either the Pastor or Faith-friend to the congregation
 - whoever knows the child best.
- give a short history of when, where, and what prompted the decision
- focus of remarks is about the child.

For example:

"I would like to introduce you to Byron Ross. Many of you have seen Byron here at church. Last month during one of the activities at Primary Sabbath School Byron made a decision. He decided to make Jesus his friend, and live as one of His children."

Commitment

- to be read or recited by the child to the congregation.

For example:

"Because I know that God loves me
I choose to live my life as one of His children.
Because Jesus covered my mistakes with His love
I want to please Him through the way I live."

Faith Friend Introduced

- explain their role. For example:
Having a friend to support you can mean the difference between success or failure. The Bible says that "If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!" Eccl. 4:10
Byron has chosen his Sabbath School teacher, Allan Pedy as his faith friend. A faith friend is someone who will encourage him in all aspects of his life - but most importantly, on his spiritual walk with God.

Guidelines for Faith-Friends

Be there for the child. It may not always be convenient to have a long talk to the child when you want - but take a few moments to let them know their thoughts are important to you, and arrange a time to talk soon.

- Respond to the child in such a way that it is clear that you heard what was said and understood the emotion with which it was stated.
- Refrain from language or dialogue that puts a distance between you and the child.
- Talk in terms the child can understand.
- Demonstrate flexibility if the situation allows for it.
- Avoid making predictions, accusations, or judgments that the child will most likely reject.
- Offer your full attention when the child is speaking to you.
- Commit to talking to the child in person or face-to-face at least once every two weeks.

Faith-friends who have the greatest effect on the personal growth of their children display many of the following characteristics:

- An acceptance of individual differences which helps in tolerating behaviours that are different than those he would choose.
- A perception of personal strengths and weaknesses within himself. Shortcomings are recognized and efforts are made to improve upon them.
- Confidence, but not to the point of feeling superior to others.
- A problem-solving attitude which allows decisions to be made rationally rather than emotionally when facing dilemmas.
- Religious convictions that are firm but are not pushed upon others with a zeal that is offensive.
- A sense of enjoyment of the little things in life.
- Humour that is displayed in a loving, not harmful, manner.
- Communication marked by clear messages that are without deceit or hidden motive.

eye-level with younger children. Caution: Talking with children is habit-forming.

8. Become an aficionado of children's art.

Cover the church walls with children's drawings. Children's artwork can be used as a cover for church bulletins. The pastor's office can be a gallery for promising young artists.

9. Write a note.

Children enjoy getting mail. A pastor friend who has sent birthday cards to children for several years was surprised to find that one mother had saved them all.

10. Have a sense of humour.

Have a repertoire of jokes, rhymes, riddles and Knock-knocks. Children love these and will flock to tell you their latest - be sure and laugh!

11. Have a children's sermon.

Is it really for the children? Children's sermons shouldn't include abstract platitudes or adult terms and ideas. Keep it at kids' level.

12. Ask your children's workers for help.

Send a letter to your children's leaders asking for ideas on how you could improve your relationship with the children. Along with praise for asking you will get several helpful ideas and a new-found partnership with the children's workers.

13. Read a book or magazine article on pastoring children.

Subscribe to KID'S MINISTRY IDEAS from your local ABC.

14. Pray.

Pray for children by name. Pray about your role as their pastor. Pray for the children's ministry and all the people who minister to the children of your church.

Don't forget your church's children.
Jesus said, "Whoever receives one such child
in my name receives me."
In ministering to children,
you'll experience Christ in a fresh way.

- the faith-friend to recite their commitment to the child.

For example:

"As your faith friend, I promise to support and care for you. Like you I may make mistakes, but I know that God forgives me. I want you to know you can come and talk to me any time. I want to be your friend."

Congregation Response

- good to get the rest of the congregation involved.

For example:

"Byron, there are many other people here who I know would have been willing to be your faith friend. Would those of you in the congregation who would like to be a "friend" to Byron please stand. Those who may be willing to encourage and support him with love. Those who want to make a commitment to be positive and not criticise or condemn, but be a friend. Please stand now."

Prayer

- by the Pastor. Keep it short

Shake Hands

- hand over commitment card.



Questions for Your Pastor and Church

Does our church provide opportunities for children to **WORSHIP**?

Are worship services meaningful to children, rather than just being adult experiences in which children must conform to adult standards?

Does anyone talk to the children—before, during, or after church—about their worship experience?

See 1 Samuel 2:21: "Samuel grew before the Lord"

Does the church provide **INSTRUCTION** at the child's level in the things of God?

Do you recognise the divinely designed limits of children and organise their instruction accordingly?

Are the teachings systematic enough for children to get a consistent notion about God, or do teachers merely bob and weave through the Bible, picking and choosing things of interest to themselves?

See 1 Samuel 3:8 "God spoke directly to the child Samuel"

Does the church provide and encourage **FELLOWSHIP** among children?

Do leaders and parents recognise that children, as much as adults, need lasting friendships that focus on the things of God?

Are children encouraged to visit, talk, or play together at church?

Are such activities respected as the foundations for relationships that build true fellowship?

Does the church organise specific times and places for fellowship in the life of a child?

See 1 Samuel 2:2: "Samuel grew in favour with God and men"

Does the church provide encouragement for children to **EXPRESS** their spiritual gifts for the benefit of the body of Christ?

Do we give enough attention to helping children who know Christ to find a role in ministry?

Have we taken the time to break ministry tasks into child-sized portions?

See 1 Samuel 2:11: "Samuel ministered to the Lord before Eli"

Respond to the child in such a way that it is clear that you heard what he said and understood the emotion with which it was stated.

Tips for Elders, Pastors and Church Leaders on Relating to Children

"Let the Sabbath school teachers take care of the kids; my ministry is with adults."

Pastors and elders don't really think this way, do they?

I know it's tempting to believe that ministry to adults is more important than ministry to children.

But pastors and elders are as responsible for the spiritual welfare of children as they are for adult church members.

1. **Pick up the phone**

Children love to receive phone calls. Sing "Happy Birthday" to a child over the phone. When you have a question a child can help you with such as "What can we do to make church more interesting to you?" Call and ask for help.

2. **Learn something from a child.**

Children often ask the best questions: "Does God wear clothes?" "Whose face do you see when you pray?" "Why doesn't Jesus come to our church?" A child's imagination can awaken your imagination.

3. **Know names.**

In some churches, the litmus test for your skill as a pastor is the ability to tell the twins apart. In all churches, the worst insult to a child is to receive a friendly hello—with the wrong name. To be personal and loving, learn children's names.

4. **Take a picture.**

Most children love having their pictures taken. Have someone take your picture with a group of children. Make a pyramid or wear crazy hats. Pose with the children for a great bulletin board decoration.

5. **Go to a children's event.**

Pick something you'll enjoy. Several years ago I wanted to go to the zoo, but I thought I'd look more mature if I found some children to go with me. Almost 10 years later, those kids still remember our zoo trip. Going to sports events, parties or school events can be a delightful part of an elder's ministry.

6. **Attend a children's class.**

Visit a different children's Sabbath school class each week. Offer to be involved - telling stories or interviewing a child.

7. **Listen to a child.**

Be genuinely interested in children and what they have to say. Make sure each conversation is between you and the child. Kneel down to