



Trinity Church

A Reformed & Evangelical Congregation

Policy on Christian Education

Adopted: December 2, 2013

Purpose: Trinity Church has insisted regularly on the imperative of Christian education and called upon parents to educate their children in a distinctly Christian fashion. This paper briefly explains why and lays out a rationale for the church's chartering of a homeschool cooperative.

Rationale: Providing Christian children with a Christian education is not an option for parents but a divine command. Parents are to teach their children diligently and help them understand how the Word of God applies to all of life – our actions, thoughts, homes, and communities (Gen 18:18-19; Dt 6:6-9; Ps 78:3-8). Fathers, in particular, are entrusted with the responsibility to ensure that their kids receive a Christian education (Eph 6:4). We are to bring our children up in the nurture and instruction of the Lord (Eph 6:4; Prov 22:6; 2 Tim 3:15) because our children belong to God (cf. Ezek 16:20-21; Mal 2:15) and are members of the kingdom of God (Mk 10:13-16). As God's children, they are not to be given over to false gods or educated by those who have no fear of God before their eyes (cf. Ps 1; Prov 13:20; Eph 5:15).

Principles: While parents are commanded by God to provide their children with sound Christian instruction, this does not necessitate that the parents themselves do all the teaching. Biblically it is permissible for parents to do the schooling themselves (what we call homeschooling, e.g., Prov 1:8-9; 6:20) or to delegate the teaching of their children to others (a private Christian school, e.g., 1 Sam 1:19-28; Gal 4:1-2) or some mix of the two. Each family should prayerfully and with counsel choose one of these options, knowing that each option will involve sacrifices and will have its own strengths and weaknesses. As children grow in age, maturity, and discernment, other options may also be considered.

Implementation: Currently, the majority of families at Trinity Church have chosen to educate their children at home. In an effort to promote excellence and provide accountability to parents in this educational task, the elders have chartered the Trinity Home Educators Cooperative. Given sufficient demand, the elders are not opposed to chartering a private school at some time in the future.

But should the Church be involved in the educational process at all? If education is the primary responsibility of parents, then why involve the Church? First, education is inherently religious. There is no neutrality (Dt 4:9-10). Chartering the cooperative makes it clear that our schooling efforts are dedicated to God.

Second, though parents are entrusted with the primary responsibility of educating their children, the Church provides oversight and accountability. After all, it is the command of Paul that reminds us of our responsibilities as parents (Eph 6:4; Col 3:21). The Church appropriately holds parents accountable for educating their children and could legitimately censure members

who refuse to train their children faithfully. The elders have chartered the cooperative as a means of providing accountability and exercising general oversight.

Third, the charter acknowledges that God has created us under authority and that as parents we are accountable for the theological truths we are teaching to our children. The Church provides the cooperative with a theological framework within which to teach. If teachers begin advocating ideas contrary to the doctrinal standards of Trinity Church, then the elders are responsible to intervene and correct the matter.

Fourth, historically the Christian Church has been intimately involved in the task of education through the establishment of monasteries, orphanages, and private Christian schools. In the OT the Levites were entrusted with the responsibility of teaching the people the Word of God – a responsibility now entrusted to the elders of the Church. This has routinely involved the instruction of Christian youth.

For these reasons, among others, the elders of Trinity Church have chartered the Trinity Home Educators Cooperative. Membership in the cooperative is open to all members of Trinity Church (as well as other members of the community upon application) and governed by a separate Charter. The elders have delegated responsibility for all decisions relating to actual teaching duties, scheduling, grading, etc. to the Trinity Home Educators Board. Teaching remains the responsibility of the parents involved in the cooperative under the oversight of this Board.

Support: The elders are committed to regular instruction on the necessity of Christian education from the pulpit. In addition, as of June, 2013 our pastor, Stuart Bryan, serves as the elder on the Trinity Home Educators Board and teaches several of the classes in the cooperative. The elders have commended him to this work as a means of shepherding the children in the Church and fulfilling his own calling to bring his children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. On Mondays during the school year, therefore, Stuart is busy with duties in the cooperative and generally unavailable for other meetings.

Addendum: CREC Memorial on Christian Education

Our denomination, The Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches, has issued the following Memorial on Christian Education:

All things are to be considered and conducted under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, including education, and especially the education of our covenant children. God has neither charged nor authorized the state to educate children within its civil jurisdiction. God has commanded parents to bring up their children in the education and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4, Deut. 6:7). Given the importance and enormity of the task (Ps. 127:3-5, Deut. 6:7-9), and the impossibility of neutrality in education (Prov. 1:7, Matt. 12:30, Luke. 6:40, Col. 2:1-10, 2 Cor. 10:3-5), we do heartily affirm the necessity of educating our children in a manner that is explicitly Christian in content and rigor.

Government schools are, by decree and design, explicitly godless, and therefore cannot be considered a legitimate means of inculcating true faith, holy living and a decidedly Christian worldview in the children of Christian parents.

Parents who do not fully understand the indispensability of Christian education should be warmly received into membership. However, the leaders of Christ's church must thoroughly understand and plainly teach the divine imperative to disciple our children, the divine prohibition of rendering unto Caesar those who bear God's image (Matt. 22:20-21), the divine warning to those who cause their little ones to stumble (Matt. 18:6) and the divine promises to those who raise their children in faith (Deut. 7:9, Ps.102:5-7, Ps. 103:17-18, Prov. 22:6, Luke 1:48-50, Acts 2:39).