

The Admission of Baptised Children to Communion before Confirmation



Diocesan Guidelines

Introduction

The Bishops of the Diocese believe that it is appropriate for children who are baptised, who worship regularly in our churches, and who are growing up in a family where Christian Faith is encouraged, to receive Holy Communion. It is expected that such children will declare their own faith, by being Confirmed, at the age when they are ready to do so.

There is no pressure on parishes to implement a policy of Admission of Baptised Children to Communion before Confirmation.

A parish that is considering such admission must

- have a careful discussion of the matter by the PCC including consideration of the Guidelines from the House of Bishops (15 June 2006) (attached with this document)
- in seeking permission from the Bishop of Carlisle, submit the completed pro forma along with a clear policy for the parish which has been approved by the PCC.

Preparation of the Parish Policy

The policy prepared by the PCC will include the following points which will apply to the diocese as a whole:

- before a child is admitted to Holy Communion before Confirmation the parents or guardians will have given their permission
- those to be admitted must have been baptised and the baptismal certificate shown to the priest
- those to be admitted will normally belong to a family in which at least one of the child's parents is a regular communicant
- admission to Communion will take place at a public service so that the prayerful support of the congregation is ensured
 - a rite of Admission is set out in Common Worship : Initiation Services, and attached with this document (Rites on the Way also contains this rite.)
 - the parents and godparents and sponsors of the child(ren) should normally be invited
- on admission to Communion, each child will receive a certificate (or an endorsement on their certificate of baptism) giving the date on which they are admitted to Holy Communion and signed by the priest admitted them
 - a specimen certificate is attached with this document
- a register will be kept of those children and committed to Holy Communion before Confirmation (this may conveniently be a clearly labelled section of the Confirmation register – for example starting at the back; in any case, the policy should state how this register is to be kept)
- once admitted to Holy Communion a person should not, anywhere in the Church of England, be excluded from it; therefore if he/she moves to another parish then the priest will provide a letter to the new parish confirming the person's communicant status
- it is expected that children admitted to Holy Communion will, at an appropriate age, be prepared for Confirmation and Confirmed by the Bishop

- as young people approach adulthood, as with adults, those who are “ready and desirous” to be confirmed may receive Holy Communion (Canon B 15A) provided that there is a clear expectation of Confirmation in the forthcoming months
- baptised children with special needs and learning difficulties will not be excluded from admission.

Points also to be included in the parish policy, but open to variation from parish to parish are:

- whether or not to specify a minimum age for admission or to allow it admission in principle from baptism
- whether or not to allow admission of a child who attends Church regularly, but his parents or guardians do not, provided they have a sponsor who is committed to the spiritual nurture the child
- the appropriate form of preparation which will be followed both for the parents or guardians of the child and for the child (which may vary according to the child’s age and special needs)
- the ongoing nurture programme that is in place for instructing week by week those admitted in Christian Faith until they are brought to Confirmation
- the ongoing programme for encouraging the faith of the parents or sponsors of those admitted and helping them both to support and nurture the faith of the children at home and to share the experience with other parents whose children are being admitted
- the way in which good interaction with a Church of England school in the parish enables children at the school, with their families, to benefit from the opportunities for nurturing Christian Faith that this policy provides
- whether or not to specify a minimum age for Confirmation
- in the case of a Local Ecumenical Project, the result of consultation with the other ecumenical partners about the policy

Multi-parish benefices

In a multi-parish benefice, before one of the PCCs seeks permission from the Bishop, all the PCCs should be informed and discuss the admission of children to Holy Communion before Confirmation. While it is desirable that a uniform policy should apply across all the churches of the benefice, the Bishop will not require this as a prerequisite for giving his permission.

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