

Admission of Children to Communion before Confirmation:

The Procedure for a Parish to follow:

This procedure is designed to assist parishes that are considering admitting children to Communion before Confirmation. Careful consideration should be given to this important issue. A parish will want to ensure the fullest consultation, not least with families. Allow time for people to pray, reflect and discuss.

- **Consultation**

1. There should be a period of preparation and discussion with the congregation with adequate time and opportunity for questions, concerns and pastoral issues to be addressed. Where appropriate ecumenical partners should be consulted, as should any church school in the parish. The booklet 'Children, Communion and Confirmation: A Resource for Parishes' may help with this discussion.
2. How does admission to Communion fit in with the overall parish policy on the nurture of children within the framework of Baptism, Communion and Confirmation? What are the earliest ages deemed appropriate by the parish for admission to Communion and for Confirmation?
3. The issue should be fully discussed by the PCC and a formal resolution passed and minuted.
4. If your PCC has resolved to proceed with change you will need to take the following steps:

- **Preparation and Pastoral Matters**

1. You will need to decide what provision will be made for the preparation of children to receive Communion. Who will be responsible for the preparation and what materials will be used? There is a comprehensive booklist available and some of the resources can be evaluated before buying.
2. How will the needs of any children with learning difficulties be catered for?
3. Who will be responsible for maintaining the register of people admitted to Communion before Confirmation?
4. The PCC or a sub-committee should consider the implications for services, the content of the liturgy and the participation of all ages. How much of the liturgy will communicant children attend (particularly if the children attend a Children's group for part of the service), how will they be involved, and how often will they receive Communion?
5. How will parents or guardians be involved in the process of deciding whether and when individual children are ready to receive Communion and in the period of preparation? How will the circumstances of families where the parents do not normally attend Church be addressed?

- **Complete the Parish Application Form**

1. Complete the Parish Application Form including a signed copy of your PCC resolution, asking the Bishop's permission to proceed. Send the form to the Discipleship Project Officer whose address is on the bottom of the form, who will send the form to the Bishop for consideration. You will receive back a letter with the Bishop's reply and a signed copy of your form.

- **In the parish**

1. Invite children who are involved with the church, together with their parents, to express their interest in the possibility of receiving communion.
2. Provide those who respond with details of the arrangements, including the preparation and the ways they can be involved.
3. Receive consent forms from the parents.
4. Arrange for preparation, this should be appropriate to the age of the child.
5. Arrange the service at which the children will receive for the first time.
6. Record the names of all the children admitted to communion in a register, presenting them with a certificate and if possible, endorsing their baptism certificate. The register should be made available to the Bishop and Archdeacons during a Pastoral Visitation. (The register should be durable and contain the following information: name, address, date of birth, date and place of baptism, date of admission, and signature of officiant at admission. Canterbury Press produces an example).
7. It should be made clear to children and their families that there is an expectation that the child be prepared for Confirmation in due course.

- **On-going nurture**

1. Have in place a plan for the on-going nurture for every age and encourage confirmation in due course.
2. If children move away, try to ensure that letters of commendation are sent to their new parish.
3. Arrange to review these procedures and their contribution to the life of the church on a regular basis.

Shelley Porter, Project Discipleship Officer is available to give additional advice and support if required.