

Policy for Admission of Baptised Children to Holy Communion

This policy follows the Regulations made by the General Synod under Paragraph 1(c) of Canon 15A.

1. Principles

Children who have been baptised have entered fully into the life of the church. Every member of the church should be cherished, nurtured and encouraged to grow in faith; and every member should be encouraged to participate as fully as possible in the life of the church. We receive communion as a gift of God's grace and we wish to include children in the reception of this gift. We understand confirmation as a gift of affirmation and deeper understanding, marking a significant stage in each person's growth in faith. This policy therefore makes provision for children who have been baptised to be prepared for admission to Holy Communion in the parish of Witney, as part of their individual growth in faith and because of their membership of the whole Body of Christ.

2. Eligibility

2.1 A child may be admitted to Holy Communion if **all** the following conditions are met: the child has been baptised but not confirmed;
and is not yet ready and desirous to be confirmed;

and is declaring an interest in receiving communion;

and a person having parental responsibility for the child is content that the child should be so admitted.

2.2 Children admitted to Holy Communion before confirmation should be either at least 7 years old or in school Year 3 or above; and they should be under 16. Young people of 16 or over who wish to receive communion should be prepared for confirmation.

2.3 Children admitted to Holy Communion should have attended a church in the parish regularly for at least six months. Regularly is understood to mean at least once a month.

2.4 Where a child is eligible to be admitted to Holy Communion, and the child's parents attend church regularly but are not communicants, this circumstance does not affect the child's eligibility to be admitted. However, the pastoral occasion for discussing with the parents whether they would like to become communicants should not be missed.

2.5 Provided that the conditions of 2.1 are met, and notwithstanding 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4, it is within the incumbent's absolute discretion to decide whether, and if so when, any child should first be admitted to Holy Communion.

3. Preparation and nurture

3.1 Ongoing nurture in the Christian life.

Provision should be made in each local church for the ongoing nurture of every member in the Christian life. Children seeking admission to communion should have been attending a local church regularly for at least six months and such provision should have been made for them. It should include: basic teaching of faith and prayer; knowledge of the story of Jesus; understanding that people grow in faith and that this growth can be marked by admission to communion and later by confirmation.

All children in the congregation should be welcomed at the Eucharist and encouraged to participate in it appropriately, for instance by receiving a blessing during the distribution of communion. Children should normally be present with the whole congregation from the

Peace onwards whenever the Eucharist is celebrated as the main service on Sunday.

Each local church should identify a person who is responsible for the Christian nurture of children in that congregation. When a child is declaring an interest in receiving communion, this person should notify the incumbent so that the process of education and preparation may begin.

3.2 Education about Holy Communion and preparation for admission.

Education and preparation should normally be done in the local church context and not in a wider group.

When a child is declaring an interest in receiving communion and the incumbent has been notified of this, the incumbent should appoint a person to conduct the process of education and preparation in the local church. This person should where possible be an ordained member of the ministry team and will be referred to here for convenience as 'the priest'.

The preparation should include:

- a discussion of Holy Communion involving the child or children, the priest, and the regular leaders of children's worship in the local church. Ideally this should be done as part of the regular Sunday service, e.g. as a session of Junior Church. It need not involve all the children of the local church.
- consent from a person with parental responsibility for the child to the child's admission to communion. This is in most cases likely to be done at the same time as the next stage, identification of a sponsor.
- the identification of a sponsor for each child. The duty of the sponsor is to support the child in the process of preparation and at the admission to Holy Communion and the sponsor should therefore be a regular member of the local congregation. The sponsor may be a person with parental responsibility for the child, or, where that is not possible, another suitable person appointed by the incumbent after consultation with the child (where appropriate), with those with parental responsibility for the child and with the local leaders of children's worship. Where both parents are able to act, a child may have two sponsors.
- a workshop for children and sponsors, with the priest and the local leaders of children's worship, to explore the place and meaning of the Eucharist in the story of Jesus and in the life of the church. It should address the meaning of community, belonging to the church, the Eucharist as a special meal, and remembering. It should make use of the context of the local church. The workshop should also include practical guidance on how to receive communion, including when it is appropriate to receive in one kind. It should allow children and sponsors the opportunity to ask questions.
- agreement of the occasion for the child's first admission to communion. If possible, the priest should preside at this service. The sponsor should be present.
- a follow-up session soon after the child's first admission to communion, with the child or children, the priest, and the regular leaders of children's worship. Again, this should ideally be done as part of the regular Sunday service. It should include the opportunity for the children to reflect on their experience, and the opportunity to learn about confirmation as the next stage of their Christian journey.

3.3 Admission to communion

Children may be admitted to communion on the first possible Sunday at least seven days after the preparation workshop. If possible, the priest who has been involved in the preparation workshop should preside at the service, and the children's sponsors should be present. A commissioning prayer should be said during the service for those to be admitted to communion.

Children who receive communion should receive it with their families, so that a parent or a person with parental responsibility can direct the Eucharistic minister, where necessary.

3.4 Preparation for confirmation

Children who have been admitted to communion will not normally be confirmed until they are 16 or over, except at the discretion of the incumbent.

Learning about the place and meaning of confirmation should form part of the Christian nurture of all children who are regular members of a congregation (see (1)). For children who have been admitted to communion, awareness of confirmation as the next stage of their journey should be reinforced as the end of their preparation for admission.

Preparation of over-16s for confirmation is not within the scope of this policy.

4 Administration

4.1 The incumbent will keep a register of all children admitted to Holy Communion in the parish under this policy. Where possible, the date and place of the child's first admission should be recorded on the child's certificate of baptism. Where this is not possible, a separate certificate recording the same details will be given.

4.2 The PCC should review the scheme every five years thereafter.

Date adopted by Witney PCC: 16 May 2017

Date adopted by Minster Lovell PCC: 13 December 2021

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