

PARISH POLICY FOR THE ADMISSION OF CHILDREN TO HOLY COMMUNION BEFORE CONFIRMATION ST LUKE'S CHURCH, MAIDENHEAD

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

We believe that it is the grace of God that requires an inclusive approach to the issue of children and communion. To share communion with children as they journey towards this decision to live as disciples of Christ is to give them the spiritual nourishment they need, to honour our Lord's command to let the children come to him and to celebrate the truth that we are full members of God's church because of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. This grace is freely lavished upon us in Baptism, nourished through Holy Communion and lived out through the course of a lifetime, rediscovered and re-appropriated as we journey with Christ. Confirmation marks our personal commitment to life in Christ.

ADMISSION

1. It must be clear that the child him/herself wishes to receive.
2. The incumbent should be satisfied that the child has been baptised.
3. The appropriate age at which children are admitted will be a matter for discernment, prayer and discussion between individual families and the incumbent or incumbent's representatives. Until the time of confirmation parents/carers have the prime responsibility for nurturing their children's faith and discipleship and should be comfortable with their child's preparation for and admission to Holy Communion.
4. The incumbent must be satisfied that a person having parental responsibility for the child is content that the child be admitted to Communion before Confirmation. Normally at least one of the child's parents should be a regular attender/communicant; however if neither is, a sponsor(s) for the child will be appointed. The requirements of the Parish Child Protection Policy will apply in the selection of sponsors and parental consent to this arrangement will be required.
5. The decision to admit a child to Holy Communion will rest with the incumbent, after consultation with those responsible for preparation and his/her parents/carers/sponsors.
6. The admission of a child to Holy Communion will be marked at a parish Celebration Communion service. Where possible the family will be involved. A register of those children admitted will be kept. Children admitted to Holy Communion will be given certificates recording the date and place of their first admission, and if possible have their Baptism certificates endorsed with the same information.
7. Those admitted to Holy Communion must not be excluded from it anywhere in the Church of England. The incumbent will provide a letter of commendation to the incumbent of a parish to which a family is moving or is going on holiday, asking for the child to be admitted to Communion in accordance with General Synod Regulations (2006).

PREPARATION

1. Clear information about the preparation process and the implications of children's admission to Communion will be made available to the child and family before the preparation is entered into. It will be made clear how many sessions there will be, how long they will be, and where they will be held.
2. Those wishing to receive Holy Communion will receive preparation in a form approved by the incumbent but which includes teaching on Holy Communion and belonging to the Church. Ideally preparation should happen with parental/carer and family involvement and encouragement, although for children who attend without their parents sponsors from within the church who share responsibility for their spiritual nurture will be sought.
3. Those with disabilities including learning difficulties will not be excluded from receiving Holy Communion. Their preparation will be undertaken in consultation with those responsible for their care, education and support and with regard to their individual capacity to appreciate the significance of Holy Communion.
4. The preparation will usually be separate from any other groups or work with children.
5. The parish Child Protection Policy procedure will be followed in selecting those who work with children.
6. At the initial implementation of this policy there will be full teaching for the whole congregation on the purpose and nature of admission of children to Holy Communion before Confirmation.

WORSHIP

1. It will be made clear to the congregation that children who have been admitted are welcome to receive Holy Communion when it is celebrated.
2. During Communion services child communicants will be expected to be present for at least the Eucharistic prayer before they receive.
3. Children will be encouraged to receive Holy Communion with their families
4. Use of liturgy and song will be regularly reviewed in order that worship is accessible and appropriate in the widest sense to all.

CONTINUING NURTURE

1. The spiritual nurture of all children will be fostered through the activities of the church's teaching groups as well as regular participation in worship, prayer and teaching with the whole church family. It is expected that children admitted to receive Holy Communion will continue to take part in the church's programme of teaching and nurture.
2. If possible, parents/carers/family members will be involved in the ongoing nurture.

CONFIRMATION

1. It will be made clear to children and their families that there is an expectation that the child be prepared for Confirmation in due course.
2. Members of the Church are witnesses for Christ. Confirmation at an appropriate stage in life will provide them with the opportunity to make their own public profession of faith, and to receive the gifts of grace needed for a life of adult discipleship. Confirmation will be encouraged for all communicants, affirming that God's Spirit moves in God's time for each individual's journey.

WITHDRAWAL

1. If at any time the parish wishes formally to cease participation in the admission of children to Communion before Confirmation, permission to withdraw from the scheme will be sought from the Diocesan Bishop. The request for this permission will be in the form of a PCC resolution, accompanied by voting figures, and will have been preceded by consultation involving incumbent, PCC, children's leaders, the wider church community, and the Diocesan Children's Officer.
2. Arrangements will be made for the pastoral support and continuing nurture of any young people who, at the time of withdrawal, have already been admitted to Communion but have not yet been presented for Confirmation.

THE POLICY

1. This policy has been drawn up in accordance with the General Synod Admission of Baptised Children to Holy Communion Regulations (2006) and with the requirements of the Diocese of Oxford.
2. This policy was first approved by the PCC at its meeting on 23rd March 2013
3. Regular reviews of the policy and the materials used in the preparation and continuing nurture of children admitted to Holy Communion will take place.

Acknowledgement is given to the Oxford and Manchester dioceses for the wording of this policy.

Date of policy: 23.3.13

Review date: March 2014, initially

Reviewed

12.3.24

18.3.25

10.3.26