



## Diocese of Truro

# Framework for Admission of Children to Communion before Confirmation

### Introduction

Please refer to the 'Children, Communion and Confirmation: A Resource for Parishes' booklet (Sections 1-3) for a brief history of the Church's attitude in this matter.

This Diocesan Framework is based on the Regulations drawn up by the Church of England's House of Bishops, which came into force on 15 June 2006.

The traditional pattern still remains appropriate for parishes which desire to continue current practice; that is, that confirmation precedes admission to Holy Communion, and is administered to those who have come 'to an age of discretion', (interpreted in this diocese as normally not younger than 12 years of age).

These guidelines have been prepared to enable parishes to discuss the issues in relation to their own situation and provide a framework for parishes formally to adopt the practice of offering Communion to children before Confirmation.

### 1. Permission from the Bishop

Since Communion before Confirmation is a departure from the inherited norms of the Church of England, it requires special permission of the Bishop of Truro before admitting children to Holy Communion.

### 2. A Parish Framework for the Admission of Children to Holy Communion

The Bishop will wish to know that both the Parish Priest and the PCC, (and where appropriate, as for example in LEPs, ecumenical partners), support an application for permission to admit children to Holy Communion. In order to ensure that a church community moves forward together on this, each parish will be asked to consult carefully and decide upon a framework for the admission of children to Holy Communion. Please read 'Children, Communion and Confirmation: A resource for parishes' (Sections 4-6) for ideas for facilitating the process.

### 3. Baptism

The rite of Baptism represents the complete initiation into the Christian Church and therefore always precedes admission to Holy Communion. Therefore, before admitting a person to communion, a priest must seek evidence of Baptism.

### 4. Age and circumstances of admission

Children who are to be admitted should themselves express a wish to receive communion and they should attend church regularly. They need to have parental support, or the personal support of a godparent or another adult within the church community and parental approval. Provision should be made by the parish priest for preparation before admission. Although a child may receive Holy Communion from the time that (s)he is baptised, in general, the time of the first receiving should be determined not so much by the child's chronological age as by his or her appreciation of the sacrament, perhaps at the

age of five. Candidates will need to be old enough to express for themselves a wish to receive communion, to ask for Baptism if they have not already been baptized, and to take part in the preparation provided. Special care should be taken to ensure that appropriate provision is made, if necessary, to include children with special needs and advice should be taken from those responsible for their care and education about this.

## **5. Marking admission**

Admission to communion should be formally marked and should normally take place during the Sunday Eucharist in the church community where the child worships. (Different circumstances can apply to church schools where it may be more appropriate to admit children to communion during a school Eucharist). It will probably be appropriate to make this service special in some way for the candidate(s), and the community in which their faith has been nurtured. Wherever possible the child's family and Godparents should be present and, if appropriate, involved in the service. Advice about the ways in which this may be done, and suggestions of texts to be used is included in: *Common Worship: Christian Initiation*, The Archbishops' Council, Church House publishing (2005) (also downloadable at: <http://www.cofe.anglican.org/worship/downloads/pdf/ciritesofaff.pdf>) , or can be obtained from the Discipleship Team at Church House.

## **6. Register**

A register should be kept in the parish of every person admitted to Holy Communion before Confirmation. Each should be given a certificate (or, better, the baptismal certificate should be endorsed) marking his/her admission.

No baptized person, child or adult, who has once been admitted to Holy Communion and remains in good standing with the Church, should anywhere be deprived of it. When a family moves to another area, the parish priest of the parish they are leaving should contact their new Parish Priest to ensure that there is no confusion regarding the communicant status such persons. It is the responsibility of the new Parish Priest to discuss with the children and parents concerned when the children should be presented for Confirmation. Such children should normally be presented at least by the age of 18.

## **7. Christian nurture, Christian education and preparation for admission to Communion.**

Admission to Communion should be considered within the general context of both the ministry that is carried out in the parish through initiation, and also of the continuing nurture of people in the Christian faith. An appropriate and serious pattern of preparation for admission to communion should be followed, and the Bishop will need to be satisfied that a programme of continuing Christian nurture is in place leading to Confirmation in due course.

The circumstances of each parish are different and programmes for Christian education will vary. Nevertheless it is the responsibility of each church community to review regularly the provision it makes for the nurture of young Christians, and to ensure that there is an appropriate pattern of Christian Education. The Parish Priest and PCC should take care regarding the quality of educational material and advice of Diocesan officers and other professional advisers should be taken into account.

The priest should decide exactly how much of the liturgy communicant children will attend. Even if there is a separate 'Ministry of the Word' for children, anyone who is to receive Holy Communion should be present in the main assembly at least from The Peace.

## **8. Services of Baptism and Confirmation.**

Since baptism is at the heart of initiation, it is important for the Bishop regularly to be the minister of Holy Baptism, and particularly at services where candidates will be both baptized and confirmed. It is generally inappropriate for candidates who are preparing for initiation into the Christian life in Baptism and Confirmation to receive baptism at a service other than the one in which they are to be confirmed. Confirmation remains an important affirmation of faith and the Confirmation Service is a public recognition of a person's commitment to adult discipleship.

## **9. Monitoring Process**

It will be helpful both to the parishes involved and to the Diocese to be able to monitor the progress of changes and how they affect the life of the church. When a member of the Bishops Staff carries out one of the regular parish visits (normally every three years) then if the parish has this policy in place it will be monitored as part of the visit.

There are a number of clergy and parishes with experience of admitting children to Communion before Confirmation within the Diocese. These parishes are encouraged to share good practice and parishes exploring the issues are encouraged to learn from others' experiences.

Resources available from the Diocesan Website:

Children, Communion and Confirmation: A Resource for Parishes

A reading and resource booklist around Eucharistic worship and children

A copy of the 2006 Regulations from the House of Bishops

Check list for parishes

Parish Application form

The Eucharist in Church Schools - some Questions and Answers for schools and clergy

Copies of Additional Eucharistic Prayers suitable for use with Children present

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