



The Church of England
Diocese of Ely

The Admission of Children to Holy Communion before Confirmation



**Policy Guide and Framework for
Parishes in the Diocese of Ely**

Foreword

From the Bishop of Huntingdon and Acting Bishop of Ely

For a number of years, we have understood the need to encourage and enable children in their discipleship and it has been clear through national research and anecdotal evidence across the Diocese that admitting children to holy communion prior to confirmation can be an important step in their journey of faith. In 2006, General Synod agreed new regulations for the Admission of Baptised Children to Holy Communion.

Allowing children to receive Holy Communion prior to confirmation has been permitted within the Diocese for a number of years now, and although the 2006 Regulation remains current, it is right that we have taken time recently to review our documentation, along with the supporting guidance.

Discipleship is a journey and children being able to receive Holy Communion prior to Confirmation is a point on that journey. Good preparation prior to that point is essential if we are to support children through this part of their journey. Further, there is an expectation that the nurture of faith and spirituality will continue and be provided for as those children admitted, journey on towards Confirmation. How the preparation is organised may look different in each context and some resources have been suggested at the end of this document.

As a Diocese, we continue to encourage all parishes to consider whether passing the resolution to enable children access to the sacrament will be important for the individual children as well as an important part of growing a culture in our parishes which recognises that, investment in the discipling of children and young people is seen as a priority and where the contribution children can make to the wider life of the church is valued.

It may be that your parish passed the resolution some years ago and we would encourage you now to review that policy to ensure it is aligned with the new guidance issued in this document as well as to enable conversations about the place of holy communion and the discipleship of children to take place within your PCCs.

This policy and supporting guidance replaces all older versions.

+Dagmar
October 2024



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Introduction

In the Diocese of Ely, the Bishop has agreed that permission may be sought from them, for the admission of children to Holy Communion before Confirmation. In each case, each parish must seek the permission of the Bishop before admitting children to Holy Communion. Children to be admitted will normally be those who are not yet ready for Confirmation but are ready to receive the sacramental signs of God's love given in Holy Communion. It is important that there is an ongoing investment in the nurture of both the child, and those having parental responsibility and that following admission, both should be encouraged to see Confirmation as the next step in the Christian journey.

This guide provides a framework for incumbents, parishes and their PCCs who are exploring the admission of children to Holy Communion before Confirmation in the Diocese of Ely. It sets out the procedure for making an application for permission to the Bishop and the expectations and responsibilities of a parish that has received such permission.

The application process should not be taken lightly and involves consulting the whole church family, including those with parental responsibility and the children prior to any application being made. It is important that a wide and open discussion takes place and that all views are heard as part of this process. The PCC will also need to ensure that there is a clear framework and plan for the continued nurturing of the children admitted to Holy Communion, their continued journey towards confirmation, as well as giving consideration to any implications for patterns of worship to ensure children are full participants in the Eucharist.

The Regulations

The regulations referred to in this guide are the Admission of Baptised Children to Holy Communion Regulations 2006, passed by General Synod under Canon B15A.1(c) in February 2006 ('the Regulations'). It is also important to note that, under the Regulations, a child who has been admitted to Holy Communion can receive Holy Communion in any parish regardless of whether permission has been given in a particular church (No baptised 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). The Regulations can be found at Appendix 1.

Further Advice and Support

The documents, application forms, certificates and further resources referred to in this guide can be found in **Appendix 4** and an editable version downloaded from the diocesan website.

Support for PCCs and parishes wishing to consider admitting children to Holy Communion before Confirmation is available from the Diocesan Development Officer for Children and Families - childrenandfamilies@elydiocese.org.



Acknowledgements: With thanks to both the Diocese of Norwich and the Diocese of Bath & Wells who have allowed us to base some of the content of this document on their resources on children accessing Communion prior to Confirmation.



SECTION A

Parish Consultation Process and Application Seeking Permission from the Bishop

As parishes consider whether to admit children to communion prior to confirmation, this section sets out the process for initial exploration by PCCs, consultation with the wider congregations, decision making and how to make an application for permission. It also highlights the need to see the agreed policy as a working document that is regularly reviewed.



1 Explore and Consult

Explore

PCC has initial discussion exploring how and why the parish might consider admitting children to Holy Communion.

Research around theological and historical perspectives may be useful for some – some frequently asked questions on this can be found at **Appendix 3**.

Consult the Congregation

A period of preparation and discussion with the whole congregation including adequate time and opportunity for prayer, questions, concerns and pastoral issues to be addressed. Some questions that may be helpful are found on the next page.

Ensure that the following people are consulted as part of this wider process:

- o Those involved in leading children and families ministry in your parish;
- o Parents and carers of children in your community;
- o Children in your community.

Consult Others

In a multi-parish benefice or where there is a Local Ecumenical Partnership, before a PCC or any of the PCCs seek permission from the Bishop, it is essential that all the other PCCs within the Benefice or members of the Local Ecumenical Partnership are informed, have the opportunity to discuss the issue fully and have been fully consulted.

Those in a multi-parish benefice should note that, once a child has been admitted to Holy Communion they should not be deprived of it regardless of the policy of the individual parish.

A decision to admit children to Holy Communion prior to confirmation in one parish may impact on other parishes within a Benefice, particularly where services take place in different parishes each week.

Key Questions for Consultation

- How does admission to Communion fit in with the overall parish policy on the nature of children within the framework of Baptism, Communion and Confirmation?
- How do we view and value children in our church? How do we ensure that children are included and seen as full members of the Body of Christ?
- Is the worship of the church accessible to all its members?
- How do we provide for the nurturing of children?



2 Decide

Take account of views

Further to the consultation, the PCC should take account of the views heard during the consultation process.

Draft a parish policy

If a decision is taken to proceed, a policy for Admission of children to Holy Communion before Confirmation should be drafted and agreed by the PCC and should include the points outlined in **Section B** below.

Pass a PCC resolution

The incumbent and the PCC must support any application to the Bishop. The PCC must pass a resolution to admit baptised children to Holy Communion before Confirmation in accordance with the Regulations.

3 Apply to the Bishop

Complete and submit an application form available in Appendix 4 and an editable version downloaded from the diocesan website

Include a copy of the passed PCC policy and resolution with your application. This should include your plans for preparation.

This should be submitted to []. If your application is successful you will receive [].

Once granted, the permission will remain in force unless and until revoked by the Bishop.

4 Review the Policy

Once permission is granted, the PCC should regularly review its policy every three years or, when there is a change in incumbent, whichever is sooner.

It is important to ensure that children admitted to communion continue to be nurtured, supported and encouraged in their journey towards confirmation and are fully included in Eucharistic worship.





SECTION B

What to Consider and Include in your Parish Policy

This section looks at the things that a PCC must consider and include in their policy on admitting children to communion before confirmation. It is important to work through each of the elements below as you shape your policy, reflecting the context of your church and community. In developing the policy, the importance of the ongoing nurture and discipleship of all children in the community should be recognised.



1 Principles

The parish policy should contain:

A statement about the place of children in your church.

A statement about why the parish wishes to admit children to Holy Communion.

2 Process and Consent

The parish policy should provide details setting out the process by which children should be invited to declare an interest in receiving communion and provisions for obtaining consent from those with parental responsibility.

Children who are to be admitted should...

Attend church regularly

Express a wish to receive communion

Ask for baptism if not already baptised

Those with parental responsibility must be consulted, involved, and give their consent in the process of deciding whether and when their children are ready to receive Communion?

Consent

What provision will be offered where one or both parents of the child do not normally attend church but have given consent? Who else from the church community will support this child?

What provision will be offered to families where one or both parents do not give consent? How will you continue to nurture, include and support these children?



3 Preparation

- 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? Some links and suggested resources to help in preparing children for admittance to Communion can be found at **Appendix 3**.
- Who will be responsible for delivering the sessions?
- How will parents be involved and included in the period of preparation?

4 Additional Needs

- How will the needs of any children with additional needs be catered for?
- Children with additional needs must not be excluded from admission to Holy Communion; they should be given the opportunity to experience the sacramental signs of God's love. The church should, in consultation with those having parental responsibility, discover ways in which a child's spiritual life can best be nurtured.

5 Marking Admissions

- How will the admission of a child to Holy Communion be marked by the church community?
 - This should usually take place during a Eucharist service in the church community where the child usually worships. It will usually be appropriate to make this special in some way for the child.
 - Suggested forms of liturgy can be found on the [Church of England website](#).
 - If a child is admitted within their Baptism service, this recognition should be included within that service.

6 Worship

- What are the implications for worship?
- How much of the liturgy will communicant children attend and how are children to be meaningfully included in the Eucharist?
- How frequently will they take communion?

7 Certificates and Record Keeping

- Who will be responsible for producing certificates and maintaining the register of children admitted to Communion before Confirmation?
- Ensure provision where necessary, to provide a letter of commendation to a new parish for any children who move.



8 Nurture

- How will the church community encourage and support the nurture of children in the Christian faith regardless of whether a child has been admitted to Holy Communion?



SECTION C

Preparation of & Continued Investment in Children Admitted to Holy Communion Before Confirmation

This section sets out the key ingredients of the process for admitting children to communion before confirmation and the continued journey and discipleship of children towards confirmation and beyond.



Process for the preparation and continued investment in children admitted to Holy Communion before Confirmation

Children come forward and parents are consulted

Parents complete permission form

Example permission form - Appendix 4 and download

Evidence of baptism sought

A child must be baptised to be admitted to Holy Communion.

Preparation: Sessions are held for children, or children with their parents

Celebrate: An admission service takes place in the presence of the wider worshipping community and a certificate is issued and presented
Editable certificate - Appendix 4 and download

Record: A register of children admitted to Communion is kept and updated by parish

Nurture and formation: An ongoing programme is put in place

Confirmation: Children are encouraged to come forward at an appropriate time

Review: The policy and process is reviewed and updated by the PCC, on a 3 yearly basis or where there is a change in incumbent (whichever is sooner)





APPENDIX 1: The Regulations

Admission of baptised children to Holy Communion Regulations 2006

(see Canon B 15A paragraph 1(a), page 34)

Regulations made by the General Synod on 8 February 2006 and which came into force on 15 June 2006.

The General Synod hereby makes the following Regulations under paragraph 1(c) of Canon B15A :-

- 1.** These Regulations may be cited as the Admission of Baptised Children to Holy Communion Regulations 2006 and shall come into force on the fifteenth day of June 2006 as appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York.
- 2.** Children who have been baptised but who have not yet been confirmed and who are not yet ready and desirous to be confirmed as required by paragraph 1(a) of Canon B15A may be admitted to Holy Communion provided that the conditions set out in these Regulations are satisfied.
- 3.** Every diocesan bishop may at any time make a direction to the effect that applications from parishes under these Regulations may be made in his diocese. The bishop's discretion in this respect shall be absolute, and he may at any time revoke such a direction (without prejudice to the validity of any permissions already granted thereunder).

4. Where a direction under paragraph 3 is in force in a diocese, an incumbent may apply to the bishop for permission that children falling within the definition in paragraph 2 may be admitted to Holy Communion in one or more of the parishes in the incumbent's charge. Such application must be made in writing and must be accompanied by a copy of a resolution in support of the application passed by the parochial church council of each parish in respect of which the application is made.

5. Before granting any permission under paragraph 4, the bishop must first satisfy himself (a) that the parish concerned has made adequate provision for preparation and continuing nurture in the Christian life and will encourage any child admitted to Holy Communion under these Regulations to be confirmed at the appropriate time and (b) where the parish concerned is within the area of a local ecumenical project established under Canon B 44, that the other participating Churches have been consulted.

6. The bishop's decision in relation to any application under paragraph 4 shall be final, but a refusal shall not prevent a further application being made on behalf of the parish concerned, provided that at least one year has elapsed since the most recent previous application was refused.

7. Any permission granted under paragraph 4 shall remain in force unless and until revoked by the bishop. The bishop must revoke such permission upon receipt of an application for the purpose made by the incumbent. Such application must be made in writing and accompanied by a copy of a resolution in support of the application passed by the parochial church council of each parish in respect of which the application is made. Otherwise, the bishop may only revoke a permission granted under paragraph 4 if he considers that the conditions specified in paragraph 5 are no longer being satisfactorily discharged. Before revoking any permission on these grounds, the bishop shall first notify the incumbent of his concerns in writing and shall afford the incumbent a reasonable time to respond and, where appropriate, to take remedial action.

8. Where a permission granted under paragraph 4 is in force, the incumbent shall not admit any child to Holy Communion unless he or she is satisfied that (a) the child has been baptised and (b) a person having parental responsibility for the child is content that the child should be so admitted. Otherwise, subject to any direction of the bishop, it is within the incumbent's absolute discretion to decide whether, and if so when, any child should first be admitted to Holy Communion.

9. The incumbent shall maintain a register of all children admitted to Holy Communion under these Regulations, and where practicable will record on the child's baptismal certificate the date and place of the child's first admission. If the baptismal certificate is not available, the incumbent shall present the child with a separate certificate recording the same details.

10. A child who presents evidence in the form stipulated in paragraph 9 that he or she has been admitted to Holy Communion under these Regulations shall be so admitted at any service of Holy Communion conducted according to the rites of the Church of England in any place, regardless of whether or not any permission under paragraph 4 is in force in that place or was in force in that place until revoked.

11. These Regulations shall apply to a cathedral as if it were a parish, with the modifications that: (a) any application under paragraphs 3 or 7 must be made by the dean of the cathedral concerned, accompanied by a copy of a resolution in support of the application passed by the chapter of the cathedral concerned; (b) the obligations imposed on the incumbent under paragraphs 8 and 9 shall be imposed on the dean of the cathedral concerned.

12. A diocesan bishop may delegate any of his functions under these Regulations (except his functions under paragraph 3) to a person appointed by him for the purpose, being a suffragan or assistant bishop or archdeacon of the diocese.

13. In these Regulations:

a. 'incumbent', in relation to a parish, includes:

i. in a case where the benefice concerned is vacant (and paragraph (ii) below does not apply), the rural dean;

ii. in a case where a suspension period (within the meaning of the Pastoral Measure 1983) applies to the benefice concerned, the priest-in-charge; and

iii. in a case where a special cure of souls in respect of the parish has been assigned to a vicar in a team ministry by a Scheme under the Pastoral Measure 1983 or by licence from the bishop, that vicar; and

b. references to paragraph numbers are to the relevant paragraph or paragraphs in these Regulations.

APPENDIX 2: Frequently Asked Questions

A selection of questions and answers to some of the more commonly asked questions. If you need further support or assistance then please do contact the Diocesan Development Officer for Children & Families, childrenandfamilies@elydiocese.org.

1. What is gained by admitting children to Holy Communion before Confirmation?

Some of the reasons put forward include that:

- The Eucharist is within the tradition of the Jewish Passover, a family meal
- Those children who are a part of the church family should be allowed to join in the “family meal” as full members of the family.
- If Baptism is what makes us part of the church, why should anything else be needed to share with the full body of the church in the sacrament that defines us as children of the same heavenly Father.
- Children who are absent from a large part of the main Sunday worship in separate age segregated groups find it difficult to enter into, or belong within, the experience of worship as young persons and may no longer want to do so.

2. Will children understand what they are doing when taking Communion and will they take it seriously?

- Where children are properly prepared and supported, they are capable of appreciating the significance of Holy Communion and sharing the special meal of bread and wine. A deeper understanding of the mystery of the sacrament is a lifetime's work for all of us and one that will never be fully complete however old we are. It is important that we do not view taking Holy Communion as a prize which we win by passing tests but as a free, gracious and unconditional gift from God.
- Children respond to the mood and atmosphere around them. The vast majority of children will take their lead from the way the adult members of the congregation behave as they receive the bread and wine. Receiving Communion is a very powerful moment, and the power is certainly not lost on children in fact they have an openness to spiritual matters which some adults may find it hard to recapture.

3. How old does a child have to be?

This is a decision for the incumbent. A good starting point would be to consider whether the child can understand basic preparation course and ask and answer questions for themselves (whilst making adaptations for including children with additional needs).

4. What happens if those with parental responsibility do not consent?

Children must have the consent of the person with parental responsibility for a child to admit them to Holy Communion before Confirmation. Where this is not the case the church should put in place provision to ensure that these children are provided with the same nurture and discipleship opportunities as those who have been admitted and ensure that they are not excluded in any way. Consider how else children can be included, for example by offering a Blessing?

5. What happens if a family moves to a parish which does not admit children?

The principle, supported by the House of Bishops, is that no one who has been admitted to receiving the sacrament should ever subsequently be denied it. A child who is admitted will be given a certificate and where necessary, the incumbent of the parish in which the child has been admitted should provide a letter to the child's new incumbent requesting that they continue to receive Holy Communion.

APPENDIX 3: Useful Resources

A selection of resources that may be helpful in preparing children for admittance to communion before confirmation. They approach Holy Communion from a wide range of differing perspectives, please do consider whether any resources is right for your context.

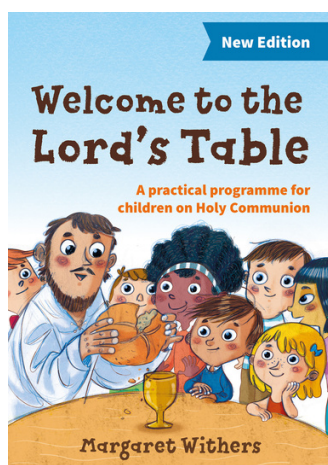


Ready to Share One Bread

Nick Harding & Sandra Millar

Published by SPCK, 2015
ISBN 9780281070534

A 'one-stop shop' for churches considering the admission of children to Holy Communion

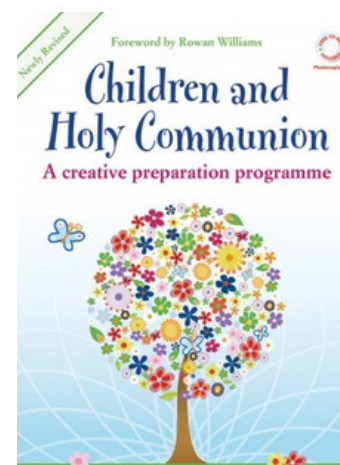


Welcome to the Lord's Table

Margaret Withers

Published by BRF, 2017
ISBN 9780857464949

A programme for all those seeking to welcome children to participate fully in the Eucharist. An accompanying activity book is also available.



Children and Holy Communion

Diana Murrie & Steve Pearce

Published by Kevin Mayhew, 2007
ISBN 9781844171514

Contains both discussion around children and Holy Communion and practical sessions

Further web resources that may be useful:

- Flame Creative Blog Spot - pages on 'Exploring Holy Communion':
<https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/p/exploring-holy-communion.html>
- Parenting for Faith resources - supporting faith at home:
<https://www.parentingforfaith.brf.org.uk/>



APPENDIX 4: Documents

Copies of the application form, example parental permission forms and certificate are provided below.

**Completed applications should be submitted to:
bishops.chaplain@elydiocese.org.**

**You can download editable versions of these documents at:
<https://elydiocese.org/children-youth/resources/communion/>**

Application Form



The Church of England
Diocese of Ely

Parish Application Form

Admission of Baptised Children to Holy Communion before Confirmation

Please complete all the details below. If completing electronically, please click in the relevant check box to select. For assistance in completing this form or if you have any questions please contact childrenandfamilies@elydiocese.org.

Parish	
Deanery	
Incumbent	

Consultation and Resolution

Has the PCC discussed this subject fully?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Has the wider congregation been consulted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Has any LEP ('local ecumenical partnership') or other churches within the Benefice been consulted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
What other guidance or advice has been sought, if any?	Details: N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
Has a PCC resolution and policy been passed by the PCC confirming that the Parish wishes to admit children to Holy Communion prior to Confirmation?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Date: _____
Has a regular review date for the policy been identified?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

Preparation & Practical Arrangements

- We have identified and organised the materials for preparing children for admission to Holy Communion.
- We have leaders in place to deliver the preparation course and they have been appropriately trained.
- We have discussed how parents/guardians will be involved in the preparation of their children for Holy Communion.
- We have put in place support and provision for children and their families where parents or carers do not wish for their children to be admitted to Holy Communion.

Application Form Continued...

- We will ensure that provisions are made for children with additional needs who wish to receive Holy Communion.
- We will ensure that appropriate support is put in place for children who come to church without their responsible adult.
- We are committed to ensuring the continued nurturing and discipleship of all children towards Confirmation.
- We will issue Certificates of Admission to Holy Communion and keep a register of all those admitted.

Safeguarding*

- We have a Parish Safeguarding Policy in place that is regularly reviewed.
- All those involved in preparing children for admission to Holy Communion have the appropriate DBS and safeguarding training in place.
- All those involved in preparing children for admission to Holy Communion have been safely recruited and have a relevant role description.

* Please consult your Parish Safeguarding Officer to ensure that all relevant safer recruitment, safeguarding and training is in place.

Application

The parish has agreed, in accordance with the Admission of Baptised Children to Holy Communion Regulation 2006, to offer Holy Communion to children who have not yet been Confirmed, provided that:

- The child has been baptised.
- A person having parental responsibility for the child is content that they should be so admitted
- Children to be admitted will take part in a suitable preparation course which forms part of a continuing programme of nurture and discipleship towards Confirmation and beyond.
- A register is kept of all children admitted to Holy Communion under these Regulations.

Signed (Incumbent)	
Date	

Completed Parish Application Form

Please send your completed application form to the Bishop's Chaplain: bishops.chaplain@elydiocese.org. The Bishop's Chaplain will confirm whether your application has been successful or whether any further information is required. Children may not be admitted to Holy Communion prior to Confirmation until your application has been granted.

Example Parental Consent Form



Parental Consent Form

Admission of Baptised Persons to Holy Communion before Confirmation

This form must be completed by the person with parental responsibility for the child wishing to be admitted to Holy Communion before Confirmation.

The Child

Name:	
Address:	
Postcode:	
Date of Birth:	
Date & Place of Baptism*:	

*Please provide Baptism Certificate or other evidence of Baptism.

Person with Parental Responsibility

Name:	
Address:	
Postcode:	

I confirm that:

- I will support my child in his/her Christian journey.
- I will help and encourage him/her to attend the preparation sessions.
- I will help and encourage him/her to continue to receive regular Christian teaching.
- I consent to my child being admitted to Holy Communion before Confirmation.

Signed	
Date	

Please return this form to your parish priest/minister

Example Certificate



The Church of England
Diocese of Ely

CERTIFICATE

of Admission to Holy Communion Prior to Confirmation



In the Parish of

by Permission of the Bishop of Ely, in accordance with
the Holy Communion Regulations 2006

Name

having been baptised, is admitted to Holy
Communion prior to Confirmation.

Incumbent's signature

Date