

The Admission of Children to Holy Communion before Confirmation

Regulations for the
Diocese of Norwich 2022

Transformed by Christ

Prayerful

Pastoral

Prophetic

Foreword

Communion before confirmation is now a well established practice within the Church of England and a significant proportion of parishes in the Diocese of Norwich present children for communion before confirmation. This rightly involves a big investment in the wider nurture of children in the Christian faith. Receiving the sacrament needs to be accompanied by a programme of Christian education and formation if maturity in faith is to be achieved. Of course, this is as true for adults as it is for children themselves. As so often, it may be our children who show us the way. That is in keeping with the teaching of Jesus himself (Mark 10.15).

These 2022 Regulations replace earlier regulations and guidance.

The future of our Church depends on the way in which we communicate the faith to succeeding generations and I pray God's blessing on all our endeavours in reaching our children with the gospel of God's love.

+ *Graham Norvic*

The Rt Revd Graham Usher
Bishop of Norwich

Children

Children who have been baptised but who have not yet been confirmed, and who are not yet ready and desirous to be confirmed, may be admitted to Holy Communion provided that the conditions set out in the following regulations are satisfied.

The PCC and wider congregation

In advance of a decision, PCCs within the benefice, as well as the wider congregation, must discuss the admission of baptised children to Holy Communion before Confirmation. It is important that the whole church understands the issues regardless of the decision the PCC make.

Once admitted, children, so long as they remain in good standing with the church, should not anywhere be deprived of the sacrament. Such children may visit or attend the church at any time and the PCC and wider congregation must be prepared for this.

Certificates

A Certificate is available on the Diocesan website at:

www.dioceseofnorwich.org/churches/children/children-communion/

It can also be obtained from the Diocesan Children, Youth & Families Team (contact details are at the end of this document).

The Regulations

1 Permission must be obtained from the Diocesan Bishop before a parish can admit any child to Holy Communion before Confirmation. Application must be made in writing and accompanied by a copy of the minuted PCC resolution in support of the application. An application form can be found at:

www.dioceseofnorwich.org/churches/children/children-communion/

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

2 Before permission is sought, the admittance of children to Holy Communion before Confirmation must be discussed fully by the PCC and with the wider congregation, and agreed and minuted by the PCC. To assist your discussions, the Diocesan Children, Youth & Families Team can supply a list of parishes with Bishop's Permission to Admit; your suffragen bishop could also offer advice.

3 In a multi-parish benefice, before any of the PCCs seek permission from the Bishop, it is essential that all the PCCs are informed and discuss the issue fully.

4 Before the Diocesan Bishop gives permission to a parish the Bishop will require assurance that:

- the policy has been agreed by the PCC of that parish and discussed fully with the wider congregation;
- other PCCs within a multi-parish benefice, or partners within a Local Ecumenical Partnership, have been fully consulted;
- there is a safeguarding policy in place;
- the parish will seek parental consent in each case;
- The parish has made adequate provision for the child's 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.

5 Children should be regularly involved in ongoing Christian nurture.

6 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. Both the child, and those having parental responsibility, should be encouraged to see Confirmation as the next step in the Christian journey. This must be emphasised in discussions.

7 Those with parental responsibility for the child must be consulted and give their consent that the child is 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. A parental permission form can be found at: www.dioceseofnorwich.org/churches/children/children-communion/

8 Before a child can be admitted to Holy Communion before Confirmation their baptism must be verified.

9 It is important that children are supported as they grow in Christ and ideally this will come from those with parental responsibility, and the nurturing body to which they belong. Where this is not forthcoming, the Church will need to accept this responsibility.

10 Admission to Holy Communion should be marked before the whole congregation. A form of liturgy can be obtained from the Diocesan Children, Youth & Families Department. If a child is admitted to Holy Communion at their Baptism, then this recognition should be included in the Baptism service.

11 Where possible the date and place of the child's admission should be recorded on their baptismal certificate. Alternatively, each child must be given a certificate, signed by the priest who admitted them, giving the date of admission. Certificates can be downloaded at: www.dioceseofnorwich.org/churches/children/children-communion/

12 Names of children admitted to Holy Communion before Confirmation must be recorded. This may be in a separate register which should be held securely with other parish registers.

- 13** No baptised person, who has once been admitted to Holy Communion and remains in good standing with the church, should anywhere be deprived of the sacrament. It follows that, if a communicant child moves to another parish, the new Incumbent should be informed.
- 14** Where, during the Liturgy of the Word, there is separate teaching for children, communicant children should regularly be present in the main assembly for the Liturgy of the Sacrament.
- 15** Children with special 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.
- 16** There is no minimum or maximum age for the admission of children to Holy Communion. Neither is there a minimum age for Confirmation, although it would be appropriate for the presenting minister to seek guidance from the Bishop if candidates are ten years old or younger.
The admission of children to Holy Communion should not unduly delay Confirmation. Confirmation candidates must be able to answer for themselves; a child admitted to Holy Communion at the age of 7 may be more than ready for Confirmation at 11. The Diocese of Norwich feels that an arbitrary imposition of a minimum age for Confirmation or admission to Holy Communion would be unhelpful.

Further Advice from the Parish Support Team

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