



## Inviting all the baptised to share Communion: *a Guide for Churches*

### What is changing?

For most Anglicans, Confirmation has traditionally been the gateway to Holy Communion - the point from which they have taken Communion for the first time. Some churches have also used the Church in Wales Children and Communion Policy to prepare children for and admit them to Communion before Confirmation. Christians from other denominations who have joined Anglican congregations without being confirmed first have also been welcomed as communicants.

From Advent Sunday this year, throughout the Church in Wales everyone who is baptised will be welcome to receive Communion if they so wish. The only restriction is that the law on giving alcohol to children under 5 should be respected and obeyed.

As the policy is enacted for the first time, churches might like to undertake preparation for congregations and especially with those who will receive for the first time. However participating in any specific course of preparation or special service should not now or in the future be required of anyone before receiving Communion.

### Key points of the new policy

Baptism is accepted as being and affirmed as the full rite of initiation into the Christian Church, the Body of Christ. Baptism is birth into, and gives full membership, of the Christian family.

That being so, regardless of age, being welcome at the family table and participating in the Church's family meal by receiving Holy Communion is a natural consequence of being a family member. So an invitation to receive Communion is now extended to everyone who has been baptised in the name of the Trinity, whatever their age. Baptised children can therefore receive Communion at their parent's / guardian's discretion, although, to abide by the civil law, under 5's should receive bread only. Over 5's may receive wine as well with a parent's or guardian's consent.

Receiving Communion is, however, optional not compulsory, and the free choice of worshippers who prefer to receive a blessing rather than Communion should be respected.

## What is the basis of the policy?

This policy recognises and affirms the belief that God's grace is primary. He acts first to call us to himself, and we are then invited to respond. We have no need to 'earn' a place at the table through our merits, our actions or our understanding. Of course, Jesus makes it clear that God wants us to respond to his grace and to live it out lovingly, day by day. That is our response to his love.

## What happens to Confirmation?

Confirmation certainly doesn't vanish or become unimportant. Quite the opposite in fact. It can now be more fully understood as a wonderful opportunity for people to affirm their baptismal vows, to confirm for themselves their place in the family and to signify, publicly, a willingness to be used by God in the mission of the Church as disciples of the Lord Jesus.

Churches must, therefore, continue to provide age-appropriate opportunities for learning, study and reflection about the meaning of faith and discipleship. Confirmation, as a result of those opportunities should be encouraged and celebrated.

## It is hoped that the new policy will:

- Help us proclaim God's grace as being the first motivation for all our actions.
- Allow the Eucharist to be food for the our journey of faith together, from the first steps onwards.
- Help young children and their families to feel more fully welcomed and included into church life, with the Eucharist as a natural part in sustaining their faith.
- Help churches reach out to and welcome in new members of the family, and help them to feel fully included more quickly.
- Provide a clear welcome to the baptised returning to Church as adults, whether or not they have been confirmed, and also welcome those joining us from other denominations.
- Provide a clear sign that no learning difficulty or impairment of understanding is a barrier to coming to Jesus.
- Allow Confirmation to be a time of personal commitment to discipleship for those who are ready, and mature enough to make this decision for themselves, knowing that they already are full members of the Church.

## Practical advice on introducing the policy

Ministry/Mission Areas and local churches are requested to move towards implementing the policy between Advent 2016 and Advent 2017. How they do so needs to be determined by them, taking into account their local contexts. The following is some advice that might be helpful in doing this.

1. People may find this change to be a real challenge, so teaching and understanding are key. Before the policy is implemented, it needs to be clearly communicated to the whole church, together with the date on which it will be adopted. It should be discussed as widely and carefully as possible, for example at parish, Ministry / Mission Area and Deanery level.
2. Teaching should be based on the principle of hospitality and God's loving invitation to everyone. The admission of children to Holy Communion should be seen as part of the parish's whole programme for nurture in the Christian faith.
3. Care should be taken to affirm that past practices were right for the context of the time, and that the experiences of church members who came to Communion through the traditional Confirmation route are not being diminished. The decision should not be rushed and ample opportunities should be provided for the expression and exploration of reservations concerning the change and explanation of justifications for it.
4. The shared ministry team and those engaged in ministry with children should be involved actively in the introduction and implementation of this new practice in the parish. A special service might be planned to mark and enact the change. A simple leaflet such as the sample attached might be distributed and made available.
5. It is important to stress that receiving Communion remains optional and is not required of anyone. If individuals wish to wait, or parents wish their children to wait, for any reason, then this choice should be respected and affirmed, and provision for blessings rather than Communion to be given should continue.
6. Care should be taken to ensure that the children admitted to Holy Communion have the active support of parents. Churches should decide how best to communicate this to children and parents and how to help them make an informed decision and indicate consent. Membership forms for Sunday schools might be amended to allow parents to give or withhold consent for receiving Communion. Where parents do not live together, it is good practice for the Church to contact both parents where possible.
7. Those who are not their parents but who bring young children to the altar (e.g. Sunday School teachers, grandparents, parents of the child's friends) will be acting *in loco parentis* and should have discussed with the children's parent / guardian(s) whether the children in question can receive or not.
8. Equal attention should be given to exploring the issues with adults receiving for the first time. Opportunities might be provided, but not required for those to learn more.

9. It should be made clear that Communion can be received in one kind and that this is a full participation in the Eucharist. Wine cannot legally be given to under 5's. Churches might consider the advice previously published by the Bishops about the possibility of using a separate chalice containing wine that is fermented from grape juice but has had the alcohol subsequently removed. This might also be provided to adults who cannot, or do not wish to, receive alcohol.
10. In the case of young children, bread could be given to the parent / guardian or other person accompanying the children for them to give an appropriate portion to the children.
11. Wording such as the following might be printed in service booklets, pew sheets, clearly displayed on a notice on entering the church and / or on cards placed in the pews (adapted to local customs for receiving Communion):

*Anyone who is baptised in the Name of the Trinity  
is welcome to receive Communion in this church.*

*When you come to receive, hold out your hands and you will be given bread and wine.*

*If you would like a blessing instead,  
please indicate by holding your service book in your hands.*

*Children under 5 can receive the bread.*

*Over 5's may receive either bread and wine or the bread alone as parents decide.*

*If you are not yet baptised, please speak to us.*

*We would love to welcome you into the family of the Church.*

12. The following might be said by the priest at the start of the service or at the invitation to Communion, especially when there are new people present:

*Everyone who is baptised as a Christian and of any age  
is welcome to receive Communion in this church.*

*Adults with children are asked to help them take part in a way best suited for them.*

13. Provision should be made, perhaps each year, perhaps during Advent or Lent for all those who wish it to reflect on and learn more about the Eucharist and what it means to be a Christian disciple. For example, this could be the focus of an annual service, such as the Feast of Corpus Christi, Maundy Thursday, or the first Sunday of the New Year. Taking part in such a service or course is not required of anyone before receiving Communion.
14. It should be noted that the Book of Common Prayer 2004 contains Eucharistic prayers for use with significant numbers of children present. Consideration should be given as to the appropriate point at which children might join the service if they normally have activities provided elsewhere. On some occasions it may be appropriate for them to be present at the whole celebration.
15. Care should be taken in baptism preparation that the new policy is explained. It must be made clear to the candidate / family that the invitation to take part in the Eucharist is extended to them and that they know how to participate in this. Each child may be given written evidence that they have been admitted to Holy Communion. The place and date of their first Communion, and the incumbent's signature may be added to their baptism certificate – or they may be given a certificate designed for the purpose.