

Children at Communion

A Policy for St Nicholas Marston

Principles

Our statement about vision and purpose includes among our values: **inclusive** and **intergenerational**. In line with these values, we have agreed to allow the admission of children to Holy Communion before Confirmation, in order to model our conviction that children are full members with adults of the Christian community. What we know of Jesus suggests that he would certainly have included children in the common life of his disciples, including their table fellowship.

Policy

1. Minimum requirements
 - a. Children receiving communion must have been baptized.
 - b. Children who receive communion at St Nicholas will be expected to be already a part of the church family, and sharing in the continuing nurture of children through Junior Church and regular worship.
 - c. We expect the minimum age of admission to be 6 or 7 years old, but this will depend on individual needs, and may be younger if appropriate.
 - d. The child him/herself must have declared an interest in receiving communion.
2. Sponsorship of child
 - a. Each child will have an adult sponsor, usually a parent, though another adult in the church may act as sponsor with the parents' permission.
3. Preparation of children to receive communion
 - a. Teaching at Junior Church will include teaching about the eucharist, within the overall pattern of teaching about Christian life and faith.
 - b. A special session will be arranged for children who have asked to be admitted to communion, which will include teaching about the Last Supper, the meaning of belonging and sharing, what happens at the eucharist, reverence at the Lord's table.
 - c. This session will be led by the clergy and junior church leaders, and attended by the children and their sponsors and/or parents.
4. Involvement of children in eucharistic worship
 - a. Children who receive communion should be present from at least the eucharistic prayer. The junior church join the congregation at the Peace in any case.
 - b. Children not attending junior church may attend the whole of the eucharist, with the agreement of, and in the care of, their sponsors.
5. Ongoing nurture of the child
 - a. This will take place through junior church and attendance at regular worship.
6. Recording
 - a. Names of children admitted to communion before confirmation will be recorded in a suitable register.
 - b. The child's baptism certificate will be endorsed with the date of admission to communion, and/or a certificate of first communion will be issued.
7. Confirmation
 - a. Confirmation still has a place and we expect that its importance will be greater, as it becomes a true marker of admission to adult commitment and discipleship, and not just a way in to receiving communion.
 - b. Children who have been admitted to communion will be encouraged to be confirmed at the age of 16 or 18 as appropriate.

Implementation

1. As a church we have held discussions within the PCC and at special meetings with parents and children, as well as devoting sermons to the issue, as part of the decision making process.
2. The congregation will be informed about the outcome of the PCC's discussions, and the process by which children are to be admitted to communion.
3. Appropriate teaching material will be used in preparation and continuing nurture of children admitted to communion.

4. We do not expect to have to make major changes to the way communion is administered. Children will continue to come to the communion rail with their parents, siblings or peers, as at present. Eucharistic ministers will quickly learn which children have been admitted to communion.
5. Children will be prepared for admission to communion individually or in small groups, as necessary. We do not expect the numbers to be large. The service at which children will be first admitted could ideally be a Family Communion Service at a major festival, but may be some other occasion as appropriate.

Tony Price
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