



ADMISSION TO COMMUNION BEFORE CONFIRMATION

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Admission to Holy Communion Before Confirmation

An Introduction

The practice of the earliest Christians with regard to receiving Holy Communion is not clear but certainly whole households were baptised and it is assumed that children would have been included. It seems that Communion immediately followed Baptism, and there is no indication that children were excluded. The Eastern Orthodox churches have always communicated children immediately after Baptism.

The tradition of the church regarding admission of children to Communion is not represented by a static norm but is characterised by a continued development in practice in the light of changing situations.

Child psychologists and experts in children's spiritual development alike point to the importance of children taking part in practical activities, learning by doing, and of their natural competence for engaging with symbol and mystery. Full participation in Communion is sometimes claimed to be an erosion of childhood, but instead it could be seen as cherishing and making best use of the very characteristics of childhood.

One important characteristic of childhood is the need to belong. Partaking in Holy Communion is a powerful indication of belonging to God, and to one another in the church. Much is made of what children may or may not understand about the sacrament, but they will certainly understand the rejection implied in being denied food at the Lord's Table.

Under the arrangements agreed by the House of Bishops and the Synod, parishes are encouraged to consider offering children the opportunity to receive Holy Communion before they have been

confirmed. The General Synod, at its session in February 2006 finalised earlier less formal arrangements by passing Regulations under Canon B15A.1(c).

This booklet contains the General Synod Regulations, along with other helpful information which will guide you through the process of considering admission to Communion before Confirmation. Alongside this guide, you may also wish to invite the Diocesan Children's Work Adviser to come and speak to your PCC to share more information about the history of children and Communion and answer any questions you may have.



Admission of Baptised Children to Holy Communion Regulations 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 there under).
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 he 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.



Blackburn Diocese Criteria for Admission to Holy Communion

Before Confirmation

Those to be admitted should:

- **Be baptised.** Proof of baptism will be required.
- **Be a regular church attendee.** Regular attendance at church or Sunday School/Junior Church, Midweek club, Youth Fellowship, Study Group, etc.
- **Wish to receive communion.** Children should not be admitted on the basis of parental aspiration alone, but for children who are under the age of 7 years the parents wishes will be considered
- **Be supported by their family or the family of the church.** Ideally at least one parent should attend church regularly. Where this is not possible, a suitable sponsor may be appointed. In these cases the parents' permission must be given.
- **Have received relevant age-related preparation.** Nurture courses should include sessions exploring areas of Belonging, Knowing, Loving, Sharing, Receiving and Giving, with content and format appropriate to experience, knowledge and personal involvement. Parents should be fully informed of the requirements of the preparation course and their involvement encouraged. Parents should be encouraged and resourced through parenting or basic Christianity courses to support and nurture their children in faith.
- **Be admitted formally.** Admission to Holy Communion for the first time should be marked in a suitable way before the whole congregation. This could be as part of an annual service. It may be appropriate to consider ways of including and involving family and/or church support. (You will find a suggested service outline on page 14).
- **Be recorded in a parish register.** Names of those admitted with the date of admission should be kept in a parish register. A Diocesan Certificate and card will be given to those admitted. Once admitted it is accepted that a person will continue to be allowed to receive Holy Communion if they move parishes.
- **Receive continuing nurture.** Appropriate nurture programmes, through Sunday School/Junior Church and Mid week Clubs etc. should be available. Organisation of such courses and practical arrangements for their delivery will be made as appropriate and necessary by individual parishes.
- **Be encouraged to go forward for Confirmation.** The importance and significance of Confirmation is not lost or undermined. Admission to Communion creates opportunity to develop models of good confirmation preparation with older teenagers and adults for active and meaningful discipleship.



Options created by Admission to Holy Communion before Confirmation and for Confirmation

Admission to Holy Communion before Confirmation—Infants and Children

- ◆ Children (7+) who have been baptised and are members of the church children's groups and have attended a nurture course with their parent(s) or sponsors.
- ◆ Infants (0-6 years) who have been baptised and are part of a committed church family whose parent(s) would like them to receive.

Admission to Holy Communion before Confirmation—Young People and Adults

- ◆ Young people and adults who have not been baptised but wish to make a commitment by first receiving some teaching or demonstrating an understanding of what it is to be a Christian. They are then baptised and admitted to Holy Communion or if a Bishop is present he may then Confirm, anoint them with oil and admit them to Holy Communion.

Confirmation - to publicly endorse for themselves the promises made for them by their parents at their baptism.

- ◆ Children and young people who have been baptised and desire to be confirmed, and along with their parents or sponsors, have attended a course. Some of them may already be receiving communion.
- ◆ Young people 14+ and adults who have been baptised and are ready to make their confirmation. They may have previously taken or require an initiation course.



The Parish Process

- Read through the Regulations and Guidelines as detailed in this booklet.
- Hold a discussion with Church Wardens and/or Standing Committee.
- Include Admission to Holy Communion as an agenda item for the PCC to initiate exploratory discussion using the criteria on page 6 as a basis. Consider including others who might be affected or involved (e.g. Children's and Youth Leaders). Consider whether to invite the Children's Work Adviser to facilitate this discussion.
- **Allow time for prayer, reflection and further discussion for all involved.**
- The PCCs decision should be made at a subsequent meeting. For the adoption of the policy there needs to be a two-thirds majority in favour.
- Feedback the decision to the parish.
- **Inform the Children's Work Adviser of the consultation and the details of the PCC decision using the form on page 9. This will then be forwarded to the Diocesan Bishop for approval.**
- Having received the Bishop's approval,
 - a) Agree appropriate preparation programme(s)/material.
 - b) Consider continuing nurture programme(s).
 - c) Identify and prepare leaders.
 - d) Consider implications for the current pattern of services, liturgy, the participation and involvement of all ages.
 - e) Consider implications for the Baptism policy; preparation and follow up, and the effects on the policy for Confirmation.

At all times throughout this process support and advice is available from the Diocesan Children's Work Adviser. Please inform her of your plans for Children's Work which supports Admission to Holy Communion Before Confirmation.

- After receiving the Bishop's approval, invite church members, including children and their parents/sponsors, interested in receiving communion to a meeting to inform them of the details for acceptance, preparation and follow up, and the ways they can be involved.
- For children, seek parental agreement and permission before proceeding. (See Consent Form on page 12).
- Prepare to deliver the preparation programme(s).
- Plan the service at which admission will take place for the first time. (See page 14 for suggested Service outline).
- Plan appropriate pastoral care, the continuing nurture and follow up, as well as a review and evaluation programme.

Diocese of Blackburn
**Admission to Holy Communion
before Confirmation application form**

Parish

Deanery

Clergy

1. Consultation

Has the PCC discussed the subject of Admission to Holy Communion before Confirmation in light of the Diocesan Regulations?

Yes No

What advice has been sought?

The PCC vote was: For Against Abstentions
(A $\frac{2}{3}$ majority is required before proceeding further)

2. Preparation

How will the preparation of the children for Holy Communion be organised?

Who will lead the preparation and what training or experience do they require?

What teaching materials will be used?

How will the nurture of the children continue after they have been admitted to Holy Communion leading up to Confirmation?

How will you review your Baptism/Confirmation policy?

3. Pastoral Matters

How will the parents be involved in the preparation of their children for Holy Communion?

Baptism always precedes admission to Holy Communion. What pastoral strategy will you have for children who do not have parental support?

What strategy do you have for affirming children as members of the Christian community?

A. In Eucharistic / non-Eucharistic worship

B In nurture

C In social events

What provision are you making for the nurture of any children with disabilities or learning difficulties who wish to receive Holy Communion?

The Admission to Holy Communion Service

It is recommended that 'first communion' is marked in an appropriate way within the life of the parish? Please provide information about:

A The Service

B The Certificate of Admission

C The Register

Signed: Incumbent Date:.....

..... Churchwarden Churchwarden

Please return this form to the Children's Work Adviser, Clayton House, Walker Office Park, Blackburn. BB1 2QE

For the Bishop

Further inquiries or action (if necessary)

Date of approval by Bishop:.....

Diocese of Blackburn
**Admission to Holy Communion
before Confirmation Parish Statement**

The Parish of.....
has received approval to admit children and young people to Holy Communion before Confirmation.

- ◆ All children who have been baptised, are regular members of church or children's group and they and their parents are so desirous will be admitted.
- ◆ A consent form will be completed by parents of children up to age 14.
- ◆ We will run a yearly nurture course to which parents of children up 14 to will be expected to attend.
- ◆ We will use the following material and resources:

.....

- ◆ The person coordinating the course will be:
- ◆ A parish register will be kept of those children admitted.
- ◆ We will have a special celebration service to welcome the newly admitted children.
- ◆ We will offer further nurture for our children through our:

.....

- ◆ Children and young people will be encouraged to make their confirmation at a future date.

Date.....

Signed Incumbent

..... Churchwardens

Form of consent

For parents of children (under 14) wishing to be admitted to Holy Communion before Confirmation

I/We confirm that I/we are happy for _____ (child's name) to be prepared to receive Holy Communion before Confirmation.

I/We understand that this parish has the Bishop of Blackburn's approval for this policy of admission and that the parish will follow the Diocesan Regulations.

I/We understand that before a child can be admitted to Holy Communion before Confirmation, the following criteria must be met:

- The child must be baptised.
- The child must be a regular attender at church and/or appropriate children's group.
- The child must attend the sessions of preparation for Admission along with parent(s) or sponsor(s).
- The child, if they are of an age to answer for themselves, must wish him/herself to receive Holy Communion.
- In the case of a child who is not old enough to answer for themselves, the parents must desire their child to receive.
- The child will be encouraged to journey towards Confirmation.

I/We understand that the support of the family is important and necessary and that I/we will be expected to attend the information meeting arranged for _____(date).

Signed _____ (Parent 1)

_____ (Parent 2)

Please return this Consent Form to the Vicar by _____ (date).

Diocese of Blackburn Admission to Holy Communion before Confirmation

Certificate of Admission

Parish: _____

Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Address: _____

Date of Baptism: _____

Place of Baptism: _____

Date of Admission to Holy Communion: _____

Incumbent: _____

Admission of the Baptised to Communion
(a suitable service)

Notes

1. This rite is intended for use in the circumstances covered by the Guidelines agreed by the House of Bishops on the Admission of Baptised Persons to Holy Communion before Confirmation (GS Misc 488, 1997). Individual parishes must seek the agreement of the diocesan bishop before introducing communion before confirmation.
2. The congregation should be made aware that people from the church are being prepared for communion. Those being preparing can be introduced to the congregation, for example by displaying photographs (with consent), and by inviting the congregation to pray for them. Godparents and sponsors, as well as families, may be invited to the service. In the case of children, the goodwill of those parents who are not regularly members of the congregation should always be sought and obtained.
3. To make it clear that the admission of the baptised to communion before confirmation is neither another baptism service nor a confirmation, baptismal water should not be used, and neither the laying on of hands nor anointing with oil should take place. Similarly, the Bishop should not normally preside at this rite, as this might confuse it with confirmation. Those admitted should generally receive the bread and wine with their family and friends.
4. The rite should normally be used in a main Sunday service. It is not necessary to use every part of the order provided.
5. The Welcome of those being admitted may be used at the greeting or before the Peace. If thought appropriate, the Questions may be used instead of the Welcome; if so, they are used before the Peace.
6. The Profession of Faith from the baptism service and the Affirmation of the Christian Way may be particularly suitable.

Pastoral Introduction

This may be read by those present before the service begins.

Today we welcome to Communion *N* and *N* who share faithfully and regularly in our worship. A person is admitted to communion on the basis of their baptism, the sign and pledge of incorporation into the death and resurrection of Christ and the new life of the kingdom of God. *N* and *N* have been baptised, and today they receive the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ with us. They are taking a new step in the life to which God has called them in baptism and which we trust they will later affirm in confirmation. We welcome them and look forward to learning with and from them as we journey together on the Way of Christ.

The Welcome

The president may invite those to be welcomed to stand before the people, and introduces them in these or other suitable words.

We are God's pilgrim people.
We share in the story of God's love for the world,
God's love in Christ, calling us to himself,
God's love in the Spirit, giving strength for our journey of faith.
We celebrate this love in word and song,
we feed on Jesus in bread and wine
and make him known through our life together.

As the people of God in this place, we share the responsibility of encouraging one another in our worship and supporting one another in our discipleship, by our example and our prayers.

N and *N*, we welcome you in Jesus' name to receive communion with us.

At the Prayers of Intercession

We pray for *N* and *N*,
that they may draw near with confidence to your throne of grace
and know in their lives the transforming power of your love.
Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

All

The Peace

The president introduces the peace in these or other suitable words:

We are the body of Christ,
in the one Spirit we were all baptised into one body.
Let us then pursue all that makes for peace
and builds up our common life.

or

We are all one in Christ Jesus.
We belong to him through faith,
heirs of the promise of the Spirit of peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

All **And also with you.**

At the Preparation of the Table

Those welcomed to communion may lead the prayers at the preparation of the table.

All With this bread that we bring
We shall remember Jesus.

All With this wine that we bring
We shall remember Jesus.

All Bread for his body,
wine for his blood,
gifts from God to his table we bring.
We shall remember Jesus.

[CW p292]

Proper Preface

And now we give you thanks
that you call us into the communion of your love;
your overflowing grace makes us partakers
in the divine nature
and a sign of your kingdom.

Post Communion

The Post Communion of the day or this Post Communion is used:

We praise and thank you, O Christ, for this sacred feast:
for here we receive you,
here the memory of your passion is renewed,
here our minds are filled with grace,
and here a pledge of future glory is given,
when we shall feast at that table where you reign
with all your saints forever.

All **Amen.**

At the Dismissal

At the dismissal, a blessing appropriate to the day or the blessing for the Day of Pentecost (Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England, page 321) may be used.

Those admitted to communion may be invited forward, and the following may be said:

God has touched us with his love
and nourished us at his table.
As God's pilgrim people,
may we continue to explore the Way of Christ,
and grow in friendship with God,
in love for his people, and in serving others.

Those who have been admitted to communion may lead the following:

To a troubled world
peace from Christ.

To a searching world
love from Christ.

To a waiting world
hope from Christ.

[New Patterns J33]

The Questions

If it is thought appropriate to use these Questions instead of the Welcome, they may be used before the peace.

The minister addresses the congregation.

Brothers and sisters, today we are welcoming *N and N* to Holy Communion. As parents and godparents, and as the community of *St N's*, we share the responsibility of encouraging them in their worship, and of supporting them by our friendship, our example and our prayers. Will you help them to grow in faith and love?

All **We will.**

The minister addresses those being welcomed.

N and N, you love God, you follow Jesus, and you live the Christian life. Do you wish to receive Holy Communion?

Yes.

As *N and N* receive today the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, let us pray that we may all know and reflect the love of Christ.

God of life,
you invite us to eat at your table;
may we know your love,
follow you in the world,
and shine with your light
all the days of our life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

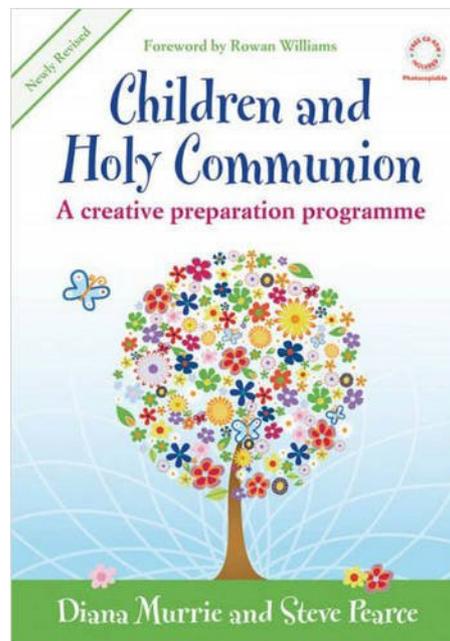
Useful Resource Material

These resources are just a few examples of materials which approach Holy Communion from different perspectives.



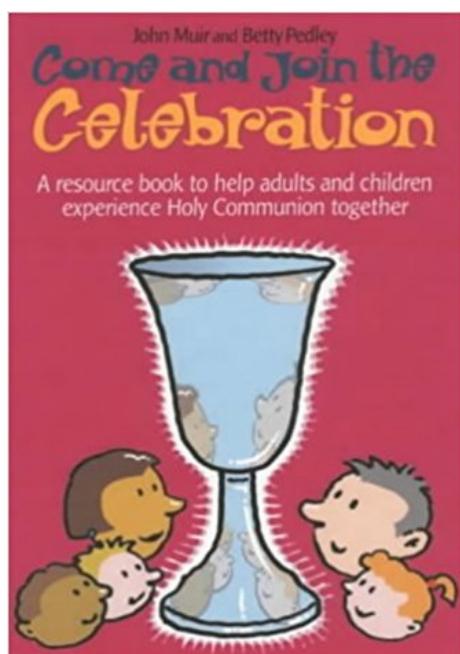
ISBN: 9780281070534

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



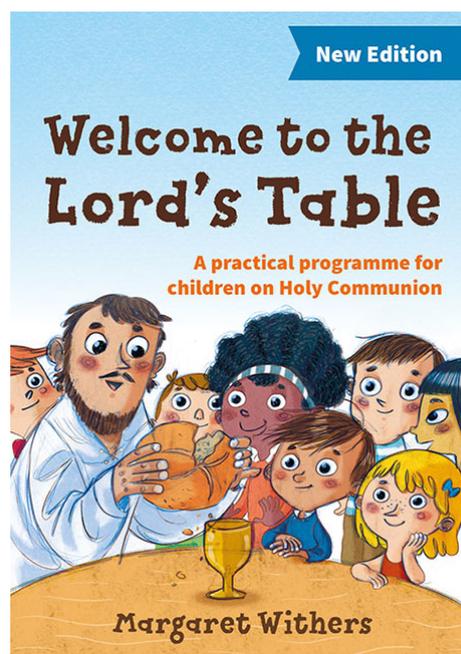
ISBN: 9781844171514

A creative preparation programme for preparing the both church and the child.



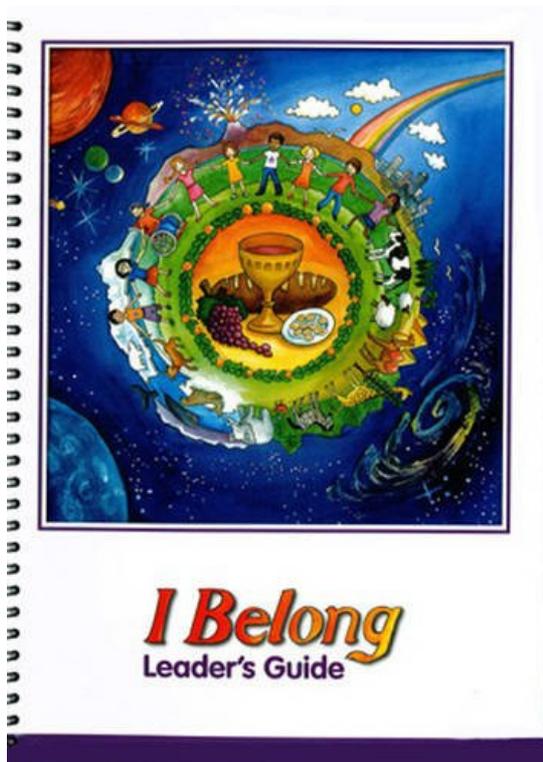
ISBN: 9780715149478

A resource which helps children to understand the liturgy and structure of Holy Communion.



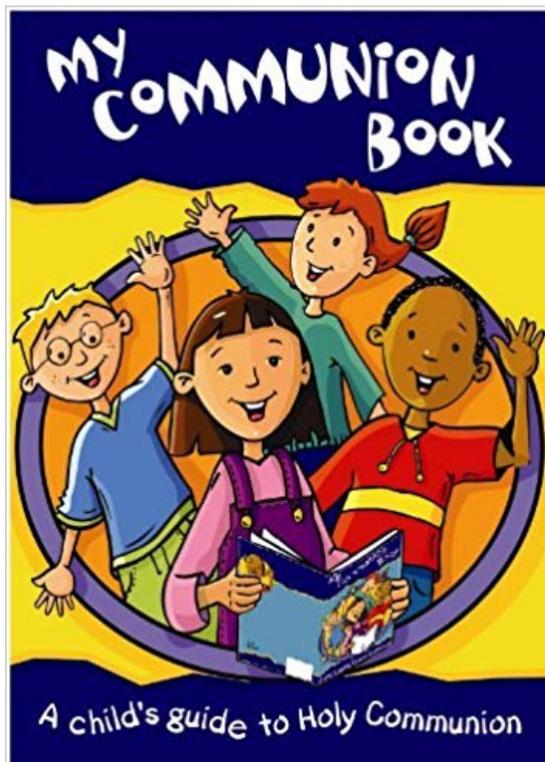
ISBN: 9780857464941

A successful programme which enables children to participate fully in eucharistic worship.



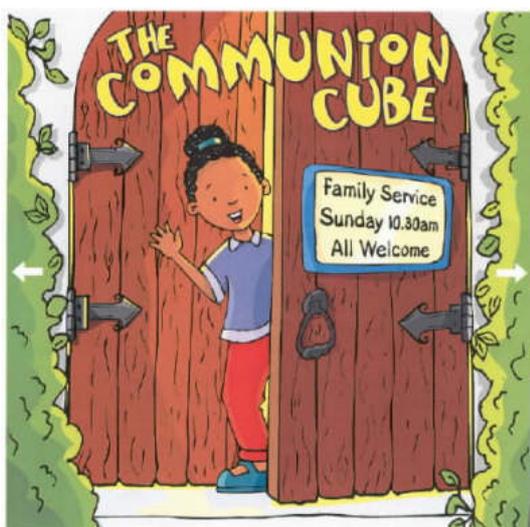
ISBN: 9780852313794

A First Holy Communion programme for parents and children firmly rooted in everyday experience.



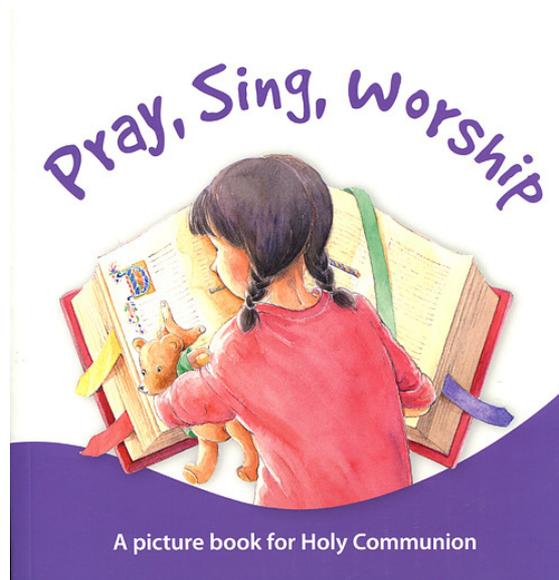
ISBN: 9780715142257

Explains key words and asks questions that relate directly to the child, helping them to engage with the service of Holy Communion



ISBN: 9780715143216

A child-friendly, illustrated cube summarising parts of the Communion service for younger children.



ISBN: 9780281065905

A beautifully illustrated book which follows the structure of the Common Worship Holy Communion service and includes many of the key texts in full.

Helpful Hints

You may find these comments from those who have already admitted children to Holy Communion before Confirmation useful.

- ◆ **The PCC** should be aware of why it is making this move. Explore what others have done; we found the work of the Revd Caroline Fairless in 'Children at Worship' particularly useful (ISBN: 9780898693263).
- ◆ **Keep people informed at all stages.** Hold a consultation meeting for members of the parish to attend in order to explain your rationale and answer questions. The discussion should always be steered away from 'understanding' pointing out that none of us 'understand' the Eucharist.
- ◆ **Involve the family.** The parents and candidates are always invited to our regular midweek Eucharist the week before the preparation starts. During the service the Eucharist is explained. It is vital not only that parents/guardians give consent but are actively involved. We produced a 'contract' for parents & children to sign to reinforce their commitment. This became very positive. Do not be afraid to disallow a child to go forward because of lack of commitment.
- ◆ **Involve the whole church community.** In our church, each child chose a 'prayer support partner' from the congregation. Once chosen, the prayer partner received training and took (a small) part in the preparation course. This was very good at making links between the young and the more mature members of the congregation.
- ◆ **Take the opportunity.** Introducing Admission to Communion provided a good opportunity to run a Lent Course on Holy Communion & Confirmation for adults alongside the first Holy Communion preparation.
- ◆ **Make the preparation long enough** and set out the expectations in advance. We started in Lent and admitted at Corpus Christi, with attendance at all Holy Week & Easter services compulsory to try and instill good habits for attending worship.
- ◆ **Make use of 'publicity'.** We found sharing as much 'publicity' in the church as possible really helped, including keeping the names of those to be admitted on prayer lists, etc. We have photos of the candidates in church with their names and hobbies and the whole church family are asked to pray for them.
- ◆ **Make the group big enough.** Don't be afraid to delay the course if you only have a small group. Alternatively, consider if small groups or individuals could join with groups in other parishes or explore the possibility of offering a Deanery Course. Have time during the discussions when the children and parents are in separate sessions. This provides parents the opportunity to discuss issues like Christian symbols in the home and praying with their children, whilst children may feel more comfortable asking certain questions away from their parents.
- ◆ **Be aware** that there may be difficulties when children go to other parishes whose policy is different to your own.
- ◆ **Use a good preparation course.** We found 'I Belong' from Redemptorist Publications & 'At the Table of the Lord' by Margaret Withers have both been used successfully. Make the classes of a reasonable length with a set pattern.
- ◆ **Down sides.** There was some opposition from some church members - but after the first year it all but disappeared.
- ◆ **Admission to Holy Communion before Confirmation did NOT undermine Confirmation.** The children were still eager to be confirmed and it made more of Confirmation, discouraging the idea that Confirmation is mostly a 'driving test' to Holy Communion.
- ◆ **The Admission Service should be a joyful and memorable occasion.** Think carefully about how you might deliver this.