

Introduction

For most of us, our experience of the Church of England is that it follows the pattern of Baptism, and Confirmation followed by admission to Holy Communion. This process has been challenged and reviewed looking at a greater emphasis on lifelong formation of faith.



Are children the church of tomorrow? Or part of our church today?

We at St Paul's are a family church and have a wonderful mix of ages across the congregation. Do we feel it is right for children to join in wholly with the church services, or keep something for them later in life?



In current context it may be helpful to have this step, therefore allowing confirmation to be delayed beyond teenage years when further exploration

of the faith continues.

Process

Within the Diocese there are defined regulations for parishes wishing to admit children for Holy Communion:

- † The child, as an individual must **want** to be admitted and have parent permission.
- † The child needs to be over 7 years.
- † The child is to be a regular member of a nurture group and to of attended church regularly for at least 1 year.

Churches who have allowed children to take communion have reported back positively.

Jesus says "Let the children come to me"

Children can express their response to God in awe, wonder, silence and prayer too.

There would be no requirement for children to take Holy Communion prior to confirmation, this just gives older children another option.

A parent chooses to have their child baptised....an adult chooses to be confirmed...a child can choose to take Holy Communion.

Non-alcoholic wine would be available.

It has been Traditional for communion and confirmation to start together.

Confirmation can happen as early as 10, are children ready at this point?

First Communion allows children to make their own decision, and come back to confirmation a little older when they are truly ready.



We, as a church, would plan to support these children towards confirmation, to include:

- † A course to fully prepare each child for taking Communion.
- † Encouraging Bible reading and prayer to become a regular part of their life.
- † Inclusion of a mentor / sponsor to be involved in their journey
- † Further encouragement to be involved in the life of the church

Children in the bible

Throughout the Old Testament children are seen as a gift from God – divine gifts (Genesis 4.1; 33.5), the future of Gods people is in the provision of an heir. Children are part of the family: Adam and Eve are commissioned to ‘Be fruitful and multiply’ (Genesis 1.28)

God chose children; Samuel to receive his message, the young boy who shared his food to feed the five thousand. God is content to work through the young.

In John we hear that Christ is the true bread from heaven. ‘I am the bread of life’ says Jesus. ‘Whoever comes to me will never be hungry and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty’. The only criteria given by Jesus are to come and believe. Can children do this just as adults do?

The New Testament understands that children have a rightful place within the Christian community, children were clearly present and there is no mention of them being excluded at any point of worship.

So the Old Testament tradition has always valued the place of children as a gift from God, the hope for the future. In the New Testament it is made plain Jesus’ love for children.

What Happens Next?

This same leaflet has been / will be available at each of the regular weekly services.

We are having an open evening on 15th September at 8pm in the church, to further explore this subject as a congregation.

It will be an informal evening to allow people to share thoughts, ideas and concerns. We don’t have all the answers and although PCC is supportive of this step we are also comfortable that it may not be right so please do come and explore with us.

Alison Hendy from Guildford Diocese is visiting with the PCC in September.

If the decision is made to go ahead, then there is a process within our Diocese to be followed which starts with submitting an application.

Children and Holy Communion

Should we, as a church, allow children to be admitted for Holy Communion at St Pauls?

How would they be prepared?

What is the process?

The PCC are investigating the options for allowing St Pauls to inform, teach and allow our children to become part of Holy Communion

This leaflet is to provide some background, answer some questions and give people an opportunity to research and share their own thoughts with the congregation.

