



THE ADMISSION OF BAPTIZED CHILDREN TO HOLY COMMUNION BEFORE CONFIRMATION

There are three main 'drivers' behind the new Regulations for the Admission of Children to Holy Communion:

- **Good theology**
- **Good nurture**
- **Good order**

Good Theology

Anglicans, in common with Christians of other traditions, have come to recognise that baptism is the universal sign of complete initiation into the life of the Church. Anglican practice, from the sixteenth century at least until the mid-nineteenth, affirmed this theological position. The First Anglican Liturgical Consultation in 1985 and the Fourth Consultation in 1991 both called for all baptized persons to be admitted to Communion throughout the Anglican Communion. Moreover, these Consultations were clear that "confirmation and other rites of affirmation ... are in no way to be seen as a completion of baptism or as necessary for admission to communion." Since Anglican churches today welcome to Communion baptized communicant Christians of other denominations, what is it about the children we ourselves have baptized into Christ which bars them from full participation at the Lord's Table?

Good Nurture

Children are not simply 'the Church of tomorrow', they are part of the Church of today! The more we become aware of the rightful place of children in the regular worship of the Church and of the vital importance of good nurture and support for lifelong Christian discipleship, the less anxious we may be about the presence of all ages in our worship. Those churches which have made the best use of previous provision for admitting children to Communion have been those which have taken Christian nurture and discipleship seriously. More and more, churches are discovering that good Christian nurture is not simply a matter of teaching but also of loving and living, like the normal interaction of family-life. They have discovered that Confirmation has gained in importance as a rite of commitment and strengthening in adulthood. As one incumbent said, "Previously, children came from Sunday school via confirmation class to adult worship and then most of them left. Now they stay and we can be sure that when they are confirmed they not only believe but they also belong." The Parish Communion movement, begun two or three generations ago, is bearing fruit.

Good Order

Anglicans value both Spirit-filled spontaneity and Spirit-given order: we see no contradiction in that. In many churches, parents break off a piece of the sacramental bread to give to their children at the altar because they know the importance of all the baptized being part of the family-meal; yet it cannot be right that parents alone determine admission to a Sacrament of the Gospel. That's why the Church of England, in common with the other Anglican churches of Britain and Ireland and many more across the world, has introduced a straightforward process for parishes to welcome children to Holy Communion in an ordered way. So please don't go it alone! Once children are admitted to Communion in one parish they cannot subsequently be refused Communion in another, even if the other parish has not signed up to the regulations.

Please give this serious consideration and prayer at your Parochial Church Council.

If the Diocesan Children and Youth Team can be of assistance, please call on them for help: the contact details are in the York Diocesan Handbook and at www.dioceseofyork.org.uk. Diocesan guidelines and resources are also available to download from this website.