

The Parish of St Mary the Virgin, Whickham

The care and protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults involved in our church is the responsibility of all members. All people working with children, young people and vulnerable adults are subject to an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check and appropriate training in safeguarding.

Policy for the Admission of baptised Children to Holy Communion before Confirmation

Introduction

We believe all ages are called to be part of the Church of God in the world. We are committed to helping everyone to grow and develop in faith, and fulfil their call and purpose before God. Baptism is a universal sign of complete initiation into the Church, which is strengthened in Confirmation, and is usually made in adulthood. We believe that opening up to God's Word and sharing of the bread and wine should be offered to children at an appropriate age. Children are both the Church of today and the Church of tomorrow.

Background

In 2017 the PCC began to explore the possibility of receiving baptised children to Holy Communion before Confirmation. Having considered the biblical authority, the liturgical and pastoral context of the parish, and being mindful of children in our church and at the Parochial School we concluded that we should widen the discussion. In 2018 via sermons, discussions throughout our congregations, as well as in the parish magazine and on our website we found the people of the church ready and supportive of admitting baptised children to Holy Communion prior to Confirmation. One cautionary letter was received by the PCC, though its author stated it was not a letter of opposition.

Agreement

On Tuesday 4th September 2018 the PCC unanimously passed the resolution that **'The PCC and with the support of the congregation agree that baptised children may receive Holy Communion prior to Confirmation'**. This was conditional to children being seven years of age or older and regular attenders in worship and the life of the Church. They must complete a preparation course, have parental support and the agreement of the Rector.

Preparation

The preparation will be given over a series of sessions guided by the course book 'Welcome to the Lord's Table'. (Other recommended Church of England courses maybe used). To ensure flexibility, sessions may be held on Sundays or midweek, within Messy Church, and for Parochial students, within school. Sessions will also give practical instruction about receiving the bread and wine. **Following completion of the course, and before being admitted to Holy Communion there must be mutual agreement between child, parent or guardian and Rector.**

Admission

Children will be publicly admitted to communion before the whole church family in St Mary's Church at an appropriate time. The course and admission to communion will be held regularly, at least annually. We understand and expect that children who have been received to communion will be entitled to receive communion in other Church of England parishes, even those who have not agreed a policy. Children admitted to Holy Communion will be encouraged to come to Confirmation at an appropriate time in response to their call to serve and follow Jesus. The PCC will periodically review and monitor the efficacy of this policy.