

Admission to Communion Policy

For our Children, Young People and Adults

For St Luke's Church, 46 Cell Barnes Lane, St Albans AL1 5QJ

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Introduction

This policy sets out the policy for admission to communion of members of this Church Family. It has been developed in the light of the decision of the PCC at their meeting on 21st February 2008 when the following was decided:

'The PCC agreed that the principle of allowing children to take communion after baptism and before confirmation be implemented in accordance with diocesan guidelines, as an additional option alongside the traditional infant baptism/adult confirmation before communion route and the adult baptism before communion route.'

The decision reflects the concern of the Council to be a church that is inclusive of the range of different theologies of baptism and communion that are represented in the church. For convenience, these views have been given labels and are further described in appendix 1. They are the Commitment View (akin to the Baptist position of believers' baptism and admission to communion), the Confirmation View (that full admission to communion takes place at Confirmation, though the person may have been baptised as an infant) and the Covenant View (that admission to communion may take place after baptism subject to Diocesan Guidelines).

This policy describes what the PCC consider to be 'best practice'. It is felt important, nevertheless, to respond to the particular needs of individual candidates, their beliefs and experiences as they come forward, and in consultation with the vicar, to offer preparation that is flexible enough to respond to these needs while remaining within the spirit of the policy.

Contents

The Purpose of Preparation	3
The Aims of Preparation	3
Confirmation View: Objectives of the Preparation	4
Eligibility for Confirmation	4
The Form of Preparation	4
Further explanation	4
The Preparation Group sessions	5
The Mentoring	5
Commitment View: Objectives of the Preparation	6
Eligibility for Baptism and Confirmation	6
The Form of Preparation	6
Further explanation	6
The Preparation Group sessions	7
The Mentoring	7
Covenant View: Objectives of the Preparation	8
Eligibility for Admission to Communion	8
Further explanation	8
Appendix 1	10
The Three Views	10

The Purpose of Preparation

The Church's vision is:

*God is at work
transforming us into an
inclusive community of grace
where together we are striving
to grow in Christ...
... a hub from which we go out in His Spirit, sharing His love through
generous service, drawing people into a living personal faith,
and transforming the world around us.*

The Church's mission statement is that St Luke's Church is to be people who '**Bring God's Grace to life**', and that we do so by...

**Receiving God's Grace in all its fullness
Living by God's Grace in the Christian Community
Sharing God's Grace in God's World**

The preparation is to help those who wish to be admitted to communion to develop as Christian Disciples by growing in each of these areas, taking into account their journey of faith so far.

The Aims of Preparation

Reflecting the church's stated vision, we aim to address three specific areas:

- 1. Developing the candidates' spirituality**
 - Experience of God through Sunday school, cell groups, services
 - Their walk with God: teaching, prayer life and worship, communion
 - Use of scripture, awareness of God day-by-day, support from family
- 2. Developing the candidates' life in God's Family**
 - Building up their understanding of Christian Belief, appropriate for their age
 - Their place in the Christian Family, support and fellowship, communion
 - Their gifts, living and experiencing God's grace
- 3. Developing the candidates' service for Christ in the community**
 - Encouragement in service in the wider community
 - Encouragement in outreach and letting their faith live and be seen

The form of preparation will depend upon the age of the person and the View (Commitment, Confirmation, Covenant) that reflects their beliefs and that of their parents.

The Confirmation View of Admission to Communion

Objectives of the Preparation

1. To help candidates answer the questions: **Do I wish to be confirmed, and why?**
2. To help candidates prepare for the commitment to the Christian life expressed by the Baptismal vows made at confirmation

Eligibility for Confirmation

- The Candidate will have been baptised, or intend to be baptised just before or at their confirmation service;
- They will be regular worshipping members of the church;
- If they are under 16 then the support of their parents will be sought;
- They will usually be at least school year 9 or higher (13-14 years or older); there may be merit in encouraging confirmation when they are closer to year 12/13 (17-18), with a greater emphasis on Christian service and commitment.

Candidates wishing to be confirmed will therefore show a desire to follow Christ and to grow in faith and desire to understand what this means in their personal lives, in their belonging to St Luke's and in their work/school/community environment. Confirmation needs to be at the right point in their lives for them to fully appreciate the importance of committing their lives to Christ.

A degree of flexibility in a candidate's eligibility is considered important as each person's faith journey is unique to them.

The Form of Preparation

Part 1 – Exploring and growing in faith

4 group sessions spread over three months considering: **Why believe in Jesus?**
Regular meetings (perhaps fortnightly) with a suitable mentor to encourage spiritual growth; The importance of this part will depend on whether or not candidates have recently attended a locally run course, such as Alpha, Emmaus, Soul2Soul or Access All Area. It may be omitted as a result of discussion with their regular church group leader and the vicar.

Part one ends with a decision: Do I wish to continue towards confirmation?

Part 2 – Growing in and understanding the Christian Life

6-8 group sessions over three months considering: Foundations of the Christian life;
Regular meetings with mentor to encourage personal growth;

Part 2 ends with confirmation.

Part 3 – Living the Life

Regular meetings with mentor, where possible, to encourage personal growth for a further 3 months; home group/youth group membership to continue and develop.

Part 3 will, hopefully, continue throughout their lives.

Further explanation

A practical expression of our vision is to encourage candidates to belong to a small (cell or similar discipleship) group. They, indeed, most people, are more likely to grow spiritually when part of a healthy small group in which Christian maturity is a chief objective. Small group membership is encouraged not just for the duration of the preparation but as part of the

candidates' continuing spiritual life. For young people we aim to offer small group membership from around school year 9 (age 13-14).

Where small group membership is not appropriate or possible, additional means of nurture is to be explored and considered.

The Preparation Group sessions

These will ideally alternate with mid-week small group meetings, so that the commitment required does not exceed one church meeting per week outside Sundays.

Part 1 might include topics such as:

Belief in God; Who is Jesus? Why did he die? What does it mean for me?

Part 2 might include topics such as:

The Holy Spirit; Discipleship; Using the Bible, What is Baptism? What is Communion?

Confirming what? Letting my faith live.

The Mentoring

The aim is to link up each candidate with a mature member of the congregation who can encourage the candidate in their personal walk with Christ, including regular (daily) prayer and Bible study, together with helping them to talk about spiritual questions that arise out of their small group and confirmation preparation. Meetings would typically be around 30-40 minutes.

Commitment View of Admission to Communion

Objectives of the Preparation

1. To help candidates answer the questions: **Do I wish to be baptised and confirmed, and why?**
2. To help candidates prepare for the commitment to the Christian life expressed by the **Baptismal vows and confirmation**

Eligibility for Baptism and Confirmation

- The Candidate will not have been baptised
- They will be regular worshipping members of the church
- If they are under 16 then the support of their parents will be sought
- They will usually be school year 9 or higher (13-14 years or older)

Candidates wishing to be baptised and confirmed will therefore show a desire to follow Christ and to grow in faith and desire to understand what this means in their personal lives, in their belonging to St Luke's and in their work/school/community environment. Their baptism and confirmation need to be at the right point in their lives for them to fully appreciate the importance of committing their lives to Christ.

A degree of flexibility in a candidate's eligibility is considered important as each person's faith journey is unique to them.

The Form of Preparation

Part 1 – Exploring and growing in faith

4 group sessions spread over three months considering: **Why believe in Jesus?**
Regular meetings (perhaps fortnightly) with a suitable mentor to encourage spiritual growth; The importance of this part will depend on whether or not candidates have recently attended a locally run course, such as Alpha, Emmaus, Soul2Soul or Access All Area. It may be omitted and as a result of discussion with their regular church group leader and the vicar.

Part one ends with a decision: Do I wish to continue towards baptism and confirmation?

Part 2 – Growing in and understanding the Christian Life

6-8 group sessions over three months considering: Foundations of the Christian life;
Regular meetings with mentor to encourage personal growth;

Part 2 ends with baptism and confirmation.

Part 3 – Living the Life

Regular meetings with mentor to encourage personal growth for a further 3 months;
Cell group membership to continue and develop.

Part 3 will, hopefully, continue throughout their lives.

Further explanation

A practical expression of our vision is to encourage candidates to belong to a small (cell or similar discipleship) group. They, indeed most people, are more likely to grow spiritually when part of a healthy small group in which Christian maturity is a chief objective. Small group membership is encouraged not just for the duration of the preparation but as part of the candidates' continuing spiritual life. For young people we aim to offer cell group membership from around school year 9 (age 13-14).

Where small group membership is not appropriate or possible, additional means of nurture is to be explored and considered.

The Preparation Group sessions

These will ideally alternate with mid-week small group meetings, so that the commitment required does not exceed one church meeting per week outside Sundays.

Part 1 might include topics such as:

Belief in God; Who is Jesus? Why did he die? What does it mean for me?

Part 2 might include topics such as:

The Holy Spirit; Discipleship; Using the Bible, What is Baptism? What is Communion?
Confirming what? Letting my faith live.

The Mentoring

The aim is to link up each candidate with a mature member of the congregation who can encourage the candidate in their personal walk with Christ, including regular (daily) prayer and Bible study, together with helping them to talk about spiritual questions that arise out of their small group and confirmation preparation. Meetings would typically be around 30-40 minutes.

Covenant View of Admission to Communion

Objectives of the Preparation

1. **To help candidates understand what participation in the sacramental life of the worshipping Christian community means**
2. **To help candidates take the next step in their commitment to the Christian life expressed by the Baptismal vows and their participation in communion**

Eligibility for Admission to Communion

- The person must be baptised (or be wanting to be baptised as a child with parental support) and be a regular church attender aged 7 or over;
- The person him/herself must wish to receive communion
- The person(s) with parental responsibility must give support to the child's wish to receive communion;

A) Preparation of those with Parental Responsibility

This preparation is the responsibility of the vicar and/or other licensed ministers and/or Young People's Leaders. It can either be done by participation in the sessions with the children, or by prior explanation of the materials the children will be using. This will be covered in two sessions in order to give everyone a clear understanding of what their children are covering and to give opportunity for them to discuss issues arising out of it.

B) Preparation of children

This preparation is the responsibility of the vicar and/or other licensed ministers and/or Young People's Leaders. The preparation may use material based upon 'Welcome to the Lord's Table' by Margaret Withers, or other suitable materials with the aim of covering the following topics:

- 1 – Who am I? / Belonging to God's Family (My uniqueness and my belonging to God's Family)**
- 2 – God's Story book / Jesus our friend (The Bible and our relationship with Jesus)**
- 3 – Thank you; Please / Sorry! (Worship, prayer and forgiveness)**
- 4 – Jesus is risen (Jesus' death and resurrection)**
- 5 – Let's have a party (The meaning of Holy Communion as a sacrament)**
- 6 – Let's share a meal (Meeting with Jesus in Holy Communion)**

Further explanation

A practical expression of our vision is to encourage people to belong to a small (Bible study or similar discipleship) group. Most people are more likely to grow spiritually when part of a healthy small group in which Christian maturity is a chief objective. Small group membership is encouraged as part of the candidates' continuing spiritual life. For younger children aged 7-12 this support will come from parents and from participation in Sunday School groups. When young people reach school year 9 (age 13-14) they are encouraged to join a youth cell group.

Where small group membership is not appropriate or possible, additional means of nurture is to be explored and considered.

At a later point confirmation will be offered in the same way as for the Confirmation View set out above to express full adult commitment to, participation in and responsibility for the life of the Christian community.

- The occasion will be planned to coincide with the completion of the preparation of the children and those with parental responsibility;
- At the next Communion Service at which the children will be present, the Vicar will make a public announcement that the individuals concerned have completed their preparation and will be taking their first communion. There may be a short act of welcome and admission to holy communion as part of this service;
- Newly admitted children will receive a certificate;
- A record of those admitted to communion will be kept as a separate register and on the church computer;

Appendix 1

It became clear to the PCC during its consultations that there are a range of views on baptism and communion represented within the Church Family. It is the PCC's express wish that these views be equally affirmed and supported.

At the time of the consultations on the admission to communion of baptised children, there were already families both holding and expressing the three main different views which are described below. The Commitment View and the Confirmation View have been expressed in the church's worshipping life. The Covenant View will only be an expressed view when this policy is implemented – which is provisional on the granting of permission from the Diocesan Bishop.

The Three Views

The diagram here illustrates the three main 'faith journeys' of members of St Luke's. Some people hold what one might call the '**Commitment View**'. This is broadly speaking the 'Adult baptism' understanding of baptism, that baptism should only follow the confession of Christ as Lord as an adult.

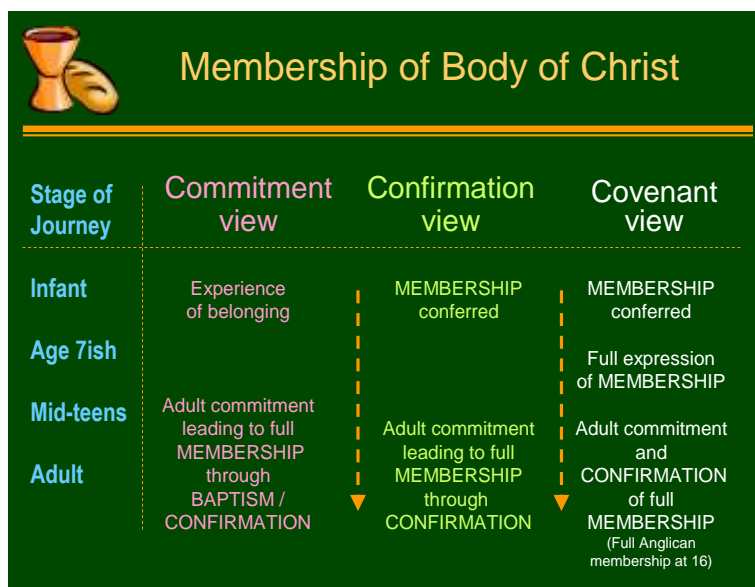
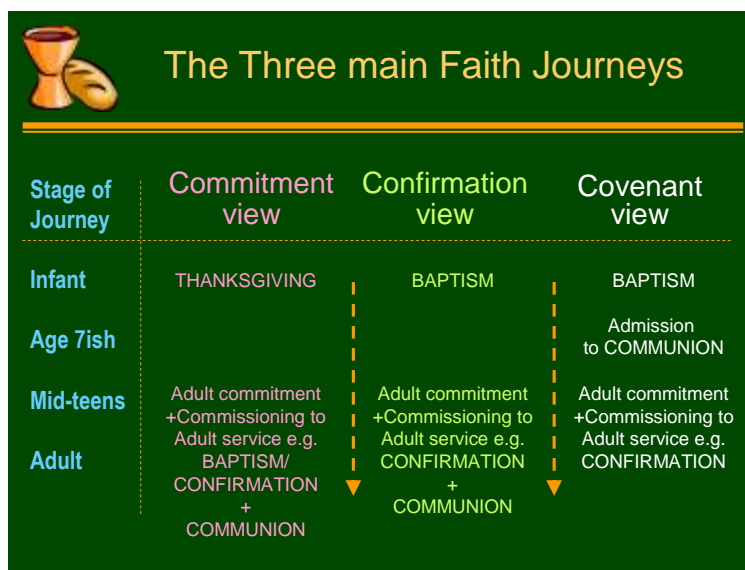
The '**Confirmation View**' is what might be described as the traditional Anglican pattern over recent years.

The Confirmation View is that, while baptism may be

administered to infants of Christian parents, the child is not considered a full member of the Body of Christ until confirmation.

The '**Covenant View**' is the view that the Anglican Church has recently accepted and is now implemented across the Church of England. This view accepts that baptism alone expresses and marks full membership of the Body of Christ.

All three views are held within our Church Family. Indeed all three views are fully lived within our Church Family.



* These views are given convenience names. They are not generally accepted theological terms.