

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What are the rules at present?

Church of England official rules state that people should not normally receive communion until they have been confirmed, and that clergy are responsible for preparing people and putting them forward for confirmation. There are three exceptions to this rule

- Members of other churches visiting or regularly worshipping at a Church of England church
- People who have not been confirmed but are actively planning to be
- Children admitted to communion before confirmation, in accordance with the official guidelines.

2. Are children old enough to understand what Communion means and to approach it with a reverent attitude?

A strong argument for delay until adulthood. If children are properly prepared and supported they are capable of appreciating the significance of the Eucharist and a simple explanation of what sharing a meal together represents. For children who have come to a personal faith, receiving Holy Communion can be as special as it is to any adult.

3. Is there a “right age” for admission?

Some people consider seven years as a good point at which children can understand a basic preparation course and answer questions for themselves. Some parishes begin preparation with children in their first year of school, especially where families have been regularly attending church for some years.

4. Why should children partake in Holy Communion, when I had to wait until I was confirmed?

At the heart of this is one's view of children and childhood. The argument 'it didn't hurt me to wait' carries no bearing beyond 'why should someone get something earlier than I did' and the old 'children should be seen and not heard' argument.

5. What do we understand the Eucharist to be?

Jesus said 'do this in remembrance of me'. He didn't say: 'And oh, by the way you have to be confirmed and at least eleven years old. 'In fact the opposite was the case, and Jesus rebuked the disciples who tried to prevent children approaching him telling them that unless they understood like children then they would not know the Kingdom of God.

6. What is gained by admitting children to Communion?

Some arguments in favour of allowing younger children to take communion are

- The Eucharist is within the tradition of the Jewish Passover, a family meal
- Those children who are part of the church family should be allowed to join in the “family meal”

- If Baptism is what makes us part of church why should anything else be needed to share with the full body of the church in the sacrament that defines us as children of the same heavenly Father
- Children who are absent from a large part of main Sunday worship in separate classes find it difficult to enter into the experience of worship as teenagers and may no longer want to
- Jesus however held up children as a model of the Kingdom of God.

7. We've never been asked about children receiving Communion, so what's the point?

Many children and their parents ask why they can't receive. Where children have been admitted in another parish or other church settings it is harder to explain why they are then excluded. This difficulty cannot be completely overcome since it is for every parish to make the decision. However if a family moves from an admitting church where they have been carefully prepared, a letter explaining the situation could be sent to the incumbent of the new parish and this can help individual situations to be wisely handled.