

# Children and Communion





# What is a sacrament?

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- A sacrament

- *An outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us, ordained by Christ himself as a means whereby we receive the same and a pledge to assure us thereof*

*Book of Common Prayer*



# What is a sacrament?

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- A sacrament
  - *Incarnational*
    - *Rooted in earthly things but conveying a heavenly truth*
    - *The use of physical material to convey the spiritual reality eg water washing us clean, refreshing us*



# What is a sacrament?

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- A sacrament
  - *Incarnational*
  - *Divine action*
    - *Not dependent on the changing or subjective response of the human recipient but on obedience to the divine will*

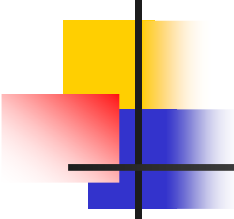


# What is a sacrament?

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- A sacrament
  - *Incarnational*
  - *Divine action*
  - *Mediated through the Church*
    - *Not private and personal, but belonging to the whole people of God and celebrated publicly*

# The sacrament of Baptism



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- A sign and seal of new birth
- Adding to those whom the Lord calls
- The start of a life-long journey of faith
- Calling out of darkness
- Dying to sin and rising to new life
- Claimed by Christ
- Cleansed from sin
- Received into the Church
- Touched with God's love
- Welcomed into the fellowship of faith

*Images found in the Common Worship Baptism service*

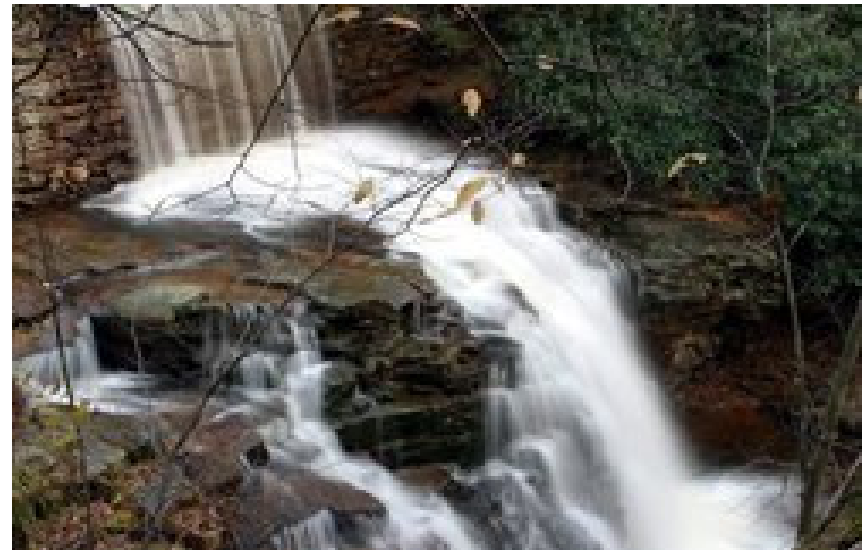
# Signs and Symbols of Baptism

- Light
  - From darkness to light
  - The light of Christ
  - A place with the saints in light
  - Walking in the light
  - Understanding



# Signs and Symbols of Baptism

- Water
  - Creation
  - Freedom
  - Cleansing
  - Refreshing
  - Sustaining
  - New life



# Signs and Symbols of Baptism

- The Cross
  - The cross of Christ
  - Sign of salvation
  - The Christian's invisible badge/mark
  - A way of life



# Signs and Symbols of Baptism

- The Oil of anointing
  - A sign of strengthening
  - A sign of blessing
  - A sign of marking out
  - A sign of God's Spirit





# The sacrament of Holy Communion

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- 'Do this in remembrance of me'
  - Luke 22.19
- 'Day by day they broke bread at home...and ate with glad and generous hearts'
  - Acts 2.46
- 'For I received from the Lord.....you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.'
  - 1 Corinthians 11.23-26
- 'Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup in an unworthy manner.....'
  - 1 Corinthians 11.27



# The sacrament of Holy Communion

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- Sharing in the body of Christ
- Though we are many, we are one body
- Draw near with faith
- Remembrance
- Thanksgiving
- Feeding/sustenance
- Cleansing

*Images found in the Common Worship Holy Communion service*



# The sacrament of Holy Communion

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- Sacrifice
- Forgiveness
- Trusting in your manifold and great mercies
- Covenant of grace
- We are not worthy
- Telling the story – that all are children of GOD
- Sending out into the world

*Images found in the Common Worship Holy Communion service*

# Signs and Symbols of Holy Communion

- Bread
  - Freedom from slavery
  - Manna in the desert
  - Feeding the 5000
  - Bread of life
  - Broken for us



# Signs and Symbols of Holy Communion

- Wine
  - Offerings to God
  - Wedding at Cana
  - The true vine
  - Shed for us





# History

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- New Testament

Baptism is the sole entry rite into the church.

No explicit teaching on children and communion.



# History

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- 3<sup>rd</sup> Century

Anointing and laying on of hands added to baptism. Children shared in all of this – including communion



# History

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- 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> Centuries
  - Augustine of Hippo and original sin
  - Growing size of Dioceses
  - Baptisms performed by local priests
  - Laying on of hands delayed until the bishop's visit
  - Admission to communion associated with baptism



# History

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- Eastern practice
  - Priest performed full baptismal rite, including infant Communion (oils blessed by Bishop)
- Western practice
  - Baptism was performed locally but anointing and imposition of hands was delayed until a visit from the Bishop



# History

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- The Middle Ages

*Baptism – Communion - Confirmation*

- Growing theology of the 'real presence of Christ'
- Laity denied the wine
- Children sometimes denied both bread and wine



# History

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- 13<sup>th</sup> Century
  - recommended age for Confirmation varied from 1 – 7 years
- 1281
  - regulation that those not Confirmed should be barred from Holy Communion
- 16<sup>th</sup> Century
  - communicating unconfirmed adults and children was finally abolished (Council of Trent)



# History

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## The Reformation

- Catholic View

- Emphasis on what God does – imparting the Holy Spirit

- Protestant View

- Emphasis on a person's response – individual response of faith

Cranmer's 1549 Prayer Book emphasised the Catechism as the pre-requisite to Communion

*'there shall none be admitted to Holy Communion until such time as he can say the catechism and be confirmed'*



# History

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- 19<sup>th</sup> Century
  - The rise of the railways! Bishops no longer had to rely on horse power to get around
  - Confirmation became seen as the completion of baptism and therefore the gateway to Communion
- 20<sup>th</sup> Century
  - The growth of the Parish Eucharist Movement meant children were visible in church and present at the Communion service



# History

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- 1954  
*Baptism and Confirmation Today*
- 1971  
*Christian Initiation: Birth and Growth in the Christian Society* (the Ely Report)
- 1985  
*Children and Communion* (the Knaresborough Report)
- 1991  
the House of Bishops brought a report on Initiation before General Synod



# History

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- 1993  
Three 'experimental' Dioceses, including Peterborough, had been admitting children to Communion prior to Confirmation.
- 1995  
*On the Way* was published, encouraging parishes to review their patterns of initiation.
- 1996  
The House of Bishops published Guidelines on the admission of children to Communion



# History

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- 2005
  - Synod received a report on the current state of play in England
  - Most Dioceses permit parishes to admit children to Communion before Confirmation
  - The Diocese of Peterborough has done this since the 1980s
- 2006
  - The Guidelines become Regulations and are included in the Canons of the Church of England



# Theological issues

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- The priority of grace
- Baptism as complete sacramental initiation into Christ
- Children as part of the covenant people of God
- Understanding or faith?



# Liturgical issues

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- Parish Eucharist means children attending communion but how do they participate?
- Need to make sense of their place in the service *as a whole*
- Eucharistic prayers for use with children present
- Continuing teaching about the Eucharist



# Pastoral issues

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- Baptism
- Parental support
- Involvement of children's leaders
- Teaching on the meaning of communion
- Regular parochial opportunities for renewal of baptismal vows
- Parents who have chosen thanksgiving for the birth of their child



# Pastoral issues

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- The school Eucharist
- An overall culture which enables children to be worshippers
- Children wanting to emulate their peers
- Inter-parochial mobility
- A minimum age?
- The place of confirmation



# The next step.....

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- Each PCC must resolve what to do
- Foundation governors in church schools must decide how to proceed, in discussion with their PCC
- Advice is available from the Children's Missioner and the Diocesan Board of Education for PCCs and schools