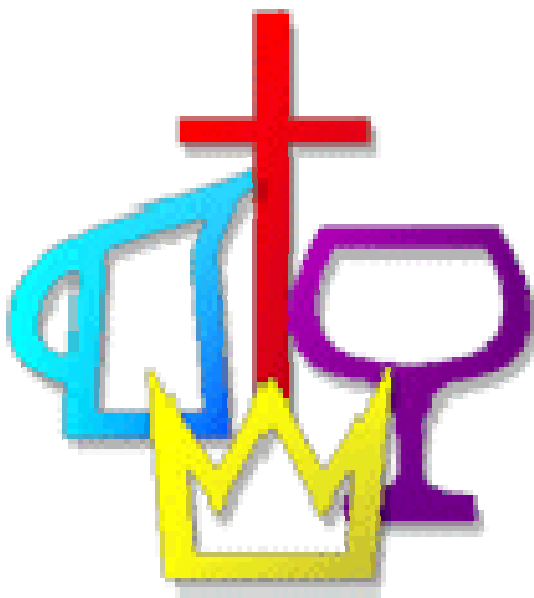




St Sebastian's Church  
Wokingham Without

## Children and Holy Communion



Information for Parents  
2010

What's it all about?

At Easter 2000 we admitted children to Holy Communion before confirmation for the first time. Since then it has become our pattern to admit children to communion most years, following a course of preparation. All the feedback that we have received from the children has suggested that they have appreciated the course and enjoy being able to take communion.

Is it allowed?

Yes, the House of Bishops have permitted parishes to go down this route and more and more are doing so. There are guidelines to be followed, and each parish must have a policy which has been passed by at least two-thirds of the PCC. In our case, we spent a couple of years discussing the issues and teaching about the change before the PCC approved the policy in July 1999. Please ask at the Parish Office if you would like to see a full copy of our policy. Tapes are also available of the teaching which has been given in the church on this subject.



Why is it important?

Sacraments are signs of God's grace to us in Jesus Christ, which the Bible tells us is received by faith. Paul's comments on the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11 make it clear that it is faith and right living which are important in receiving Holy Communion. Children are as capable of these as adults. So often in the past we have waited until children can understand Holy Communion, when this does not seem to be part of Paul's teaching at all.

In the New Testament admission to Holy Communion is linked to baptism. Those who share in the covenant also share in the covenant meal. The Church of England baptises children who are too young to profess the Christian faith on the understanding that they grow up as Christians within the family of the church. They are included within the covenant by virtue of their parents' faith. It seems strange to refuse Holy Communion to these children, as they begin to discover and grow in the faith into which they were baptised.

Traditionally the church has made Confirmation the gateway to Holy Communion, but this has no biblical basis. Confirmation is much better seen as an opportunity to make an adult profession of faith, when a person is ready to take on their own life-long commitment to Jesus.

All of this leads us to believe that it is acceptable to admit baptised children of Christian parents to Holy Communion before Confirmation. We acknowledge that different churches will have different policies, but this has seemed to be the right way forward for St Sebastian's. Once admitted to Holy Communion, the House of Bishops' Guidelines say that a child or adult should 'nowhere be deprived of it'.



## Who is eligible?

To be eligible to be admitted to Holy Communion in St Sebastian's a child should:

- him/herself be keen to receive Holy Communion
- be baptized
- be aged 7 years or over
- be regular at worship
- be ready to attend a preparation course before admission.

At least one of his or her parents should:

- consent to the child being admitted to Holy Communion
- be baptised and be a regular communicant member of St Sebastian's church.

## What should I do next?

We will be holding another preparation course this January, with a view to admitting children to Holy Communion on February 21st 2010. This course will take place at the Parish Centre on five Sunday mornings (17th, 24th, 31st January, and 7th, 14th February 2010) from 11:15 am —12:30 pm. The children concerned need to attend all the sessions in order to be eligible to be admitted to Holy Communion. Full details and an application form are available from the Sally Alexander or the church office. ( email [children@stsebastians.org.uk](mailto:children@stsebastians.org.uk) )

If you think your child might be interested, please talk together about how he or she feels about taking Holy Communion. You have a very important role to play in discussing this with your child, but in the end the decision must be theirs. We are particularly concerned that you do not put any pressure on them if they seem unwilling.

