

Holy Trinity Northwood, First Communion Policy 2025

It has been the tradition of this church, since at least 2008, to admit children to Holy Communion before confirmation, providing that they have been/are baptised and complete our Welcome to Communion course. This is routinely offered to the children of our community in year four and parents or guardians are invited to attend the sessions too. Older children can also sometimes be accommodated (or additional provision made).

The course culminates in an official Welcome to Communion Service in church, at which all the course participants are officially welcomed to receive communion for the first time, they receive a bible and certificate and their details are recorded in a Welcome to Communion Register. Thereafter these children are welcome to receive communion at our any of our eucharistic services.

We talk about the place and importance of confirmation as part of the Welcome to Communion course, and anticipate confirmation being a good next step in a young person's faith journey, typically in one's early teenage years, although this can be later. We affirm that confirmation is open to any baptised Christian and encourage adults to take this step too, if they have not already done so. Confirmation courses are regularly offered to teenagers and adults.

This Policy does not change our church's tradition in any way, but merely clarifies and confirms our established practice.

Reverend Ann Lynes, July 2025

Holy Communion before Confirmation: admission of baptised persons (from the Diocese of London's website [Communion guidelines - Diocese of London \(anglican.org\)](https://www.anglican.org.uk/resources/communion-guidelines))

1. Since 'communion before confirmation' is a departure from our inherited norm it requires special permission. The agreement of the Area Bishop is required before a parish introduces the practice of admitting baptized persons to communion before confirmation.
2. An application to the Area Bishop for an approved Parish Policy for the 'Admission of baptized persons to Holy Communion before confirmation' (download the form from the resources block at the bottom of this page) must include the following elements:
 - a. evidence that both the incumbent and the Parochial Church Council support the application.
 - b. evidence that the parish policy is clear and understood within the parish.
 - c. details of the Christian nurture and education programme for the parish for both children and adults.
 - d. evidence that the importance of Confirmation is emphasized within the programme of nurture.

- e. that Baptism must always precede admission to Holy Communion.
 - f. that there is a proper discussion between the parish priest, the parents and other catechists about the right time for admission of a child to Holy Communion, and that they share in a continuing education of the child in the significance of Holy Communion. Persons (including children) with learning difficulties should not be barred, but rather given an opportunity to experience the sacramental signs of God's love.
 - g. before a child is first brought to Holy Communion the significance of the occasion should be explained to him/her and proper preparation given for the reception of the sacrament.
 - h. 'First Communion' should be marked in some way appropriate to the life of the parish. It is often helpful for the Bishop to admit children to communion at a service of confirmation, where the two practices can be linked.
 - i. liturgical resources for the admission of children to Holy Communion are available from the Area Bishop's office.
 - j. a register of every person admitted to Holy Communion before Confirmation should be kept, and each person so admitted should be given a certificate by the Area Bishop.
 - k. the priest must consult with the Area Bishop about how much of the liturgy communicant children should attend. The Ministry of the Word may be in separate groups (e.g. Sunday School), but the Ministry of the Sacrament should be for the whole church together.
3. The Christian nurture and education programme of the parish, which will form part of the application to the Area Bishop, must be monitored by someone in the Episcopal Area, possibly the Area Director of Training and Development. Resources for such programmes are kept by the Diocesan Children's Adviser at London Diocesan House for the use of parishes.
 4. It is impossible to force the policy of one parish on to another, and therefore there may be difficulties when families move from one parish to another. It should be made clear that admission to Holy Communion before confirmation is "for this parish only". However, unconfirmed communicant people who move to another parish will be commended to their new incumbent as communicant members of the church.
 5. Since the bishop is the principal minister of initiation, it is important for the bishop regularly to be the minister of Holy Baptism, and particularly at services where candidates will be both baptized and confirmed.