



Children & Communion at Broughton & Loddington

'Taking communion makes me feel privileged and that I am part of the Kingdom of God'

Sam aged 9

'It makes me feel like I want to pray when we have communion'

Abigail aged 7

'It felt really special as I knelt at the altar taking holy bread and wine, I said a prayer and thought about how Jesus died so we could live'

Daniel aged 10

Baptism marks the beginning of a journey of faith. On that journey, as the words of the baptism service remind us, children *will need the help and encouragement of the Christian community, so that they may come to know God in public worship and private prayer...* One of the ways in which children can be encouraged is by including them fully in the celebration of Holy Communion.

The villages of Broughton and Loddington are typical of many rural Northamptonshire communities. When I became priest-in-charge in 2004 only Broughton church had a significant number of children attending on a regular basis. As I explored with PCCs and families how we might positively embrace the church's responsibility to nurture faith in our children two things emerged. First a desire to re-establish a working relationship with the voluntary controlled Church School in Loddington and second a real sense of unease that children were not able to fully participate in the worshipping life of the church by receiving communion.



Developing the relationship with the school was greatly assisted by the arrival of a Christian head teacher keen to enrich the worshipping life of the school and to do so in partnership with the church. The possibility of admitting children to receive communion began to be discussed in both churches and the school and I wrote a paper to help PCCs consider the issues more thoroughly. Formal approval came in September 2005 and was followed by a series of communion teach-ins for all congregations as well as for pupils at the school and parents. A small number of church members and parents expressed doubts, but were nevertheless prepared to see how it worked in practice. A programme of preparation for children in church and school was established in 2006 and continues.



Today upwards of 20 children/non-confirmed young people receive communion at church services in both Broughton and Loddington and over 30 pupils together with staff and parents receive communion at the half-termly school communion. The nurturing that takes place in school is also bringing a number of new families into the church community. Alongside this practice Broughton church has a youth group and Loddington School an after school faith, both of which are thriving. Thus communion *and* more traditional approaches to the nurture of young people are proving effective in supporting and encouraging their journeys of faith.

The introductory quotes from some of the children evidence the value of this approach, their developing spiritual awareness, as well as for me the privilege of serving as a priest. I would encourage others to seriously explore the admission of children to communion for did not Jesus say to his disciples *'Let the children come to me and do not stop them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.'*

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Note: Peterborough became one of three experimental dioceses where parishes were able to seek the Bishop's approval for admitting children to Communion as long ago as 1985/6. Since 2007, national Regulations have prescribed the way in which parishes may admit children to Communion before confirmation."