

St Margaret's Church

Church Lane, Chipstead, CR5 3RD

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11 September, 2024

Dear Parents,

Admission to Holy Communion before Confirmation.

One of the things I love most about being a priest is the privilege of celebrating Holy Communion with the family of God, knowing that I am taking part in ceremony and sacrament that has been performed in an unbroken continuity since Jesus himself celebrated with his friends on the last night of his earthy life and commanded them to 'do this as often as you shall eat and drink it in remembrance of me.'

In the Church of England we all agree on two sacraments: Baptism and Holy Communion. These are the two things Jesus did and commanded us to do the same. If Baptism is when we welcome people into the family of God, Holy Communion is our family meal.

Historically children were prevented from taking Holy Communion until after their Confirmation, but in 1997 the House of Bishops allowed admission to communion before confirmation. Interestingly Southwark had been part of a national pilot period doing this since 1991! Since the 1950s, there had been a growing theological awareness of baptism as the one complete rite of initiation. Baptised children are wholly, not conditionally, in the Body of Christ. There had been a growing sense that they are part of the sacramental community and should, with appropriate nurture and support, be welcomed at the communion rail with adults.

As a general rule, it is children who are 7 or over, who respond best to this invitation BUT if your child is younger and you think that they are ready to take communion with you please do contact me and I can see if it possible to make an exception.

The nurture and support for our children at communion comes from us as a church family and you at home. Josh has prepared two sessions for all our children and young people which he will deliver in the usual slot during the 10:15am service on Sunday 15th and Sunday 22nd September 2024. All children who are present will take part in these sessions. It will then be up to you whether you would like your child to take Holy Communion on a Sunday when it is offered. I ask that you talk to your child and have a discussion about Holy Communion.

Taking Holy Communion affirms and deepens what you as a parent/guardian started in Baptism. It is a time when the choice you made in faith is now one you can share with your child, it affirms that growing in faith is a life long journey. Faith is one of the most valuable gifts that you can pass on to your child. You are saying to them, as the Gospels tell us that no matter what life throws their way, they are never alone. They are always and unconditionally loved, they are truly loveable and they can share that love with others. You are the major influence in this decision. Your words, attitudes and actions regarding Holy Communion will influence your child in a powerful way.

Admission to Holy Communion before Confirmation does not replace the rite of Confirmation, which instead becomes a moment in a young person's faith journey when they are ready to declare the faith that you have shared with them as their own. Confirmation becomes the time a young person may stand up and say 'I choose to follow Jesus for the rest of my life and this faith is mine.' If any of your young people are at that stage please come and talk to me. Josh and I would love to walk with them as they make this step for themselves.

There are two things I would like you to do as a result of this letter:

1. If you have any questions please call me on 07855 428025 or email me on rector@smchipstead.org
2. Please fill out the form here: <https://forms.office.com/e/b719ZFrTxz>

Thank you so much for being part of St Margaret's Church family, and for your commitment to your child's growth in faith.

With every blessing, Hannah

Our purpose is to know and share God's transforming love with one another, with our local community and the wider world.