

Letter to Families re: All Age Communion

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Here at Brightons Parish Church we are delighted that your children or grandchildren are part of our shared life together! We have been communicating since June 2022 that we will be proactively inviting our children to share in the sacrament of Communion, and this letter is to help people catch up or remember the journey. Let me reiterate that this is not about inclusion for the sake of inclusion nor sentimentality, but about following through the logic of our theology about what Jesus has accomplished for us.

Following on from a Kirk Session meeting in May 2022, steps were taken to more proactively involve children in partaking of Communion and one of those was teaching on Sunday mornings on 'Covenants and Sacraments' during 28th August to 11th September 2022. If you missed these, then we encourage you to catch up via our website or YouTube channel – we can also provide CDs or DVDs. There was then an open meeting in September 2022, which prompted the first version of this letter, and a few weeks ahead of Communion in December 2022 we shared a leaflet to help parents and guardians prepare themselves and their children for celebrating the sacrament – that leaflet is also on our website.

In this letter, I want to focus on common questions and practicalities that have been raised since the start. Firstly, I want to emphasise again, this is a completely personal and family decision, and there is no pressure from the Kirk Session or myself for children or young people to share in the sacrament – it is simply giving the option to do so, if parents and children are both minded for this and willing (more on this below).

Secondly, for grandparents and other guardians who bring a child or young person to church, please note that you need permission from parents beforehand, so as to respect parents' wishes. Additionally, the responsibility of preparing children for communion will also lie with you, in place of parents (see below).

Thirdly, as mentioned above, preparation for Communion is expected – I taught about how children of believers share in the New Covenant and thus that 'understanding' is not the entry point for being allowed to share in Communion. However, understanding of the sacrament is not unimportant. Consequently, we have a leaflet about how to explain Communion to children and young people, as mentioned above. As you talk about this, you also need to ask your children if they want to take part, and if they say "no", to respect that – we all have moments when we might hesitate for a variety of reasons. This is OK and part of the faith journey, and so it is completely acceptable to allow the plates to pass by.

Fourthly, here is an overview of what to expect during our all-age communion services:

- Children and families will come in for the start of the service and leave after the first song to go through to Sunday school groups. Children will sit with families in the pews at this time. This will help ensure enough space is reserved for children when they come back in. We would encourage families to sit near the front so that children can see what is happening.

- When the children and young people are out, the Sunday school leaders will refresh what Communion is about, building upon what you have told them and what they will have heard at other times.
- During the hymn before Communion, the children and young people will come back in and sit with their families.
- The format and content of the service will be adapted to be family-friendly, but most else will stay quite similar to normal. We don't expect absolute silence either, so please don't let this be a worry for you.
- There will be gluten free options for anyone requiring this.
- For those in the creche room, a server will bring through bread and juice for anyone wishing to share in the sacrament, but children of all ages are welcome to come back in – we just know sometimes that can be tricky!
- A prayer of blessing will be available for families where children do not take the bread and juice, which can help children feel included still. Simply pick up a card when you arrive from those on door duty and when we come to the relevant part of the service, people from our prayer ministry team will move around the sanctuary to pray with anyone who has a card. I'll guide us through these steps at the time.

I am sure there may be other questions and concerns people have, and if so, please do speak with either myself, your Pastoral Grouping leader or the Sunday School leaders.

We hope and pray for this development in our church life to be true to Jesus and beneficial for all, for the sacrament is meant to proclaim Jesus, sustain faith and maintain our unity, for through Jesus we are one family. So, as we gather as all ages around the Lord's Table may these truths come home afresh.

Yours in Christ,



Scott
Minister

May 2023