

DIOCESE OF ST ALBANS

Guidelines for Confirmation Services

(with or without Baptism and the Eucharist)

The Bishops assume that the service will follow the Common Worship Order, which we commend as a rich resource. If you propose to use the Order from the Book of Common Prayer, please speak directly to the Bishop concerned, well in advance of the service.

In common with most of the Common Worship material, the Initiation Services contain within them a range of alternatives, and some selection is essential if the service is to give prominence to the central actions of Baptism and Confirmation and also to be accessible to those present who may not be regular churchgoers. These notes indicate the decisions to be made and our general advice.

- **Notices**, if any, should be given out by the incumbent before the service begins. *Usually a service can then proceed unannounced but, for instance, if hymn books are being used, the incumbent should make any announcement.*
- The liturgy for Confirmation with Holy Communion is straightforward. However, we have produced five standard templates to assist clergy in producing the liturgy. These are will cover most eventualities:
 - Confirmation and Holy Communion
 - Confirmation, Reception and Holy Communion
 - Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Communion
 - Baptism, Confirmation, Reception and Holy Communion
 - Confirmation without Holy Communion

If you wish to diverge significantly from these please consult the bishop beforehand.

- **Rubrics**, it is extremely helpful if any flexible rubrics are adjusted to be made as specific as possible

A few examples:

Where the Bishop is specifically to speak, offer biddings or to indicate actions, e.g., 'Please stand' it is most helpful if this can be clearly specified in the service order.

In the Eucharist, at the Ministry of the Word, the standard rubric suggests that psalms, canticles or other hymns and songs may be used between readings. It is most helpful if these options could be focused down to the actual proposed practice on the day, e.g., 'We sing hymn number 345', or, 'Hymn for the gradual, 345' etc.

For baptisms and confirmations, there are many rubric options, depending on local practice and upon whether there is a baptism during the service/anointing/reception into the C of E.

It is most helpful if the service order can, e.g., omit the baptism rite if there is to be none, and similarly, to specify the precise practice for actions such as candle lighting/giving at the end of the service. It is often the case that the rubric will indicate, e.g., 'the Bishop or a minister may give a candle to each candidate' but it is preferably if

this is made more specific, e.g., ‘the candidates will be invited to receive a candle from the bishop’.

- The **Gloria** may be used, *but only when there is a specific reason for its inclusion, e.g. at a major festival.*
- **Readings** will be provided.
- A **large candle may be lit** for the Decision. *The use of the Paschal (Easter) candle is encouraged, so please let the Bishop know if this will not take place.*
- If there is **no baptism but the font is to be used liturgically** for the renewal of baptismal vows, please ensure that there is plenty of water in the font. The Bishop will ‘sprinkle’ the candidates and the congregation. If you wish to have singing for the procession to and from the font, it is useful to have a hymn of 4 verses or so, divided in two, to cue the candidates to move.
- **At the signing of the Cross**, Oil (previously blessed on Maundy Thursday) may be used. *Its use should follow the custom of the parish. Where there are candidates from more than one parish, there should be agreement beforehand as to whether oil is to be used.*
- The **prayer over the water** should be one of the seasonal or general, responsive or ordinary, prayers provided in the appendices.
- If there is to be **clothing** after Baptism, **Affirmation** or **Reception**, then please speak directly to the Bishop beforehand about this.
- The physical arrangement for the laying on of the hand at **Confirmation** should be made by the parish priest and the Bishop advised of this when he arrives at the church. The Bishops have no preference as to whether the candidates are confirmed standing or kneeling, singly, in pairs or in lines. The presenting priest should speak the name clearly, so that the congregation can hear it and name cards should not be used.
- The **Commission** and **prayers of intercession** may be used. *Care should be taken in considering the nature and length of the service (the number of candidates, whether or not there is a Eucharist, the time of day, etc.) in deciding whether either/both of these should be included.*
- The **Eucharist** *should usually be included for services taking place on a Sunday. Where there are candidates from several churches at weekday services, the Eucharist should normally **not** be included so that candidates may make their first Communion in their own church.*
- The **Eucharistic Prayer** should be selected by the parish priest. *Please consult the Bishop if you wish any part of the Prayer to be sung by the celebrant and, if this is agreed, provide the music.*
- At **Communion** the Bishop will normally wish to administer the bread to the whole congregation, accompanied by two assistants administering chalices. In some circumstances we understand that two or more distribution points may be helpful.
- The **giving of a lighted candle** may be included.

Some final general points.

- **Hymns** should be sensitively chosen to reflect the nature of the service, the parishes represented, the age and background of the candidates, etc. Judicious choice can greatly enhance services and the use of a service sheet enables verses to be selectively omitted.
- Where Confirmation candidates **have not been baptised** we urge that, where possible, the Baptism should take place within the context of the whole Initiation Rite at a service of Baptism and Confirmation, thus highlighting the ancient integrity of the Rite. Other candidates for Baptism at the service should be confined to family members where an adult is being confirmed.

Confirmations: 2 - Service Guidelines

- Please do not introduce **other prayers and material** (e.g. your favourite prayers from another church's confirmation rite). The integrity of the Common Worship service should be preserved.
- A **special service sheet** can be very helpful to those unaccustomed to church services. An enlarged typed copy is often appreciated by the Bishop, though this should be identical to the congregational copies in everything but size. Those parishes without facility to create their own service sheets can obtain from Abbey Gate House standard sheets suitable for photocopying.
- If you are part of a Local Ecumenical Project and you wish to take candidates to a confirmation in another parish you will need to check with the Bishop's Office before finalising the arrangement.
- It is very important that the Bishop knows of any special or distinctive provisions for the occasion. These might include a request for baptism by immersion, any special needs of the candidates regarding mobility, access etc. There is a box in the check list for adding such notes. If you are unsure, please err on the side of providing full details, even if they may seem unimportant or trivial.
- *Please send a **draft Order of Service** to the Bishop for his approval at least a fortnight before the date of the service.*

It is appreciated that these guidelines might at first sight appear to be rather pedantic. The aim however is to remove ambiguity and also to reduce the amount of time before the service in discussion with the bishop with regard to the precise details of the service.

Your co-operation in this is greatly appreciated.

Alan St Albans
Paul Hertford
Richard Bedford

June 2014