

## **D11 CONFIRMATION (and reception into the Church of England)**

### **Planning for Confirmations**

The dates for Confirmations are fixed well in advance. In the spring the bishop's chaplain invites the rural deans to make bids for individual parishes and deanery confirmations. The dates are finalised in September and circulated to rural deans. There are always more bids than bishops and some confirmations may take place on an alternative day. A larger deanery event serving many parishes within the deanery is an opportunity to celebrate being part of the wider church.

### **Practical arrangements before the event**

The diocesan and suffragan bishop send out a Confirmation pack about six weeks before the event. Clergy should complete the form and return it to the bishop two weeks before the service. If a special service sheet for the service is to be used then a draft should be submitted to the bishop for approval prior to printing.

The bishops also like to have a note about the candidates. This could be something they have written themselves as part of their preparation (eg. a letter to the bishop, or "why I want to be confirmed"), or a brief note that the person who has prepared them for Confirmation writes.

### **Liturgy**

There are two forms of service available – BCP or Common Worship. The Common Worship service is very good and it is worth exploring the liturgical material provided.

**Common Worship** requires choices to be made and this does need some careful thought in order to avoid making it too heavy and long. Ideally a specially produced order of service (from the Church of England web site or CD Rom version) is the best option if facilities are available.

The Liturgy of the Word should be as set out in Common Worship. (A simple outline is set out below along with explanatory notes.) Avoid adding the confession or anything else from the Order for the Eucharist which tends to unbalance the service.

## **An outline service of Holy Communion with baptism, confirmation, affirmation and reception according to Common Worship**

### **Preparation**

- Greeting
- Gloria in Excelsis (optional)
- Collect

### **The Liturgy of the Word**

- Reading (optional)
- Gospel Reading
- Sermon

### **Liturgy of Initiation**

- Presentation of the Candidates
- Decision
- [Signing with the Cross
- Prayer over the Water
- Profession of Faith
- Baptism
- Declarations]
- Confirmation
- [Affirmation of Baptismal Faith
- Reception into the Communion of the Church of England]
- Commission (at the end of the service)
- Prayers of Intercession
- Welcome and Peace

### **Liturgy of the Eucharist**

- Preparation of the Table
- Taking of the Bread and Wine
- Eucharistic Prayer
- Lord's Prayer
- Breaking of the Bread
- Giving of the Bread and Wine
- Prayer after Communion

### **Sending Out**

- Blessing
- Commission
- Giving of a Lighted Candle
- Dismissal

## Notes on the Liturgy

**Baptism** - The new service has a welcome re-emphasis on remembering our Baptism. Candidates who have not been baptised should be baptised during the service. Clergy should consult the confirming bishop if they think there are particular pastoral reasons why it should be done beforehand. It is preferable for the baptising minister to be the presiding bishop, but the presenting priest may baptise if he wishes, with the agreement of the bishop.

**Oils** - The juxtaposition of baptism (or the gathering of the candidates at the font) and the moment of confirmation is very powerful. The order of service makes provision for signing the candidates with the oils of the Catechumenate or Chrism if desired, this should be indicated on the form.

**Readings** – should preferably be from the CW Lectionary for the day, unless these are thought to be inappropriate for any reason. Two readings only, one of which should be the Gospel.

**Liturgical colour** – at a confirmation this has traditionally been red for the Holy Spirit but with the connection with baptism much more prominently acknowledged there is a case for white if preferred.

**Testimonies** can be included as part of the CW order. This can be very moving but we need to keep an eye on time. It sometimes works well for two or three of several candidates to give testimony or alternatively to reproduce something of what candidates may have written about themselves in the service sheet or on its cover.

**Confirmation** – it helps if the candidates are audibly introduced to the bishop (and the congregation) with words such as “Bishop, this is **N.**” If candidates find it difficult to kneel then they should be assured that it is perfectly all right to stand.

**The Commission** is a powerful addition to the CW order and should come near the end of the service prior to the candidates being led out with lighted candles. However some may prefer it to come after the prayer “Defend O Lord....”

**The Communion** – it is helpful if the elements are prepared for the Bishop according to your usual custom. If numbers are likely to be large then it is helpful if there are additional stations for the administration. It is also helpful if the ablutions can also be done for the bishop according to your usual practice.

**The giving of lighted candles** (by the incumbent) at the end of the service and the walk through the church with the candidates works well. This can be done fairly informally, but it does need planning. It is important that the exit is accompanied by joyful music or a hymn (rather than silence) as the candidates walk out.

## **Practical arrangements on the day**

### **Parking**

Please arrange for a parking space to be made available for the bishop and inform him where it will be.

### **Bishop's Chaplain**

It is helpful if someone is willing to act as **bishop's chaplain** for the occasion but it is not essential. The bishop will tell the chaplain before the service what is required (basically to look after the mitre and bishop's staff).

### **Diocesan Returns**

The bishops usually arrive about half an hour before the service to sign registers, books, cards etc and to walk through the service with you. Clergy should have the **Diocesan Return** completed for him to take away. The time before the service is also a good opportunity to meet the candidates where they are sitting.

### **Reaffirmation**

Reaffirmation of Baptismal Vows is intended for cases where someone wants to make a very particular recommitment to the Christian faith and the life of the church. There are other opportunities in the Christian Year for a renewal of baptismal vows.

### **Reception**

Reception into the Church of England is for those who have already been episcopally confirmed: although provision is made for this here, it can equally well be done on other occasions by the parish priest if he first requests the bishop's permission. Under current Canon Law, all others need to be confirmed, with no additional Reception. It is important to stress that in both cases people are not rejecting their previous church membership, but seeking to continue that commitment in another part of the one Church of Christ.