

### **3. ADMISSION OF BAPTISED CHILDREN TO HOLY COMMUNION REGULATIONS: IMPLEMENTATION**

#### **Previous consideration**

1. The House of Bishops Guidelines on the Admission of Baptised Persons to Holy Communion before Confirmation (GS Misc 488) were issued in March 1997 following approval by General Synod in November 1996. These Guidelines were made further to the provision in Canon B 15 A, paragraph 1 (a) in respect of the admission to communion of those 'ready and desirous' to be confirmed.
2. General Synod in November 2000 requested the House to monitor the implementation in the dioceses of the Guidelines and to report back by 2005 on whether a change in canon law was required.

#### **New Regulations**

3. Following debate in the Board of Education and the House of Bishops, it was considered desirable in the light of the pastoral experience since 1997 to regularise what was happening on the ground in the form of new Regulations drafted under paragraph 1 (c) of Canon B 15A which provides for the admission to Holy Communion of "any other baptised persons authorized to be admitted under regulations of the General Synod". The General Synod agreed to this approach in July 2005 on the back of a debate on the report *Children and Holy Communion: A Review* (GS 1576).
4. These draft Regulations were laid before General Synod for general approval at the November 2005 Group of Sessions as **GS 1596**. The members overwhelmingly gave their support and approval. Some amendments were proposed during the debate and informally in subsequent discussion.
5. The House of Bishops agreed to a slight revision of the draft regulations in the light of points which had been raised and accordingly gave approval to the Admission of Baptised Children to Holy Communion Regulations (amended draft) **GS 1596**. Final approval was secured at the General Synod February 2006 group of sessions. The Regulations are attached as **Annex 1**.

#### **Implementation**

6. The Archbishops have agreed under **Regulation 1** that the Regulations shall come into force on **15 June 2006** - the Feast of Corpus Christi.
7. As the new Regulations are based on the Guidelines which have already been in place, current practice in each diocese need not be radically altered by the Regulations. However, dioceses cannot simply leave things as they are.

8. When the Regulations come into force, they will effectively supersede the existing Guidelines, which will no longer be printed in future editions of the Canons. This is without prejudice to the statement of principle in paragraph (j) of the Guidelines that *'no baptised person, child or adult, who has once been admitted to Holy Communion and remains in good standing with the Church, should anywhere be deprived of it'*. So the position of individuals who have been admitted to Communion under the Guidelines will not be prejudiced.
9. Whatever the current policy in his diocese, when the Regulations come into force each diocesan bishop will have to consider whether or not to make a direction under **Regulation 3**, and he should inform clergy of his decision. Any permissions given to parishes under the Guidelines will lapse on the coming into force of the Regulations. Therefore, where a bishop makes a direction under **Regulation 3**, he should ask parishes who have been granted permissions under the Guidelines to make an application in the form required by Regulation 4. A sample pro forma is attached as **Annex 2** In order to try and ensure as seamless a transition from the Guidelines to the new Regulations, diocesan bishops may – in liaison with their Children's Adviser - wish to consider in advance of 15 June the process which would be followed in the diocese for ensuring that parish permissions are in place as soon as is practicable after that date.
10. Given the requirements of **Regulation 5**, it is of course possible that a bishop may decide that a parish which has previously been granted permission under the Guidelines should not be given permission under the Regulations (although such cases are likely to be the exception rather than the rule). The effect would be that the parish in question would not be able to admit further children to Communion unless and until permission under the Regulations were granted, but without prejudice to the right of children previously admitted to continue to receive Communion.
11. Any register kept under **Regulation 9** will fall within the definition of a record in parochial custody for the purposes of section 9 Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978, and should therefore be inspected by the archdeacon in the course of the quinquennial inspection.
12. With regard to the certification required in **Regulation 9**, the bishop may wish to introduce a specific diocesan certificate for such circumstances where the baptism certificate is not available. A pro forma for this is available from the email address below.
13. It is suggested that the diocesan bishop involves the diocesan Children's Adviser where he/she is in post: he/she should be a key player in the implementation process. If no such post exists, then someone in the diocese should be designated to undertake this task.
14. If diocesan bishops are in any doubt as to how to proceed, they should either consult their diocesan Children's Adviser, or email [children@c-of-e.org.uk](mailto:children@c-of-e.org.uk)

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17 March 2006

**ANNEX 1**

**GS 1596A**

## **GENERAL SYNOD**

### **ADMISSION OF BAPTISED CHILDREN TO HOLY COMMUNION REGULATIONS 2006**

The General Synod hereby makes the following Regulations under paragraph 1(c) of Canon B15A :-

1. These Regulations may be cited as the Admission of Baptised Children to Holy Communion Regulations 2006 and shall come into force on such day as the Archbishops of Canterbury and York may jointly appoint.
2. Children who have been baptised but who have not yet been confirmed and who are not yet ready and desirous to be confirmed as required by paragraph 1(a) of Canon B15A may be admitted to Holy Communion provided that the conditions set out in these Regulations are satisfied.
3. Every diocesan bishop may at any time make a direction to the effect that applications from parishes under these Regulations may be made in his diocese. The bishop's discretion in this respect shall be absolute, and he may at any time revoke such a direction (without prejudice to the validity of any permissions already granted thereunder).
4. Where a direction under paragraph 3 is in force in a diocese, an incumbent may apply to the bishop for permission that children falling within the definition in paragraph 2 may be admitted to Holy Communion in one or more of the parishes in the incumbent's charge. Such application must be made in writing and must be accompanied by a copy of a resolution in support of the

application passed by the parochial church council of each parish in respect of which the application is made.

5. Before granting any permission under paragraph 4, the bishop must first satisfy himself (a) that the parish concerned has made adequate provision for preparation and continuing nurture in the Christian life and will encourage any child admitted to Holy Communion under these Regulations to be confirmed at the appropriate time and (b) where the parish concerned is within the area of a local ecumenical project established under Canon B 44, that the other participating Churches have been consulted.
6. The bishop's decision in relation to any application under paragraph 4 shall be final, but a refusal shall not prevent a further application being made on behalf of the parish concerned, provided that at least one year has elapsed since the most recent previous application was refused.
7. Any permission granted under paragraph 4 shall remain in force unless and until revoked by the bishop. The bishop must revoke such permission upon receipt of an application for the purpose made by the incumbent. Such application must be made in writing and accompanied by a copy of a resolution in support of the application passed by the parochial church council of each parish in respect of which the application is made. Otherwise, the bishop may only revoke a permission granted under paragraph 4 if he considers that the conditions specified in paragraph 5 are no longer being satisfactorily discharged. Before revoking any permission on these grounds, the bishop shall first notify the incumbent of his concerns in writing and shall afford the incumbent a reasonable time to respond and, where appropriate, to take remedial action.
8. Where a permission granted under paragraph 4 is in force, the incumbent shall not admit any child to Holy Communion unless he or she is satisfied that (a) the child has been baptised and (b) a person having parental responsibility for the child is content that the child should be so admitted. Otherwise, subject to any direction of the bishop, it is within the incumbent's absolute discretion to decide whether, and if so when, any child should first be admitted to Holy Communion.
9. The incumbent shall maintain a register of all children admitted to Holy Communion under these Regulations, and where practicable will record on the child's baptismal certificate the date and place of the child's first admission. If the baptismal certificate is not available, the incumbent shall present the child with a separate certificate recording the same details.
10. A child who presents evidence in the form stipulated in paragraph 9 that he or she has been admitted to Holy Communion under these Regulations shall be so admitted at any service of Holy Communion conducted according to the rites of the Church of England in any place, regardless of whether or not any permission under paragraph 4 is in force in that place or was in force in that place until revoked.

11. These Regulations shall apply to a cathedral as if it were a parish, with the modifications that:

- (a) any application under paragraphs 3 or 7 must be made by the dean of the cathedral concerned, accompanied by a copy of a resolution in support of the application passed by the chapter of the cathedral concerned;
- (b) the obligations imposed on the incumbent under paragraphs 8 and 9 shall be imposed on the dean of the cathedral concerned.

12. A diocesan bishop may delegate any of his functions under these Regulations (except his functions under paragraph 3) to a person appointed by him for the purpose, being a suffragan or assistant bishop or archdeacon of the diocese.

13. In these Regulations:

(a) 'incumbent', in relation to a parish, includes:

(i) in a case where the benefice concerned is vacant (and paragraph (ii) below does not apply), the rural dean;

(ii) in a case where a suspension period (within the meaning of the Pastoral Measure 1983) applies to the benefice concerned, the priest-in-charge; and

(iii) in a case where a special cure of souls in respect of the parish has been assigned to a vicar in a team ministry by a Scheme under the Pastoral Measure 1983 or by licence from the bishop, that vicar; and

(b) references to paragraph numbers are to the relevant paragraph or paragraphs in these Regulations.