

St Luke's Church, Lodge Moor

The place and application of the Dominical Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion

Objectives

The purpose of this statement is:

- To outline the nature and purpose of the sacraments of baptism and communion and the way in which they will be applied at St. Luke's
- To outline the sacramental practice of each of the four denominations that comprise the LEP and how the sacramental practices of each of them will be honoured
- To provide guidelines for admission to baptism and communion

Baptism

Baptism is the sacrament of membership. It is the sign and seal of our 'beginning to belong', our entry into the family of God's people. The main difference between the denominations in their practice of baptism is that some emphasise the virtue of baptising infants and others that baptism should be linked to a person's conscious decision (thus known as believer's or adult baptism).

In infant baptism the child is received into the family of God's people on the basis that God's grace extends to children as well as adults, and on the understanding that the child is to be brought up within the family of the church. Believer's baptism is the Baptist form of the sacrament.

St. Luke's practices both the baptism of infants and believer's baptism. Preparation for baptism includes clarification of the meaning of the affirmations made during the rite and the responsibilities of membership. The decision about whether to proceed is left with the individual or the parents with no judgement being exercised by the leadership as to the quality and depth of the individual's or parents' faith. Services of thanksgiving or dedication are offered as alternatives for consideration. The choice of sprinkling or full immersion is left to personal choice.

The denominations that practice infant baptism recognise that at some point those baptised as infants need to take for themselves the affirmations made on their behalf (this is done through the rite of confirmation).

Holy Communion

Communion is the sacrament of fellowship with God and with each other and is a sign of our 'being in belonging'. It is a means whereby the death and resurrection of Jesus can be made known, believed and appropriated in the lives of individual members of the community of God's people. Each of the four denominations of the LEP have their own forms of service for Holy Communion, and all of these are used at St. Luke's at different times.

There are differences between the denominations with regard to admission to communion. The Anglican, Methodist and URC denominations require baptism before admission to communion. The Baptist denomination reserves the sacrament of baptism for those who have made a coherent profession of faith and does not require baptism before admission

to communion. Within all four denominations some churches take a flexible approach and give an open invitation to the communion table.

St Luke's recognises that those who wish to participate in communion should, according to some of our partner denominations, first be baptised. However this will not be insisted upon, as it is recognised that for some (particularly those from the Baptist tradition) baptism may not be an acceptable prerequisite.

Children and Communion

Children and adults become members of the community of God's people through the sacrament of Baptism. Since children are members of the family of God then they should be able to share the family table. Accordingly, children will be admitted to communion at St. Luke's provided that they have approval from their parents. Children will be given appropriate teaching as a part of Kids Church (Xplode!). Children who do not wish to receive communion and those whose parents have not given permission will be treated sensitively and offered a prayer of blessing. Children will continue to be taught about the place of baptism in the Christian journey and after discussion with their parents will be offered the sacrament of Baptism when appropriate.

John Stride, Vicar / Minister
March 2006