

## Letter from Revd Claire, 26 May 2019

Today at our 9.30am Eucharist, we will be baptizing children and admitting to Holy Communion those who have attended our preparation classes over the past 6 weeks led by Mrs Ikhona Mvaphantsi and Ms Ayanda Dabengwa, We thank them for this ministry.

Some might wonder why we are doing this as they have not yet been confirmed. The Anglican church grappled with this issue, and since the early 1990s it was agreed at Provincial level as ACSA that there are good theological reasons for admitting ALL baptized persons to Communion. Baptism is the single sacrament of initiation into the membership of the body of Christ. The sign of the cross made on our foreheads shows that we belong to Christ. We are welcomed and born anew into the Christian family of the church. At the Eucharist each week, we reaffirm and renew our Baptism.

Some ask "But how can children understand what it is all about?". True, they may not fully comprehend its significance (do any of us either?!) but certainly young children are capable of making significant acts of faith and trust in God. Personally speaking, I cannot remember a time when God was not real to me. In addition there are human developmental reasons for including our children – they need to know that they belong to God and are equally members of his family. This family, like any other, has a table at which food is shared. Our table as Christians is the altar where we are invited to "feed on him in our hearts by faith and with thanksgiving". Like adults, our children need the nourishment of the Holy Communion to equip and strengthen them for the Christian life they lead.

Some might ask: "What about Confirmation then – does it fall away?" No - there is more to Confirmation than being allowed to receive Communion. It gives the candidates an opportunity to make their own public profession of faith, by taking on themselves the promises that were made on their behalf by their parents and Godparents at Baptism. They respond personally to God's love by making their own act of commitment and showing that they are serious about following Jesus. At Confirmation the Bishop lays hands on them, anoints them and prays for the infilling of the Holy Spirit to empower and equip them for Christian witness and service. They are commissioned to participate in the life of the church as adult members.

In our preparation classes, we taught our children that Jesus loves everybody, and invites us to share in his special meal. There is a place for YOU! As we share in the bread and the wine (we encourage children to dip/intinct their wafer in the wine) we remember Jesus who died for us, who loves us, forgives us, and promises to always be with us. We thank God for feeding us to strengthen us and help us to love others, as he loves us.

Children of God, we WELCOME YOU!

Claire Nye Hunter