



CCU Resources 2007

Extract from

Ecumenical Relations: Code of Practice 1989

(ii) Joint Confirmations

108 For LEPs Canon B 44 paragraph 4(1)(e) allows the bishop to include in his written instrument setting out the worship arrangements for an LEP provision for the holding of joint services... including services of... confirmation'. Joint Confirmations are often inspiring occasions in the life of an LEP as representatives of the Churches act together at a very significant moment in the lives of particular individuals. The service acts as a powerful symbol of the LEP because of the full participation of denominational representatives.

109 Care needs to be taken not to overshadow the dignity and primacy of baptism, nor to polarise baptism and confirmation. It is therefore to be desired that baptism be celebrated at the time of confirmation, and that baptism, when it is celebrated apart from confirmation, be administered ecumenically.

110 Two difficulties may be raised by Joint Confirmations that may need further exploration. First, confirmation is understood in different ways within and between the Churches. The Church of England rite, unlike the rites of some other Churches, does not specifically admit to membership of the local congregation. It can be argued that these differences of emphasis should be seen, not as mutually contradictory, but rather as complementary. Immediately following the administration of Confirmation the candidates can, appropriately, be received into the fellowship of the particular congregation(s) by the local minister(s) and representative lay people.

111 Secondly, confirmation in the Church of England is unrepeatable. It is not therefore available as a rite where someone confirmed at a young age wishes to make an adult profession or faith. Nor is it available where someone who has previously been confirmed wishes to extend their membership to other participating Churches or denominations of the LEP.

(iii) Ministers of Confirmation

112 Confirmation is properly administered in a locality by a commissioned representative of the wider Church. For the Church of England this must be the bishop of the diocese or some other bishop authorised by him. For some other Churches it is the local minister or another minister representing the wider Church. As Joint Confirmations are seen as admitting people to fellowship with the other participating Churches it is confusing, and therefore undesirable, for a local Church of England priest whose ministry is officially recognised by another Church to be that Church's officiating minister of confirmation; such a practice would in any case be contrary to Canon B 43 paragraph 3(a).

(iv) Rite of Joint Confirmation

113 (a) The House of Bishops first agreed to permit Joint Confirmation on 20th March 1975. The appropriate minute read as follows:

that joint services of Confirmation may be held, provided that the rite at least includes a form of Confirmation authorised by the Church of England and that the parish priest is satisfied that all candidates have been adequately prepared.

(b) There are broadly three schools of thought in the Church of England on the relation of baptism and confirmation:

(i) Baptism is the sole and complete rite of Initiation; there is no need for any other rite before admission to Communion, except possible reaffirmation of vows.

(ii) Confirmation, with its baptismal reaffirmation, marks and empowers the Christian at the point of entry into adult life.

(iii) The sacramental aspect of confirmation, i.e. prayer for the gift of the Spirit with laying on of hand(s), completes (along with Communion) the rite of initiation, being understood as signifying the gift of the Spirit in initiation.

Many would not wish to polarise these views and sections 23—26 of the ASB Baptism and Confirmation Service were carefully drawn up to hold them together. Partly for this reason they have normally been used in joint services of confirmation. It is probably wise to continue this practice although a bishop might use other rites if



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he were satisfied that they were compatible with Church of England doctrine and practice. The ASB permits the bishop to anoint the candidates with oil at section 25; it may be appropriate for the bishop or the minister of another church to anoint candidates at a joint confirmation.

(c) In view of the different understandings of the event it may be useful to continue the tradition that has developed of printing an explanatory note in the service sheet.

(d) It may be appropriate to include additional questions provided that they do not overshadow the professions of faith. It may also be appropriate to allow candidates to supplement, briefly, their profession of faith in their own words.

(e) The rite should include some form of the renewal of baptism vows and should draw on items familiar and important to different traditions represented in the LEP.

(v) Points of Practice

114 (a) A bishop will need to know in advance who the confirming ministers of the other Churches will be.

(b) the bishop should ensure that the rite is approved by the relevant authorities of the participating Churches and the Sponsoring Body.

(c) the Sponsoring Body should ensure that there is a procedure for agreeing how the different functions of presidency at initiation, including preaching and presidency at the eucharist, are shared between the participating ministers.

(d) preparation for Joint Confirmation should include relevant denominational instruction.

(e) it is helpful to have one confirmation/membership card signed by all the confirming ministers.

(f) names of all the candidates should be entered in the confirmation register which should also be signed by the bishop (i.e. normal denominational practice should be followed, just as each candidate will have gone through the normal

process of presentation of each participating Church).

(g) it is inappropriate for Church of England candidates from elsewhere to be brought to a Joint Confirmation; similarly it is not appropriate for candidates from an LEP to be brought to another Church of England confirmation service. Nevertheless, where there are large numbers of LEPs in a diocese consideration could be given by the Sponsoring Body to arranging Joint Confirmations for several LEPs in different centres.

NOTES:

This extract is made available for those using the Joint Confirmation Service Arrangements Form and Checklist (*CCU Resources Paper B-2-4b*)

Those using the Form should also be given the CCU Guidelines for Joint Confirmations (*Paper B-2-4a*)

The Code of Practice draws attention to the order of service for Baptism and Confirmation in the Alternative Service Book 1980 (ASB). This has now been replaced by material in Common Worship, which will similarly provide a good foundation on which to shape an order for Joint Confirmation.

Sample services already approved for use in various dioceses are now available from the Council for Christian Unity.

The full text of the Ecumenical Relations Code of Practice is available electronically from the Council for Christian Unity
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