

Organising a Service of Confirmation

in the Diocese of Southwell &
Nottingham



 THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

Diocese of Southwell & Nottingham

INTRODUCTION

That you have picked up this handbook means that you are going to be involved in the organisation of a confirmation service in this Diocese.

Confirmation services are a wonderful opportunity to celebrate that God is active in his Church today. It is an opportunity to hear testimonies of changed lives, of deepening discipleship, of how God is meeting and drawing people closer to him from every generation and across the diocese.

It is also a service in which the Bishop prays for God to fill his people with his Holy Spirit to empower, strengthen and guide them in the way of Christ, as they go out to shine his living hope to the city, towns and villages of Nottingham and beyond.

Please, in the planning of this service, pray for those who will be participating. For the clergy and lay leaders preparing candidates, for the candidates themselves and for the friends and families that they invite to attend that they might come to know Christ more deeply, or even for the first time, as a result of this service.

May I take this opportunity to thank you for the time you have put into preparing this service. If you have any queries, please contact the Bishop's Chaplain, chaplain@southwell.anglican.org who will do their best to help.

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CONFIRMATION SERVICES IN THE DIOCESE OF SOUTHWELL & NOTTINGHAM

There is currently a pattern of 2 confirmation services held at Southwell Minster (Christ the King in November, and Pentecost Eve in May) and a youth focussed service at Trinity Church Nottingham, most often in April/May.

Other services are held in deaneries – with deaneries hosting either individually or sharing a service between two deaneries. Every deanery is involved in a confirmation service each year.

Which deanery hosts what is organised by the Area Dean/Deanery Administrator in discussion with the PA to the Bishop of Sherwood.

Confirmation services are normally non-Eucharistic and without baptism. This enables candidates to mark their baptism and to receive communion for the first time in their local church. The one exception is the November Diocesan Confirmation service in the Minster which is Eucharistic.

Where individual churches have a large number of candidates, the bishops welcome invitations to confirm candidates in a Sunday service, although this is only possible where the diary allows. Where one of these services is arranged, the Area Dean and deanery administrator should be informed.

Where it is a deanery service, thought should be given to which church should host. The church should be willing to host, able to provide suitable worship (in line with the focus area of inspiring worship) and provide sufficient space for candidates and visitors from several churches. This should be arranged by the Area Dean.

THE ORDER OF SERVICE

See Appendices 3 and 4

- Where it is a deanery confirmation, the Orders of Service should be organised by the incumbent of the host church or Area Dean. The Area Dean is responsible for ensuring that a draft Order of Service reaches the Bishop's Office a week prior to the service.
- Where it is a confirmation in the church setting, it should be organised by the host church, in discussion with the Bishop's Chaplain.
- Where the services are in the Minster, this is overseen by the Canon Precentor.

SUNG WORSHIP

Thought should be given to the traditions of the candidates being presented for confirmation, along with what can be done well in the hosting church, the gifts of available musicians, and the equipment available.

We recommend songs / hymns that are well known, particularly as there are likely to be guests at the service. If in doubt about song choices, please contact the Bishop's Chaplain.

The Contemporary Worship Leads (Tom Walters and Hannah Crutch) for the diocese would be delighted to come and lead sung worship, or work alongside your existing musicians if that would be helpful. Please do let the Bishop's Chaplain know if you would like their help.

BIBLE READING

The Bishop's Office should be in touch before the draft Order of Service is required with the Bible reading(s).

READERS / INTERCESSIONS

The person compiling the Order of Service should also find someone to read/lead the prayers, for deanery confirmations please consider those from churches that are not represented elsewhere in the service. Ideally, these would not be candidates so that the candidates can concentrate on being present.

TESTIMONIES

Both Bishops like to receive a short paragraph from each candidate about themselves and their spiritual journey – sent together to the confirming bishop as soon as possible / no later than two weeks before the service.

It is always encouraging to hear people's stories and there is a testimony slot in the Order of Service. Bishops like to know beforehand if this is happening and who is 'running it'. It is helpful if they have written what they want to say beforehand as this helps to keep it succinct; alternatively, these could be shared as part of an interview.

REHEARSAL

For Deanery Confirmations, the Area Dean is responsible for rehearsing candidates and ensuring everything runs smoothly. Depending on the circumstances they might wish to delegate this to the hosting clergy. For church confirmations the incumbent should organise the rehearsal. Notes for the rehearsal are found on page X.

Most often rehearsals take place one hour before the service.

If you are unsure please don't hesitate to contact the Bishop's Chaplain with any questions, or if you would like them to help lead the rehearsal. On occasion when it has been a service with particular complexities the Bishop's Chaplain has led the rehearsal and it may be appropriate for this to happen.

HOSTING CHURCH

- Please reserve a suitable car parking space for the bishop.
- It is helpful for there to be a table in a quieter space for presenting clergy to place registers, certificates, and any books for the bishop to sign when they arrive. The bishop normally arrives about 30 minutes before the service.
- Please give thought to a space where the bishop can meet candidates before the service; to hear their story and pray with them as a group.
- Please provide somewhere for the bishop (and his chaplain/additional clergy) to robe.
- It is up to the deanery/hosting church what refreshments are provided following the service.
- **Mics:** Usually clip on for the bishop, lectern mic for readers/speakers. Please have these ready in the vestry before the service.

If the hosting church wishes to livestream the service, please let the bishop's office know (via [Jacky Bates](#)) as permissions will need to be sought.

VESTURE

The bishop will robe and sponsoring ministers are also invited to robe. Please can you locate where the bishop and sponsors can robe and direct them accordingly upon arrival. If sponsors wish to robe, choir dress (black cassock and surplice, red stole or reader scarf) or might simply wear collar.

COMMUNICATIONS

We love to celebrate confirmations and share on our social media.

Occasionally we employ a diocesan photographer for the service – if this is the case then a notice should be shared at the beginning of the service highlighting the need to let the photographer know if someone does not wish their photo to appear publicly.

Sponsoring clergy should check that all their candidates / candidates' parents are happy for their photo to be taken and have the necessary permissions in place.

A group photo is normally taken at the end of the service with the bishop – if there is no photographer it would be great if you could arrange for someone to take this photo and send it to comms@southwell.anglican.org.

Occasionally we might receive a testimony that we wish to share more widely, in this case we will check with the preparing clergy and the individual.

If the hosting church wishes to livestream the service, please let the bishop's office know (via Jacky Bates) as permissions will need to be sought.

SPONSORING CLERGY RESPONSIBILITIES

Clergy who are preparing candidates for confirmation are responsible for the following:

- Completing Confirmation returns and returning to the Bishop of Sherwood's PA (*if a suitable lay person is presenting candidates from a church in vacancy, the Area Dean should sign the confirmation return*).
- Checking candidates have received a trinitarian baptism.
- Ensuring candidates are appropriately prepared for confirmation.
- Helping candidates to write testimonies for the bishop.
- Attending the rehearsal on the specified date.
- Providing the bishop with certificates and confirmation registers at least half an hour before the service.
- Bringing candles to the service.
- Presenting candidates to the bishop.

LEADING REHEARSALS

Candidates will normally sit in the front rows on the church, with sponsoring clergy on the ends of the row.

It is generally easier for candidates to be seated from the start of the service.

Depending on the context the bishop may process in with any robed clergy during the first hymn. If there is not a procession, please give thought as to where the bishop will be at the start of the service – they may have a ‘second’ seat in the front row, along with their throne.

A welcome is usually given by the hosting clergy / area dean – this should include any notices about photographs and invitation to refreshments at the end of the service. They should also introduce any hymns / music, and the bishop leads all the liturgy.

Candidates will be confirmed in the order listed in the OOS (by parish). Please advise the bishop’s office if there are particular pronunciations of names that it would be helpful for the bishop to be aware of beforehand.

If it is your custom, a paschal candle can also be located nearby the font and lit at the point of the Decision.

Rubric in OOS marks when candidates will stand etc. Basically, they will remain in their places throughout and stand when bishop addresses them. Depending on the church layout, they will gather or the bishop leads them to the font, usually as music plays/hymn is sung, if a distance to the font. The font will have a small amount of water in for the bishop to invite candidates to sign with the cross. Bishop leads them back from the font to their places, again music might play.

SERMON

Bishop usually preaches either from throne or the lectern. Please advise him upon arrival where optimum location might be.

TESTIMONY

Appropriate testimony during the service is to be encouraged. The bishops would like to know before if this is to happen and who will be ‘running it’; alternatively, one or a few candidates may be interviewed. It is recommended that candidates read out written testimonies (in case of nerves).

POINT OF CONFIRMATION

Candidates can either be confirmed kneeling or standing depending on the context and number of candidates.

If candidates are confirmed kneeling, then there should be a kneeler available. The sponsoring clergy should come forward with their first candidate then remain as each candidate comes forward, is confirmed, and then returns to their seat for the next to come up.

With each candidate the sponsoring clergy should clearly say, “Bishop, I present [name]”. Once all their candidates are confirmed, the clergy should return to their seat.

Alternatively, candidates may be confirmed standing in a semi-circle. Depending on numbers and space there may need to be several groups.

Candidates should face the altar and form a semicircular arc in front of the bishop - the sponsoring minister will stand just behind each candidate. The bishop will then confirm the candidates standing, from right to left as you look at the altar.

Once the bishop reaches the end of the arc, all return to their seats, and the next group comes up. The rehearsal will give a sense of space for these groups. Candidates should be seated in these groups and the order of confirmation.

Please advise the bishop’s office in advance and remind the leader of the rehearsal of any mobility issues or concerns that the bishop might wish to be aware of. It may be appropriate for a candidate to be confirmed while seated.

SENDING OUT

In the final song, each candidate will come out to the front and form a semi-circle either side the bishop, facing forward. Sponsors should take a candle, light it and hand to their candidates – sponsors should help each other to ensure all candidates have a lit candle by the end of the song/hymn.

The bishop then gives the final liturgy before leading the candidates out, down the aisle and through the main door. Candidates will still be holding lit candles at this point – and may need to be reminded to keep the candles a safe distance from each other!

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

CAN A BAPTISM BE PART OF THE CONFIRMATION SERVICE?

As baptisms are about being welcomed into the local church family, who promise to support the believer in their faith, we strongly recommend baptisms take place in the home church as part of a service before the confirmation service.

ONE OF MY CANDIDATES IS NOT SURE THAT THEY HAVE BEEN BAPTISED AND THERE IS NO EVIDENCE OF A CERTIFICATE OR RECORD.

In this instance it is possible for someone to have a conditional baptism, either as part of, or prior to the service.

See Note 13 in the Order for a Service of Baptism, Book of Common worship:

13 Conditional Baptism

If it is not certain whether a person has already been baptised with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, then the usual service of baptism is used, but the form of words at the baptism shall be:

N, if you have not already been baptised, I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All Amen.

ONE OF THE CANDIDATES HAS A BAPTISM CERTIFICATE BUT THE CHURCH WAS NOT CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

If the church is trinitarian (check the vision on their website) then there is no need for the candidate to be baptised again.

ONE OF THE CANDIDATES HAS ALREADY BEEN CONFIRMED BUT NOT IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND – CAN THEY BE CONFIRMED?

Did the confirmation take place with a bishop? If not, then they will need to be confirmed in the Church of England.

If yes, there is no need for another confirmation. If they particularly wish to mark this part of their journey, they can be received into the church of England by a Bishop. Additional liturgy for this is found in Appendix X. There is also a certificate - Appendix Y.

ONE OF MY CANDIDATES DOES NOT LIKE BEING TOUCHED (FOR INSTANCE DUE TO TRAUMA OR HEALTH REASONS) CAN THEY STILL BE CONFIRMED?

Yes! Please speak to the bishop's chaplain / Area Dean in advance to talk through the needs of individual candidates, they will ensure that the bishop who is confirming knows which candidate this relates to.

ONE OF MY CANDIDATES STRUGGLES TO KNEEL/ TO STAND/TO STAND FOR LONG PERIODS OF TIME, CAN ANYTHING BE DONE TO HELP THEM GET CONFIRMED?

Of course, candidates don't kneel at every confirmation service – this is dependent on context. Please let the bishop's office and person doing the rehearsal aware of any particular needs, they may adjust the order in which candidates are presented and/or ensure seating is available to ensure that candidates are able to concentrate on the presence of God.

OUR CANDIDATE(S) CAN'T ATTEND THE DEANERY CONFIRMATION, IS IT APPROPRIATE TO GO TO ANOTHER DEANERY, OR EVEN A PARISH, CONFIRMATION?

Yes! In most cases, this would be appropriate – please liaise with the deanery administrator or Jacky Bates in the first instance.

A CHURCH IS IN VACANCY; CAN CANDIDATES BE PRESENTED FOR CONFIRMATION FROM THAT CHURCH?

Yes, it is up to the Area Dean to ensure that candidates receive suitable preparation and support (which may be by a suitable lay member of the church) and the Area Dean needs to sign and return the Confirmation return.

IS THERE A MINIMUM AGE FOR CONFIRMATION?

Normally candidates should be in school year 6 at the youngest, though both bishops prefer that children are presented for confirmation at 12+.

TIMELINE FOR A SERVICE OF CONFIRMATION

- JANUARY**
 - Jacky Bates emails all clergy and deanery administrators informing them of dates and locations of confirmation services for the coming year.
- 3 MONTHS BEFORE DEANERY SERVICE**
 - Area Dean reminds clergy and churchwardens in churches in vacancy of upcoming confirmation service.
 - Churches consider who might wish to get confirmed and how to prepare them. Ensure baptism etc.
- AT LEAST 2 WEEKS BEFORE SERVICE**
 - Churches send completed confirmation return to Jacky Bates.
 - Area Dean / Host church provides draft Order of Service including songs, name of readers etc. and details of rehearsal date & time to Bishop's Office.
- ONE WEEK BEFORE SERVICE**
 - All candidates' testimonies should be received by the Bishop ([via Jacky Bates](#)).
- APPROX. ONE HOUR BEFORE SERVICE**
 - Candidates arrive for a rehearsal.
 - Anything for the bishop to sign (registers, books etc.) should be placed on a table ready for signing.
- APPROX. 30 MINS BEFORE SERVICE**
 - The bishop arrives and signs registers, certificates, books etc.
 - The bishop meets candidates and prays before the service.