

CONFIRMATION



AN ANGLICAN
RESOURCE

Brian & Kirsten Dawson

INTRODUCTION

page 3

PART ONE

A Short History of Almost Everything that Matters

page 6

PART TWO

In Search of Meaning

page 16

PART THREE

The Wider Church

page 34

PART FOUR

Building Christians: Preparing for Confirmation

page 41

CONCLUSION

page 52

APPENDIX

Resources for Confirmation Preparation

page 54

A SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

For Further Reflection

page 61

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INTRODUCTION

*The reform of confirmation had to be considerable, even radical, lest the entire coherence of the initiatory reform crumble under the ambiguities and paradoxes which had grown up around this sacrament.*¹

The quote above refers to the changes that took place in Roman Catholic approaches to Christian initiation post-Vatican II. Those changes were truly radical, but no more so than the changes that swept through some Anglican provinces, including our own, over the same period. By the early 1990s confirmation in much of our church was beginning to disappear, replaced by a new appreciation for and practice of baptism.

We explore these changes below, but it is important to note from the start that the impetus for this work came from those concerned that this trend represented a waste of a valuable resource. It was in 2005 that the Professional Anglican Diocesan Youth Staff (PADYS) wrote to the Diocesan Ministry Educators group (AMEN) expressing concern about a “perceived downward trend of interest in and promotion of Confirmation, especially among young people.”² Over the next two years the issue moved to the Tikanga Pakeha Ministry Council, where it was formed into a specific project.

In early 2008 we accepted the task of undertaking the Confirmation Project on behalf of TPMC. The original terms of reference included as one of its objectives the production of a resource;

[T]hat is both available to and accessible for parishes and other faith communities (including church schools) that are looking for assistance with and information on:

- Confirmation – especially preparation materials useful in specific contexts and situations.
- Ritual – with a particular emphasis on rites of passage and inclusion for young people.
- The theological and liturgical understandings that undergird our rites and rituals.

This resource represents part of the outcome of that work.

Where Are We At?

It should come as no surprise that there are far fewer confirmations today than twenty or thirty years ago. In fact, statistically the drop has been approximately 87% since 1985,³ with both parishes and schools affected, and provincial dioceses being somewhat harder hit than metropolitan ones. There are many reasons for this sharp decline, some unique to the Church, many not, and, as we shall see below, such has always been the case.

¹ Aidan Kavanagh, *Confirmation: Origins and Reform*. (New York: Pueblo, 1988), 89.

² John Heberton and Michael Treston on behalf of the 2005 PADYS group. Letter to AMEN, 2005.

³ Based on figures for 2007 – 2008 gathered from diocesan year books.

One contributing factor is unquestionably the corresponding decline in the number of teenagers and people in their twenties in Anglican pews. This has been a long-term trend and a topic for a project different to this one. A perhaps unexpected result has been an increase in the percentage of adult confirmations (those 18 and over), although the actual number has dropped markedly here as well.

Are we then witnessing the death of confirmation? Apparently not, with statistics pointing to a definite upturn in numbers of confirmands (up 94% in six years in one diocese, although the starting figure was not a high one) and anecdotal evidence of increased interest from many quarters.

It would be inaccurate to say that confirmation is hale and healthy, but it is by no means on its death-bed, despite many dire predictions of a terminal illness. The impetus for this project alone bears witness to an interest and investment in the rite that may well prove enough to keep it alive and kicking for some time to come.

All is not perfect however, and along with reports of increased interest and numbers of confirmands there are also many questions and concerns, some quite serious, that the Church must be willing to address. In particular these revolve around what confirmation is and how it might best be approached and prepared for. We have tried to offer information and, where appropriate, suggestions about some of these below.

A Brief Word about ‘Rites of Passage’

We address this further in Part Four below, but a word at the beginning may be helpful.

It was originally envisaged that this resource would include practical examples of ‘rites of passage’ for a variety of occasions, particularly those involving youth. There are two reasons why this has not transpired. The first is because we have some concerns about the suitability of the term ‘rites of passage’ with reference to confirmation, and it would be at the risk of causing further confusion if we offered other, non-confirmation, examples alongside what it presented here. The second is because no one has offered us any *Anglican* examples of such rites. It has not been for want of trying – everywhere we have been we have asked for them, and we keep *bearing* they are out there, but no one, it seems wants to share.⁴

In a separate report on this subject we have recommended some work be done on producing some appropriate rites for a variety of pastoral situations. Hopefully that may happen in the not too distant future.

Three Guiding Principles

Before moving on there are three points that need to be made clear:

- 1. This is an Anglican project.** As will become evident below, Anglicans think and do different things about confirmation than others – all churches do. This resource is concerned only with our own, although we do offer some comments on others.

⁴ Of course if you have any, do feel free to send them to TPMC!

2. **This is a Tikanga Pakeha project.** This resource has been prepared by, for and with reference primarily to Tikanga Pakeha. We do discuss the situation within our partner Tikanga briefly, but it is not our task to take that discussion any further.
3. **This is a research and resource project.** As much as possible we have tried to avoid offering our own opinions about the points discussed here. We *have* our own opinions of course, and at times they may peek out from behind the words, but that is not our intention. The topic under consideration provides far more questions than answers. For the most part we have attempted to put forward the background and leave the answering to you.

As noted above, this resource is intended for anyone with an interest in and / or looking for information on confirmation in an Anglican context. What quickly becomes clear when you begin such an exploration is that this is a complex subject, presenting various challenges and opportunities. Engaging with those points is extremely difficult without some appreciation of the history of confirmation, including the various shifts in practice and understanding that have taken place over the past millennia and more. In addressing these points, this resource breaks our topic up into four parts:

Part One – in the first part we explore just a small part of the historical and scriptural backgrounds to confirmation from the Early Church to the Middle Ages.

Part Two – here we focus on the various *meanings* laid on confirmation since the sixteenth century, beginning with Thomas Cranmer and the emergence of Anglicanism.

Part Three – we stand within a wider Church, both in terms of the Anglican Communion and ecumenically. In part three we offer a brief explanation of what is happening elsewhere, including within our partner Tikanga.

Part Four – preparation is a major issue to consider when looking at confirmation. In our final section we explore the options for preparation and what works best.

Alongside these four parts, this resource includes an appendix listing a variety of confirmation resources with suggestions for where and whom they might be best suited. Finally the select bibliography contains suggestions for further reading.

We hope you will find this a helpful resource. It is by no means a complete or exhaustive study of confirmation, but it does attempt to cover all the main points.

PART ONE

A Brief History of Almost Everything That Matters

“Conversion, the water-bath, and the gift of the Spirit must never be separated from one another; otherwise all sorts of distortions arise.”¹

The broad-brush history of confirmation is relatively well known: what began as a single, unified rite of Christian initiation gradually disintegrated under the pressure of episcopal scarcity, leading to a separation of what would eventually become two rites; baptism and confirmation.

While containing much of the truth, this overview fails to convey a sense of the complexity and variation surrounding confirmation’s origins and development, a grasp of which is essential if one is to gain some insight into the understandings and practices of the rite today.

Confirmation in the Bible

There are absolutely no grounds for confirmation in scripture.

There are some who would passionately disagree with such a bold claim, and it is fair to say that for many years the ‘official’ histories of confirmation would have claimed otherwise also. Those histories cited a variety of scriptural passages as the basis for confirmation, mostly from the New Testament.

As with most debates surrounding confirmation, arguments about its roots in scripture are essentially by-products of a more extensive discussion concerning baptism. The development of the Early Church’s baptismal theology draws heavily on New Testament statements concerning the baptisms of Jesus and John (the Baptist) and the differences and similarities between the two.² Equally, there is much debate about the implications of the baptismal statements in the post-resurrection commissioning episodes in Matthew (28: 16-20) and Mark (16: 14-16). Contemporary scholarship has raised notes of caution about both these passages, and in particular their historicity compared to the rest of the Gospels. Today most would agree that these are later additions to the text seeking to provide some uniformity between the Gospels and, possibly, established Church practice.³

Scriptural claims for confirmation specifically (as opposed to Christian initiation in general) usually centre on Acts 8 and 19. In Acts 8 we read about Philip’s preaching in Samaria and the apparently striking results in terms of new converts. In verses 14-17 the apostles in Jerusalem have heard about Philip’s exploits and, concerned that he may have breached some canon somewhere, pack off Peter and John to pray for the new converts, as it seemed the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon them, not even at their baptisms! The two apostles make the trip, lay hands on the recently baptised, the Spirit descends, job done!

¹ Gerard Austin, *The Rite of Confirmation: Anointing with the Spirit*. (New York: Pueblo, 1985), 7.

² See Austin, 4f.

³ See Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation: Their Evolution and Interpretation*, (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1999), 1ff. Johnson goes on to survey arguments that, in fact, the initiatory rites introduced by Jesus himself may more accurately revolve around his acts of “table companionship”.

Acts 19 tells a similar story, set this time in Ephesus where Paul discovers a number of new disciples baptised “into John’s baptism.”⁴ Again, Paul discovers that these converts have yet to experience the Holy Spirit and thus have failed to receive a ‘complete’ initiation. Determined to rectify the situation, Paul lays hands on them and the Spirit arrives.

At a glance it is easy to see why these verses (and there are several others) might be understood as early examples of what now call confirmation. They certainly involve recognised religious authorities praying for and laying hands on those previously baptised. The giving of the Holy Spirit, although a point of some contention around confirmation today, was for many centuries understood to be the primary role of the rite. Surely then this is confirmation writ large in scripture? Obvious though the links between these passages and confirmation may be to some, however, the majority of scholars focusing on confirmation in recent years have agreed that they “are anything but clear”⁵

Reginald Fuller has argued that the Acts 8 incident in particular is an indication of the author’s editorial focus on “subordinating each successive new stage in the Christian mission to the Jerusalem church and its apostolate.”⁶ Gerard Austin builds on this and notes that others have maintained that we actually find two distinct theologies of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, one Lucan and the other Pauline. Austin goes on to argue that it is the Pauline view that should most influence our contemporary theology as Luke’s “is dominated by the early enthusiastic understanding of the first Christians ... In Paul’s eyes the Spirit is the fundamental mark of belonging to Christ, and the gift of the Spirit is the result of baptism”.⁷

Austin also addresses what he considers to be the “key for unlocking both the biblical and the patristic understandings of initiation.”⁸ This, he says, is the concept of *sphragis*, the Greek term commonly translated as ‘seal’. The term is often used in the Old Testament, as well as many other ancient writings, frequently with reference to the ‘sealing’ of a king’s authority. Austin claims that it later became used for a variety of elements within Christian initiation rites, as well as for describing the whole baptismal rite itself. In later centuries it became attached to confirmation, leading to some identifying its use in scripture with the rite.⁹

Baptism, however, remains the only act of Christian initiation to have clear roots in the New Testament. This clearly became the normative understanding of the early Christian community and any origins for confirmation can only be discerned through an exploration of the evolution of the primary rite of baptism.

The Early Church

As with most of Christian history, it is the first five centuries that provide the foundations for all that is to come. While the New Testament practice of baptism seems to have been fairly simple, it is clear that within a short period of time complexities began to emerge.

⁴ Acts 19: 3 (NRSV translation).

⁵ Johnson, 24.

⁶ Reginald Fuller, *Made, Not Born*. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976), 14.

⁷ Austin, 9.

⁸ Austin, 9.

⁹ Austin, 9ff.

One of the earliest examples we have of baptismal practice comes from Tertullian in *De Baptismo* (c. 200 C.E.). At this stage we can see a clear two-fold rite emerging with a water-bath and anointing followed by the laying on of hands. Tertullian states that it is the second part that involves the Spirit: “in the water we are made clean by the action of the angel, and made ready for the Holy Spirit.”¹⁰ There is no suggestion from Tertullian, however, that the anointing and hand-laying should be seen as belonging to a separate rite - both together form the rite of baptism.

Tertullian’s work is followed soon after by the fullest description we have of baptism in the Early Church, provided by Hippolytus in *Apostolic Tradition*. This classic text portrays a water-bath event culminating in the anointing by a priest and then followed immediately by an episcopal laying on of hands (although not necessarily over each candidate), a further anointing (of the hand) and a signing on the forehead (sealing). The entire event (described in its totality as baptism) leads to a celebration of the eucharist and from a liturgical vantage point it is clear that this is an essential part of the whole. Hippolytus’ description is important because it later became the accepted *Roman Pattern* followed in large part by most churches of the West and imposed by Rome on all churches under its control.¹¹ Within this pattern lie the origins of confirmation.

Placing later trends to one side, it seems clear that within the pre-Nicene churches of both East and West there were significant varieties of practice and theological understandings of Christian initiation. Many, and perhaps most, featured a similar array of ritual elements that together made up the liturgy, but it would be pushing the point to claim a common approach to baptism.¹² By the fifth century, however, the desire for some kind of uniformity was evident.

The Council of Orange in 441 included discussions on the wide variation in baptismal practice, and its outcomes included an instruction to avoid “repeated chrismation” which appears to have been sparked by activities in some rural areas.¹³ Gabriel Winkler suggests that this was an issue arising from a visiting bishop *ratifying* an earlier baptism (performed by a priest) and in the process anointing those who had already been anointed at baptism.¹⁴ If this was the case then we *may* be witnessing a very early example of confirmation.

There is some question as to whether this ratifying, or *confirmation*, was a laying on of hands or anointing.¹⁵ Whichever it was, there is no evidence that it was widely accepted as a separate and independent rite from baptism. Indeed, the evidence we do have suggests that by the early fifth century, while baptism itself was no longer always an integrated rite (in that elements of it were sometimes postponed), confirmation, as such, was still nonexistent. That, however, was about to change.

An important character in the development of confirmation is Faustus, a former abbot who became bishop of Riez in 458. In a Pentecost sermon Faustus put forward what is recognised

¹⁰ Quoted in Austin, 11.

¹¹ Austin, 11f.

¹² Johnson 85.

¹³ Austin 13.

¹⁴ Austin, 13.

¹⁵ Austin, 13.

as the first doctrinal statement of a separate ‘confirmation ceremony’.¹⁶ Faustus states that baptism is a “regeneration to life” while confirmation is an “augmentation” of baptism to strengthen for battle and the “struggle of human life”. For Faustus baptism was a matter of passive reception, with no real involvement from those being baptised, while confirmation requires human effort.¹⁷

Faustus’ sermon seems to have gained little traction in the Church of his time, with no other contemporary references to his theories in evidence. Later, though, in a different format and under a different guise, his ideas would prove extremely influential.

The most significant issues in the fifth century were the shifts happening outside Rome, and especially in the churches of Gaul and Spain. From descriptions available we can see that while in Rome, Milan and North Africa the norm for Christian initiation was still a unified rite culminating in the eucharist (albeit with some local differences of order and personnel), in Gaul and Spain it was becoming common for the baptism (involving an anointing, water-bath, and a post-baptismal second anointing) to be a stand-alone liturgy *confirmed* in a later visit by the bishop. In the East, meanwhile, things were developing along very different lines.

The Eastern Church

Significant differences in practice and theology in the Eastern and Western Church began to become apparent in the fourth and fifth centuries. While the laying on of hands was gaining prominence in the West as the point of confirmation *within* the baptismal process, in the East from the time of Cyril of Jerusalem a theology arose that made the anointing with the chrism the “Seal of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁸ The truly significant difference here, however, was the absence of the requirement for this anointing to be episcopally administered. While on occasion the writings from the period indicate the bishop as the presider of the *entire* rite, where the baptism was presided over by a priest there is no record of a bishop being required to ‘finish things off’. What does remain essential is that the chrism oil used be episcopally consecrated. Thus the expectation developed (and remains today) that a priest would administer baptism, anointing and first communion in a single liturgy, the bishop being present only vicariously through the use of consecrated chrism. This has, over time, become the fundamental distinction between the East and (some of) the West.¹⁹

Therefore, while the approaching Middle Ages would see huge upheavals in initiation rites, these would be a “uniquely Western Christian phenomenon.”²⁰ There unquestionably were some distinctions in both meaning and practice between the various churches of the East, however none would involve the separation of the water-bath from the anointing with chrism oil (the post-baptismal “seal of the Holy Spirit” and first communion, regardless of the candidate’s age.²¹

¹⁶ Austin, 14. Austin notes that this does not include recorded cases of rebaptism or the reception of ‘heretics’. Leo the Great went on to use the term ‘confirmation’ for the laying on of hands on those previously baptised for reception of the Spirit. Austin argues that technically what Pope Leo was referring to was not confirmation but because this terminology was used the waters were further muddied (16).

¹⁷ Austin, 14.

¹⁸ Johnson, 23.

¹⁹ Johnson, 123f.

²⁰ Johnson, 222.

²¹ Johnson, 222ff.

The Medieval Church

The Middle Ages, ecclesiastically speaking, are usually dated from the death of Gregory I in 604 to the beginnings of the Protestant Reformation in 1517. In terms of Christian initiation this was the time of the greatest changes the Church had seen until the twentieth century.

The massive development of theology and liturgical practice following the conversion of Constantine and subsequent swift growth of the Church in the fourth and fifth centuries had given rise in the West to several dominant liturgical traditions and a myriad of local variations.²² It was in the ninth century, under the auspices of Charlemagne's Carolingian Reform, that the Emperor himself attempted to make the liturgy of Rome normative for Western Christianity in general.²³

There are two major documents that give us a picture of the Roman initiation rites at this time. The *Gelasian Sacramentary* and *Ordo Romanus XI* date from the seventh and eighth centuries. The *Sacramentary* provides us with a presider's-eye view of the liturgical practices of the day while the *Ordo XI* offers the rubrics.²⁴ In broad terms both documents portray initiation rites similar to those found in *Apostolic Tradition* and several other works of the earlier Church. However, they also highlight some significant changes, particularly in the preparation practices and requirements, and the specific words of the liturgy.

Ordo XI explicitly refers to the bishop's laying on of hands and prayer as "confirming them with an invocation of the sevenfold grace of the Holy Spirit," and instructs that great care be taken that the episcopal anointing is not "neglected, because it is at this point that every baptism is confirmed and justification made for the name of Christianity."²⁵ Thus, in Rome at least, it is the bishop's *confirmation* that seals the deal. As documents such as *Ordo XI* were designed for those areas *outside* Rome where the Roman rite was to be introduced, we can deduce that the specific nature of the instructions given is designed to either introduce something new or correct something old. Maxwell Johnson makes the point that directives such as these "are not normally needed unless something desired, in fact, is not taking place." He also notes that "such directives about 'confirmation'" abound in the medieval West.²⁶

Both the *Sacramentary* and *Ordo XI* continue to place the initiation rites at the Easter Vigil where they culminate in the Easter eucharist. It seems clear from the available resources that between the eighth and twelfth centuries the fundamentals of the Roman rite remain the same, "baptism, confirmation and first communion still being, as in primitive times, three parts of one coherent whole."²⁷ It is also significant to note that *Ordo XI* makes it clear that this pattern applies to all ages, including young children; "After this they go in to Mass and all the infants receive communion. Care is to be taken lest after they have been baptised they

²² For a full, if not exhaustive, survey of these differences see J.D.C. Fisher's important work *Baptism in the Medieval West: A Study in the Disintegration of the Primitive Rite of Initiation*. (Chicago: Hillenbrand, 2004).

²³ Johnson, 177f. Johnson is at pains to point out that Charlemagne's reforms were an *imperial* rather than *papal* attempt to enforce standardisation. Nevertheless it should also be noted that Charlemagne had been virtually handpicked by the papacy to restore order in Western Europe. See also Gary Macy, *The Banquet's Wisdom: A Short History of the Theologies of the Lord's Supper*. (New York: Paulist, 1992), 68f.

²⁴ Fisher, 14ff

²⁵ Johnson, 184f.

²⁶ Johnson, 185.

²⁷ Fisher, 22.

receive any food or suckling before they communicate.”²⁸ From the twelfth century onwards the Roman rite continues to develop, and in particular *contract*, with the liturgy and its surrounding elements being compressed into a much shorter timeframe.²⁹

While *Ordo XI* and the *Sacramentary* offer us a picture of the Roman situation, other sources reveal significant developments elsewhere, especially in Gaul and Spain. As noted above, quite different patterns of initiation had developed over several centuries in those areas. It is clear that some of these differences had already influenced Roman practice by the ninth century where we find in the *Sacramentary* several “Gallican additions” to the Roman rites, including a special order for a “sick catechumen” in which the post-baptismal anointing is followed immediately by first communion with the episcopal actions happening *after* the communion.³⁰ This Gallican influence gained ground in the Middle Ages, so that during this period there emerges a mixture of theologies and practices from both Rome and Gaul / Spain leading to the development of a clear, usually separate rite known as ‘confirmation’.³¹

This gradual development led to the eventual separation of the various ritual elements previously contained within a single rite of baptism. Fisher charts this in four movements:

1. The separation of confirmation from baptism
2. The separation of communion reception from Christian initiation
3. The separation of initiation from Easter / Pentecost
4. The fragmentation of the unified rite into three distinct sacramental rites separated further by increasingly long time intervals.³²

Johnson suggests that some “nuancing” of Fisher’s approach is required, noting that it is difficult to speak of the separation of confirmation from baptism in the case of those regional variations where no equivalent to the ritual confirmation elements appear. In those cases the *separation* is more akin to an *addition* to be adopted at the same point the Roman rite was.³³ Nevertheless, it is clear that by the late Middle Ages these changes had taken place and it was within that context that confirmation first became clearly a rite in its own right.³⁴

Despite all this activity surrounding Christian initiation in the Middle Ages it appears confirmation was not widely practiced and may indeed have been quite rare. Evidence of this is strengthened by the frequent recording of legislation requiring confirmation – such legislation usually only being required where something is *not* happening.³⁵ Adding significance to confirmation was the gradual shift away from the practice of giving communion to infants and children. By the thirteenth century this practice was still present, but fast disappearing in some places, and subject to many requirements for approval. In England, for example, the Council of Worcester in 1240 threatened parents with exclusion from the eucharist if their children were left unconfirmed beyond the age of one, although

²⁸ Johnson, 185.

²⁹ Johnson, 186. Johnson notes that this compression includes the catechumenal period and its liturgical expressions, which eventually involves a single liturgical ceremony.

³⁰ Johnson, 186f. Importantly, just *how long* after the first communion these happen is not specified.

³¹ Johnson, 57f, 211.

³² Fisher. See also Johnson, 201.

³³ Johnson, 202.

³⁴ See Austin, 19.

³⁵ Austin, 20.

the proviso “provided they had access to a bishop” was a softening influence.³⁶ The Council of Durham in 1249 threatened the same consequences but set the age at seven, while the Councils of Winchester (1262) and Exeter (1287) mandated the lower age of three. Without fail the goal of these pronouncements was to limit the gap between baptism and confirmation, with allowances made for certain practical difficulties.³⁷

Similar events occurred on the Continent. The Council of Cologne in 1280 set the age of confirmation at seven, but acknowledged that some candidates might be ten or older given the difficulties of finding a bishop. In reality many parents simply delayed bringing their children for confirmation. Attempts to promote the rite met with mixed success and there is evidence that some believed it could be put off indefinitely.³⁸ By 1281 when the Council of Lambeth met under Archbishop of Canterbury John Peckham it was clear that large numbers of churchgoers were unconfirmed. To counter this “damnable negligence” the Council decreed that no one should be admitted to the eucharist – except when in danger of death – unless they had first been confirmed or “reasonably prevented from receiving confirmation.”³⁹ The result of this declaration, intended to reinvigorate confirmation, was a rapid decline in the numbers receiving communion.

Despite its widespread neglect, the number of edicts and statements recorded on the issue indicate that by the late Middle Ages confirmation was, officially at least, seen as being of great significance. This was in no small part due to the efforts of one of the greatest theologians of the time; Thomas Aquinas.

Aquinas’ views on confirmation were heavily influenced by the much earlier understandings of Faustus, whose name, however, would have been unknown to him. Some time between the fifth and thirteenth centuries Faustus’ Pentecost sermon had become attributed to a ‘Pope Melchiades’, thereby endowing it, and numerous other documents released under this name, with a papal seal of authority. Later scholarship proved that there never was a ‘Pope Melchiades’ and the supposed papal documents were no such thing.⁴⁰ Aquinas, however, was unaware of the questionable nature of his source documents, and used them to develop his thinking on confirmation which appeared in his thirteenth century *Summa Theologica*.

Picking up on Faustus’ focus on a post-baptismal *strengthening* by the Holy Spirit, Aquinas held a view of confirmation that began a shift away from its direct association with initiation:

Through the sacrament of confirmation a man is given spiritual power for activity which is different from that for which power is given in baptism. For in baptism power is received for performing those things which pertain to one’s own salvation in so far as one lives for oneself. In confirmation a person receives power for engaging in the spiritual battle against enemies of the faith.⁴¹

³⁶ Fisher, 137.

³⁷ Fisher, 137. See also James F. Turrell, ‘Muddying the Waters of Baptism: The Theology Committee’s Report on Baptism, Confirmation and Christian Formation’. *Anglican Theological Review* 88 (2006): 349.

³⁸ Fisher, 138.

³⁹ Fisher, 138f.

⁴⁰ Johnson, 209. These documents became known as the *False Decretals*.

⁴¹ Austin, 27.

Such an individualistic focus on the primary initiation rite does not sit well with most contemporary understandings of baptism. Like many scholars of his era he was ignorant of the liturgical traditions of the earlier Church and thus failed to grasp confirmation's origins within the baptismal rite. Essentially, what Aquinas did was take the emerging practices of his time and build theologies for them that were unfortunately largely based on unreliable and falsely attributed evidence. Later research would reveal the difficulties with his work, but it is important to note that Aquinas' theories on the relationship between baptism and confirmation "dominated the theological arena for centuries."⁴²

Towards the end of the Middle Ages the practice of the Early Church had been undone and the celebration of baptism and confirmation as two distinct rites was the norm. In 1439 the Council of Florence, in a close examination of the 'accepted sacraments', sealed the separation of the initiation rites by making what had become the norm official doctrine:

Among the sacraments, these are three, baptism, confirmation and holy orders, which print on the soul an indelible character, that is, a certain spiritual sign distinguishing the recipient from others. Hence, these are not given more than once to one person.⁴³

Thus the Middle Ages drew to a close with confirmation having been shaped in ways not dissimilar to the way the rite survived until the twentieth century. Thanks to Aquinas, it was predominantly understood, in the West at least, as "a distinct rite, separate from baptism itself," received "as a special sacrament of the Holy Spirit for *an increase of grace, strength to live and fight the battles of the Christian life, and as a sacrament of 'maturity'.*"⁴⁴

Theory and practice, however, do not always walk hand in hand. The "damnable neglect" of confirmation witnessed by John Peckham in the thirteenth century was still a common factor three hundred years later. Simply because theologians and liturgists had decided what confirmation was didn't mean that this was what was believed or practiced by the majority – or even a significant minority – of priests and people. Evidence from the period suggests observance, especially outside the major cities, was patchy at best.⁴⁵ Such apathy was not restricted simply to confirmation. By the beginning of the sixteenth century there were numerous issues brewing in the Church, with fiery results to come.

The Reformation

While the reforms of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries involved major changes for both Protestants and Roman Catholics, it is only the former that we will dwell on here.⁴⁶ Confirmation came in for heavy criticism from the major figures in the Protestant

⁴² Austin, 27.

⁴³ Craig Cox, 'Rethinking Confirmation: Possible Ways Forward' in Arthur J. Kubick, *Confirming the Faith of Adolescents: An Alternative Future for Confirmation*. (New York:: Paulist, 1991), 173. The Council of Trent would later use this statement as evidence of the unsound theological practices of the Reformers.

⁴⁴ Johnson, 211

⁴⁵ Johnson contends that in practical terms confirmation may have been abandoned altogether in Gaul during the Middle Ages and struggling in England and elsewhere. 199, 211.

⁴⁶ As will be explored further below, the Reformation really began a further separation of belief (if not initially practice) between Protestant and Roman Catholic churches in terms of confirmation. This would lead to a situation where there are two (or more) distinct rites with the same name, much to the confusion of both.

Reformation, but generally only as a by-product of their primary concerns with baptism, which have been described in five parts:

(1) Since it could be shown from Scripture that by divine appointment baptism must be administered with water in the name of the Trinity, *nothing else was essential to the rite*; the blessing of the font and the use of oil, candles, salt and spittle being therefore unnecessary additions introduced by men. (2) These additions gave rise to superstition. (3) The prevalent custom of baptising children at any time in an almost empty church detracted from the honour due to a holy sacrament, and obscured the ecclesial element in baptism. (4) Not enough care was given to choose suitable godparents. (5) The service was not meaningful because it was in Latin.⁴⁷

That first statement, “Since it could be shown from Scripture”, became the mantra for the Reformers’ sacramental theologies. Martin Luther’s denial of five of the seven commonly accepted sacraments created a new measure for determining sacramental status.⁴⁸ This demand for a scriptural basis to sacramental practice heightened the debates surrounding Christian initiation and inflamed arguments as to whether or not the two Acts passages evidence a rite separate from baptism. As far as the Continental Reformers were concerned, the answer was a clear no, and baptism and the eucharist quickly emerged as the only two dominical and scripturally founded sacraments.

While Luther and the other Continental Reformers may have reached quick agreement about the number of sacraments, they parted company equally swiftly over their understandings of what those sacraments actually do. While Luther maintained a belief that the very enacting of the sacraments brings about some working of the Spirit, others were careful to distinguish between the two:

If the Spirit be lacking, the sacraments can accomplish nothing more in our minds than the splendour of the sun shining upon blind eyes, or a voice sounding in deaf ears. Therefore, I make such a division between Spirit and the sacraments that the power to act rests with the former, and the ministry alone is left to the latter – a ministry empty and trifling, apart from the action of the Spirit; but charged with great effect when the Spirit works within and manifests his power.⁴⁹

Disagreements aside, baptism and eucharist were the two accepted sacraments of the Protestant Reformation. When it came to confirmation none of the Reformers were prepared to accept it as a sacramental rite. There was, however, an interest in retaining something of the elements *within* confirmation, although clearly quite separate from initiation.

Luther reportedly described confirmation as “monkey business”, “fanciful deception”, and “mumbo jumbo”.⁵⁰ However, Gerard Austin points out that Luther’s concerns about

⁴⁷ Quoted in Johnson, who notes that all five of these criticisms can be found in Luther’s *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* in 1520. 233f.

⁴⁸ Johnson, 234f, emphasis ours.

⁴⁹ John Calvin, *LCC*, XXI. Cited in Johnson, 256.

⁵⁰ Arthur C. Repp, *Confirmation in the Lutheran Church*. (Concordia: St Louis, 1964), 15.

confirmation lay in the continuing belief that it *completed* baptism.⁵¹ Picking up on Aquinas' teaching, Luther was willing to concede that confirmation had a part to play in preparing people for the struggles of the Christian life. In Luther's mind the greatest potential for the rite lay in its use as a celebration of catechetical instruction in preparation for the reception of Holy Communion.⁵² Thus the rite itself was not of great interest, but rather the preparation that preceded it. Confirmation, therefore, becomes more a rite of *education* than *initiation*. This shift in focus is nowhere more evident than in the thoughts and actions of the Reformation's greatest English architect, Thomas Cranmer, whose shaping of Anglican understandings and practices of confirmation we explore next.

⁵¹ Austin, 87.

⁵² While the lengthy period of catechesis usually required before baptism in the Early Church had been whittled down to what was occasionally a brief period of instruction, but more often none, debates about the necessity of some form of preparation for a delayed rite of confirmation had surfaced periodically during the Middle Ages. While it seems that in most places there was some expectation of catechesis pre-confirmation, it is likely that, as with the rite itself, it was more often than not ignored.

PART TWO

In Search of Meaning

“Perhaps the biggest problem in the theological debate is the seemingly irreconcilable conflict between two positions on the meaning of confirmation. One position ... sees confirmation as part of an initiation ritual that must – to be true to its theological and historical foundations – follow baptism and precede eucharist ... The other position ... sees confirmation as a ceremony in which the initiation of one who was baptised in infancy is affirmed, ratified, “confirmed” by one mature enough to make an informed commitment.”¹

It has often been said that confirmation is a ‘rite in search of meaning’. The reality, however, is that the search has not been so much for *meaning* as a *single* meaning. In Anglicanism, as in other traditions,² meanings for confirmation abound. The brief survey of the rite’s history up to the Reformation in the previous section shows just a few of the complexities involved, and the events of the past century have certainly added to them.

As we shall see below, for at least four hundred years confirmation was (and in places, remains) the formal ‘gateway’ to the eucharist in the form of a catechetical process designed to ensure participants were suitably prepared prior to first communion. At the same time, however, it has also been seen as a *sacramental* rite wherein one receives the gifts of the Spirit and the ‘confirmation’ of one’s baptism. Alongside this is the idea that confirmation ‘strengthens’ one for the Christian life; a life one also makes a mature commitment to at confirmation. All these have been (and most still are) present within our Anglican understandings of confirmation, but to understand *why* and *how* we need to look first to the original architect of Anglican liturgy: Thomas Cranmer.

Cranmer’s Confirmation

We know that Cranmer was greatly influenced by the Continental Reformers who by and large rejected confirmation as practiced by the Medieval Church. That said, while we can assume that the initiation rites compiled in the 1549 *Book of Common Prayer* are “not incompatible” with Cranmer’s theology, we have remarkably little other evidence as to his views on Christian initiation.³

One clue lies in *The King’s Book*, a collection of doctrinal teaching Cranmer helped to compile in 1543. In the section on sacraments *The King’s Book* refers to three effects of baptism; *remission of sins*, *incorporation*, and *grace*, while in a later section on confirmation a fourth effect is added:

¹ Kieran Sawyer quoted by Craig Cox, ‘Rethinking Confirmation: Possible Ways Forward’ in Kubick, *Confirming the Faith of Adolescents*, 165.

² For two examples from other traditions see Gary Davis, ‘Building Christians: Toward Reclaiming a Theology of Confirmation – A Protestant Perspective’ in Kubick, 109ff, and Brian Dawson, *In Search of Meaning: Christian Initiation and the Rite of Confirmation in the Methodist Church of New Zealand / Te Haahi Weteriana o Aotearoa*. An Extended Research Essay for the Diploma in Liturgical Studies, Melbourne College of Divinity, 1993.

³ Bryan D. Spinks, *Reformation and Modern Rituals and Theologies of Baptism: From Luther to Contemporary Practices*. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 65.

... all such as had duly received the sacrament of baptism were by virtue and efficacy thereof perfectly regenerated in Christ, perfectly incorporated and made the very members of his body, and had received full remission of their sins, *and were endued with graces and gifts of the Holy Ghost.*⁴

All four of these themes subsequently appear in the baptismal rite in the first *Book of Common Prayer*. Here the baptismal water-bath is followed by an anointing with the prayer, “Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath regenerated thee by water and the Holy Ghost, and hath given unto thee remission of all thy sins, he vouchsafe to anoint thee with the unction of his Holy Spirit and bring thee to the inheritance of everlasting life. Amen.”⁵ This prayer appears remarkably similar to that which conveyed the gifts of the Spirit in earlier initiation rites, leading some to suggest that it could be interpreted as having the “force of a presbyteral confirmation.”⁶ It seems most unlikely, however, that this was Cranmer’s intention, given that the 1549 book also contains a separate service of confirmation.

While some have claimed that the 1549 confirmation service is “an almost word-for-word translation from the Sarum rite”,⁷ this view ignores clear Lutheran influences. The inclusion of a catechism for children and the requirement that the bishop must be satisfied those to be confirmed are able to say *the articles of their faith, ten commandments, Lord’s Prayer*, and to *answer the questions from the catechism*, all point to Luther’s focus on a celebration of catechesis. Alongside this, however, is the prayer for the gifts of the Spirit from the Sarum rite (a prayer that displays an obvious focus on the Early and Medieval Church understanding of confirmation as the giving of the Spirit) derived from the sixth century *Gelasian Sacramentary*.⁸ Thus we see from the beginning a dual focus emerging in the Church of England.

Arguably the most significant point in the 1549 confirmation rite is its final rubric: “And there shall none be admitted to the holy communion, until such time as he be confirmed.”⁹ This *confirmation rubric* sets in ecclesiastical stone the thirteenth century rule of John Peckham. As with Peckham, however, it seems Cranmer’s demands fell largely on deaf ears, not least because of the rigorous preparation process demanded. This strict period of catechesis was to be tested by the bishop prior to confirmation, which was “to be administered when the child approaches the age of culpability, for a benefit of the rite is the receiving of ‘strength and defence’ against the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil which are associated with that period in a child’s life.”¹⁰ Evidence suggests that both the episcopal testing and confirming were largely ignored, with the reception of communion irregular at best. The fact remains, however, that from the sixteenth century until relatively recently confirmation was essentially compulsory throughout the Anglican world.¹¹

⁴ Spinks, 66, emphasis ours.

⁵ 1549 *Book of Common Prayer*. Cited in Austin, 66.

⁶ Fisher, cited in Austin, *The Rite of Confirmation*, 66.

⁷ Spinks, 69.

⁸ Austin, 67.

⁹ Austin, 67.

¹⁰ Marion Hatchett, quoted in Austin, 67f.

¹¹ Stephen Mark Chamberlain, *Forming Faith: A comparative study of two methods of confirmation preparation and the ways they facilitate faith formation in candidates*. M.Min. Thesis, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, Otago University, 2008, 13.

The critical event in the period between the 1549 and 1552 prayer books was the publication of Martin Bucer's critique of the former in *Censura*. Bucer, a staunch advocate of reform, was committed to the principles of "(1) eliminating ceremonial actions, especially those involving such material things as oil, which did not have clear warrant in scripture, and (2) eliminating duplications, such as introducing prayers and actions at the church door, themes that would shortly be repeated in the central actions at the font."¹²

The revised baptism service of 1552 clearly shows Bucer's influence. Gone are the white baptismal robe and anointing with chrism which had previously followed the water-bath. In their place are a prayer and actions that had previously formed part of the now omitted service at the church door:

We receive this child into the congregation of Christ's flock, and do sign him with the sign of the cross, in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner against sin, the world and the devil, and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end.¹³

There is no signing of the forehead in the 1552 confirmation service and numerous changes have been made in the prayers. The 'strengthening' concept is made explicit in the prayer prior to the laying on of hands while the prayer *during* the hand-laying asks for grace "that he may continue thine for ever, and daily increase in the Holy Spirit more and more". Most significantly, what Austin describes as the "crucial phrase" in the 1549 rite; "strength them with the inward unction of thy Holy Ghost" is omitted entirely in 1552.¹⁴

The 1552 rite also includes a heightened emphasis on the recipient's ability to recite the catechism with the *confirmation rubric* now requiring that "none shall be admitted to the Holy Communion, until such time as he can say the catechism and be confirmed" and the teaching of the catechism increased from one Sunday in six in the 1549 rite to weekly plus holy days.¹⁵

It is not until the 1662 revision of the *Book of Common Prayer* that any explicit ratification – or *confirmation* – of baptismal promises appears in the confirmation service, despite a common understanding that this public ratification was the "principal function of the occasion."¹⁶ In the 1662 rite the bishop begins by asking the candidates to "renew the solemn promise and vow that was made in your name at your Baptism".¹⁷

While the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* continued the requirement for confirmation, there is evidence to show that in practice it was often ignored with few if any consequences at a local level. In his history of Methodism, Bernard Holland describes the situation in the Church of

¹² Austin, 68

¹³ Austin, 68.

¹⁴ Austin, 70. Some suggest that shift is actually from a "rite of chrismation, with a sacramentally effective invocation of the Spirit" in the 1549 liturgy, to 1552 where "the spirit emphasises strengthening from within." If so, this effectively marks a liturgical shift from a *sacrament* to a *rite*. Quotes from Stephen Platten, 'The Rite[s] of Christian Initiation in the Church of England: Some Theological Reflections Emerging from Liturgical Practice'. An unpublished paper written for the Church of England Faith Advisory Group, 2008.

¹⁵ Austin, 69.

¹⁶ Austin, 69.

¹⁷ Austin, 71.

England, quoting an eighteenth century cleric as saying that, “all the thousands that are unconfirmed live in the parishes as reputed Christians, and may come to the sacrament when they will.”¹⁸ Clearly, however, confirmation was not neglected completely, with reports that a “thousand confirmations at one place and one day were not uncommon.”¹⁹

Regardless of what was happening in *practice*, it is obvious that by the end of the seventeenth century confirmation had more than one *meaning* in Anglican minds. On the one hand was the Lutheran-influenced catechetical rite, combined with a focus on the reaffirmation of baptismal vows. On the other were the remaining vestiges of a much earlier post-baptism sacramental understanding of confirmation with a strong connection to the giving and receiving of the Holy Spirit. Through all the shifts in theological, liturgical and political influence within the Church of England, both views survived and continued to be described as confirmation, a situation that continued to the present day and within which we find much of the heat that has dominated arguments over confirmation for four hundred years.

20th Century Challenges

The theology of the sacraments advocated by the Liturgical Movement at the beginning of the twentieth century brought a renewed focus on baptism and, by extension, confirmation. At the heart of these debates were questions about the very nature of baptism and the efficacy of the sacraments – issues that dated back at least as far as the Reformation. In truth these questions had always existed within Anglicanism and from time to time led to impassioned and even violent quarrels.²⁰

The proposed 1928 revision of the *Book of Common Prayer* included some significant changes to both the baptism and confirmation rites. In particular the preface to the confirmation liturgy, citing the Acts 8 episode, stated that “a special gift of the Holy Spirit is bestowed through the laying on of hands with prayer.”²¹ This represented a shift from the 1662 book back to the focus on the gifts of the Spirit in the 1549 *Book of Common Prayer*, and was a sign of things to come.

Newly uncovered details about the Early Church and its liturgical practices led to new understandings of the Church’s rites. These provided the basis for the work of first A. J. Mason and later Gregory Dix, whose arguments in favour of the unified view of Christian initiation included the necessity of a two-fold sacramental action; *baptism*, which accomplished regeneration from death to life by the imparting of a spiritual grace conveyed through the baptismal ritual, and *confirmation*, either with or some time after baptism, for the conferring of the gifts of the Spirit. This so-called ‘Mason-Dix line’ argued that baptism alone was “wholly incomplete without the seal of the Spirit bestowed in confirmation.”²²

While those influenced by the Tractarian emphasis on the efficacy of the sacraments welcomed the work of Mason and Dix because it served to elevate the importance of both baptism *and* confirmation (with debates over whether or not the latter was a sacrament continuing), the Mason-Dix line was also a good fit with the continuing Anglican practice of

¹⁸ Bernard Holland, *Baptism in Early Methodism*. (London: Epworth, 1970), 20.

¹⁹ Holland, 21.

²⁰ See Spinks, 77ff.

²¹ *The Shorter Prayer Book Being an Abbreviated Form of the Book of Common Prayer with some additional matter*. (London: Cambridge University, 1946), 115f.

²² Ruth A. Meyers, ‘Fresh Thoughts on Confirmation’. *Anglican Theological Review*, 88 (2006), 322.

requiring confirmation prior to first communion. Up until this time, the sixteenth century requirement had focused primarily on the supposed need for education prior to receiving communion, with an emphasis on the catechetical preparation process. Implicit in the Cranmerian stance, however, is the understanding that baptism alone is not enough to ensure full access to the rites of the Church. In practice this probably did not mean much during the many years in which the eucharist was celebrated relatively infrequently and given a fairly low priority. However, with a heightened theology of the eucharist leading to a push towards regular communion, the issue became more pressing.

The Mason-Dix line sought to clarify the purpose and practice of confirmation by refocusing it away from being a *rite of catechesis* and (arguably) back to being a *completion* of the baptismal initiation rite. While, as we have seen above, this was by no means a new understanding of confirmation for Anglicanism, it was definitely a shift in what had become its primary focus. With Dix's work in particular being warmly greeted in the 1940s, it seemed likely that this was to be the future of confirmation for the Anglican Communion. The Mason-Dix line, with its two-stage rite, was not, however, accepted by all.²³

In 1951 the Mason-Dix line was seriously challenged by Professor Geoffrey Lampe who used the same research called upon by the two older scholars to argue that the Spirit, far from being at work only in confirmation, is firmly involved in baptism.²⁴ However, while Lampe did believe that the gifts of the Spirit were fully imbued at baptism, in the case of infants he regarded them as “more potential than actual” and still insisted on confirmation as a rite that “enables these Christians to realise and actualise what has already been bestowed in baptism.”²⁵ Having pulled back from challenging confirmation as a stand-alone rite, Lampe nevertheless left the door ajar for a still more radical engagement with the issue, and it would not be long before that door was opened.

In the early 1960s, just a decade after the publication of Lampe's work, pressure began to mount for change. Liturgists in several Anglican Provinces had been working on new approaches to Christian initiation, taking into account the work of both Dix and Lampe. In 1964 Professor Massey Shepherd, heavily influenced by Lampe's theories, proposed to the Liturgical Commission of the Episcopal Church in the United States the adoption of a single initiation rite for both infants and adults, presided over by a bishop, and including all the elements of baptism, confirmation and admission to communion.²⁶ Similar work was being done in the Church of England, where its Liturgical Commission was working on a single unified rite of baptism and confirmation for adults, with the intention that this would be seen as the norm and infant baptism a “derived rite”.²⁷ While it was the focus on *reuniting* the traditional elements of initiation that led this charge, the implications for baptism would prove far-reaching.

²³ Spinks, 172.

²⁴ Geoffrey W. H. Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit: A Study in the Doctrine of Baptism and Confirmation in the New Testament and the Fathers*, 2nd Edition (London: SPCK, 1967).

²⁵ Meyers, 322.

²⁶ Ruth A. Meyers, ‘By Water and the Holy Spirit: Baptism and Confirmation in Anglicanism’. *Anglican Theological Review*, 83 (2001), 417ff. Meyers notes that Shepherd's proposal made no mention of the work of the Spirit.

²⁷ This work formed part of the experimental rites produced by the Church of England in 1967. See Spinks, 172.

The End of an Error

With all of the attention focused on the subject around the Anglican Communion, it should have been no surprise that baptism was a significant agenda item for the 1968 Lambeth Conference of Bishops. Following the advice of one of its working groups, the conference resolved to recommend “that each province or regional Church be asked to explore the theology of baptism and confirmation in relation to the need to commission the laity for their task in the world, and to experiment in this regard.”²⁸ The specific areas of experimentation recommended included separating admission to communion from confirmation, and administering baptism and confirmation together for adults *and* infants.²⁹

The reasoning behind the Lambeth resolution lay firmly in the work of the by then many liturgical scholars focused on the rites and practices of the Early Church. Their work was revealing that with few exceptions, baptism had been the single point of entry into the Christian community for at least two hundred years. While arguments persisted over the significance of the various elements *within* the early baptismal liturgies – did they or did they not represent separate rites? – there was general agreement that the idea of an initiation rite (or rites) spread over months or even years did not exist in the Early Church.³⁰ Moreover, closer examination of the Church leading into the Middle Ages revealed that even at a time when the elements of baptism *were* separated, both infants and adults yet to be ‘confirmed’ were receiving communion and it was not until Aquinas that questions of ‘maturity’ or the ‘age of reason’ became an issue affecting admission to the eucharist.³¹

It would be fair to say that the effects of this research were mainly experienced in the so-called ‘first-world’ or ‘western’ churches. Anglican provinces in the developed nations were quick to embrace its results, with England, the United States, Canada, New Zealand and Australia all involved in internal debates over baptism and, by extension, confirmation, by the late 1960s.³² Following the 1968 Lambeth resolution, New Zealand became, in 1970, the first province to begin the process of admitting children to communion prior to confirmation.³³ By that time the Americans were well underway with work towards a new prayer book which would soon lead to a similar decision in that province, while in England since the 1940s a steady stream of reports had sided with several different understandings. A significant point in the development of the Church of England’s understandings came in 1971, when the Ely Report followed the clear direction of Lambeth in declaring baptism to be the “One and complete sacrament of Christian initiation” which “cannot be added to, supplemented or

²⁸ Resolution 25, *The Lambeth Conference: Resolutions Archives from 1968*. (Anglican Communion Office, 2005), 11.

²⁹ David R. Holeton, ‘Christian Initiation: An Ongoing Agenda for Anglicanism’ in, David R. Holeton (editor), *Growing in Newness of Life: Christian Initiation in Anglicanism Today. Papers from the Fourth International Anglican Liturgical Consultation, Toronto 1991*. (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1993), 15.

³⁰ It should be noted that this view was not universally shared, and certainly not *ecumenically* agreed to. Our focus, however, is Anglicanism.

³¹ Austin, 26ff.

³² There was also a lot of liturgical scholarship happening on the Continent, in Germany and Rome in particular. These tended to be Roman Catholic scholars, however, in areas where Anglicanism was – and is – relatively weak.

³³ Mostly due to pressure from the future Archbishop, Brian Davis. As vicar of Dannevirke at the time, Davis persuaded the Diocese of Waiapu to be the first to introduce admission to communion prior to confirmation.

‘completed’.”³⁴ This view, which is completely in line with those of a number of Anglican provinces, is reflected in theory, if not universally in practice, in the Church of England today.

The momentum for change seemed unstoppable and in 1979 new liturgical ground was broken with the publication of the Episcopal Church’s revised *Book of Common Prayer* (TEC BCP). By the mid-1980s several provinces had formally removed the requirement for confirmation prior to first communion, a position strengthened by the recommendations of the first International Anglican Liturgical Consultation (IALC) held in Boston in 1985. The theme of the consultation was ‘The Eucharist’ and its first two recommendations pick up the charge:

- (i) that since baptism is the sacramental sign of full incorporation into the church, all baptised persons be admitted to communion;
- (ii) that provincial baptismal rites be reviewed to the end that such texts explicitly affirm the communion of the newly baptised and that only one rite be authorised for the baptism whether of adults or infants so that no essential distinction be made between persons on basis of age.³⁵

Six years later, in Toronto, the IALC turned its attention once more to initiation. The chair of that meeting, David Holeyton, noted the centrality of confirmation to the issue:

It was with confirmation that the present initiatives in renewing Anglican initiation practices began, and often it seems that it is with confirmation that they will come to an end. It was with confirmation that the first generation of reports from theological commissions and rites from liturgical commissions broke down.³⁶

Two of the resulting recommendations in the *Toronto Statement* relate directly to confirmation:

- a. Baptism is complete sacramental initiation and leads to participation in the Eucharist. Confirmation and other rites of affirmation have a continuing pastoral role in the renewal of faith among the baptised but are in no way to be seen as a completion of baptism or as necessary for admission to communion.
- b. The catechumenate is a model for preparation and formation for baptism. We recognize that its constituent liturgical rites may vary in different cultural context.³⁷

Is the model of Christian initiation described in the *Toronto Statement* radically different to that developed by Thomas Cranmer four hundred years earlier? That is debatable. Some would argue that Cranmer believed baptism to be a “complete sacramental initiation” while

³⁴ Chamberlain, *Forming Faith*, 14. This was not surprising really as Geoffrey Lampe was resident in the Diocese of Ely at the time.

³⁵ Holeyton, 18.

³⁶ Holeyton, 24.

³⁷ David R. Holeyton (Editor), *Christian Initiation in the Anglican Communion: The Toronto Statement ‘Walk in Newness of Life’*. (Nottingham: Grove, 1991), 5.

confirmation's focus lay elsewhere.³⁸ Others, however, continue to argue that "Cranmer certainly did not regard Christian initiation as complete in baptism", noting that his insistence on catechesis and confirmation reflect his belief that the Christian life requires a continual renewal of faith and spiritual strengthening, particularly at the point of maturity.³⁹

Regardless of what Cranmer may or may not have believed, by the late twentieth century the Anglican theology of initiation had been radically revised in much of the Communion. Many provinces had formally adopted the understanding that baptism was the sole rite of entry to the eucharist, overturning four centuries of tradition.⁴⁰ The implications of this, of course, presented a major challenge to confirmation; if *baptism* is the sole point of entry both to the eucharist *and* the remainder of the rights (and rites) that go with church membership, what is confirmation? The *Toronto Statement* had suggested it was a *rite of affirmation* with a *continuing pastoral role in the renewal of faith*, but what does that mean? And what impact does that have on the liturgical rite itself? To explore these questions we turn our attention to the task of prayer book revision in two very different places with two very different results.

A Tale of Two Prayer Books

Baptism and confirmation were only two of the issues facing the Church by the mid-1960s. Gregory Dix's work – of which initiation was only a part – had revealed some significant liturgical deficiencies,⁴¹ while the social changes of the time were causing their own ecclesiastical upheavals. It was in this context that both the Episcopal Church in the United States and the Church of the Province of New Zealand launched their work towards the production of new prayer books within a few years of each other.

As far as baptism and confirmation are concerned, the results of both revisions differ immensely from what had gone before. Both reflect the liturgical changes of the past fifty years, including the abandonment of the *confirmation rubric* in favour of baptism as the full rite of Christian initiation. Each, however, takes a distinctly different route to get there.

The Americans

When The Episcopal Church (TEC) began moving towards a revised prayer book Lampe's work was still new and relatively unknown. While few were willing to be as cut and dried about *where* the Spirit was at work (in baptism *or* confirmation) as Mason and Dix, the majority still subscribed to their two-stage initiatory rite requiring baptism followed, either immediately or at some later time, by confirmation. Massey Shepherd's proposal for a single, unified rite had led to a raft of similar ideas and when the first proposal for a new Episcopal prayer book was released for public discussion (in the same year as the 1968 Lambeth Conference) it included no reference at all to confirmation.

This initial proposed rite followed the Mason-Dix two-stage rite – a water-bath baptism followed by the laying on of hands for the Spirit – but within a single liturgical event. Reaction to this proposal was swift and sharp. Many were uncomfortable with abandoning a

³⁸ Austin, 65ff.

³⁹ See Spinks, 71.

⁴⁰ As we note below, a number of those provinces, including New Zealand, continued to allow for some variations in that understanding to cater for certain theological and / or cultural positions.

⁴¹ Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, (London: Black., 1945). Dix's views on liturgical structure would later be challenged also, but they remained extremely influential in the task of liturgical revision.

separate confirmation rite and argued for its reinstatement. The Drafting Committee, largely ignoring these demands, moved forward and in the 1970 *Prayer Book Studies 18*,⁴² proposed a single service of baptism with a laying-on of hands, to be presided over by a bishop *or* priest, with no subsequent rite of confirmation. In an attempt to keep the pro-confirmation camp happy, a separate rite was proposed called ‘A Form of Commitment to Christian Service’. This brief commissioning rite was designed to offer a repeatable opportunity for the affirmation of faith and personal commitment previously provided by confirmation.

The theology behind the proposal was explicitly stated to be that baptism was the full and final rite of entry into the Church, with no further rite required or desired. While greeted with interest by many, the recommendations were roundly rejected by the Episcopal Church House of Bishops, who argued in favour of retaining both confirmation and its episcopal requirements. What was broadly agreed to, however, was the dropping of confirmation as a prerequisite for admission to communion.⁴³

While the final form of a revised baptism service was more or less completed by 1973, debates about the place and meaning of confirmation within the new prayer book continued throughout the decade. The final version, published in 1979, included rites for both baptism and confirmation, but while the rubrics stated one *might* follow the other, in practice this was discouraged by the placement of the liturgies in two different sections of the book.⁴⁴

Turning to the book itself, we note that baptism is the stated sacrament of initiation with this being bluntly spelt out in the introduction: “Holy Baptism is full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ’s Body, the Church.”⁴⁵ The inclusion of “*and the Holy Spirit*” is a stark rejection of the Mason-Dix argument, while the insistence that baptism is the sole entry point to the eucharist reflects the intentions of the 1968 Lambeth resolution. To underscore this shift, the baptismal rite includes the prayer for the seven-fold gifts of the Spirit, “a prayer that had been part of confirmation in every Anglican prayer book since 1549.”⁴⁶ The liturgy also includes an anointing accompanied by the words, “you are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ’s own for ever”, a further emphasising of the Spirit’s role in baptism, although some argue that this post-baptismal *sealing* is in fact a throwback to the medieval baptism rite and constitutes a distinct, and to some degree *separate*, sacramental act.⁴⁷

The potential for finding elements of earlier confirmation rites within the TEC BCP baptismal liturgy is heightened by the inclusion of a focus on commitment, albeit with the responses being made by all present and not just the candidates.⁴⁸ The result is a packed rite including; a water-bath, an anointing and signing, a prayer for the seven-fold gifts of the

⁴² The number, 18, refers to its placement in the series of Prayer Book discussion documents released.

⁴³ Spinks, 173.

⁴⁴ The inclusion of a separate confirmation was clearly understood to be primarily at the insistence of the House of Bishops. Its placement within the Pastoral Services section was equally clearly a sop to those who fought against including the rite at all.

⁴⁵ *The Book of Common Prayer*. (New York: Church House, 1979), 298.

⁴⁶ Meyers, ‘Fresh Thoughts’, 322.

⁴⁷ Meyers, ‘Fresh Thoughts’, 323. Gerard Austin identifies this clearly as an act of confirmation, noting that the final wording, “*in Baptism*”, was only grudgingly accepted as a compromise between pro and anti confirmation advocates. Austin, 74ff.

⁴⁸ 1979 TEC *Book of Common Prayer* (TEC BCP), 304f. Part of the rationale behind this is to encourage the view that every baptism is an opportunity for the renewal of one’s own. See Turrell, ‘Muddying the Waters’, 342.

Spirit, and a commitment to Christian service. The placing together of all these elements within a single rite of baptism inevitably enabled some of those responsible for the final product to argue that they had succeeded in reuniting the various elements of baptism and confirmation into one liturgical rite simply entitled, as in the Early Church, *Holy Baptism*.⁴⁹

As noted, the confirmation rite is situated in the Pastoral Services section of the TEC BCP.⁵⁰ The 1970 'Form of Commitment to Christian Service' has been retained and placed straight after the confirmation rite, highlighting the similarities between the two. The tendency to compromise seen in the decision to include both leads to some inevitable issues if not contradictions within the TEC BCP.

While the traditional *confirmation rubric* is gone, replaced by the emphasis on baptism being the point of entry to the eucharist, the TEC BCP still makes confirmation an expectation, at least for those baptised as infants.

In the course of their Christian development, those baptised at an early age *are expected*, when they are ready and have been duly prepared, to make a mature public affirmation of their faith and commitment to the responsibilities of their Baptism and to receive the laying on of hands by the bishop.⁵¹

The rubrics go on to note that a similar expectation is placed on those baptised as adults, *unless* "baptised with laying on of hands by a bishop".⁵²

Unlike the baptism rite, which incorporates a significant emphasis on the community reaffirming their faith alongside the candidates,⁵³ the confirmation rite is focused on being simply the *first* occasion for those baptised as infants to make "a mature public affirmation of their faith and commitment to the responsibilities of their Baptism and to receive the laying on of hands by the bishop."⁵⁴ Here the intended understanding of confirmation is spelled out; a *public affirmation of faith, committing to the responsibilities of baptism, and receiving the laying on of hands by the bishop*. This latter action is left unexplained, not surprisingly since its origin and intention lies in the Mason-Dix line as the point of the giving of the Holy Spirit. As noted above, the TEC BCP places this action clearly in the baptismal liturgy, leaving confirmation to focus on the reaffirmation of baptismal promises – a clearly *pastoral* action; "As such, the theology of confirmation is no more or less than the theology implied and expressed in the recapitulation of those foundational baptismal commitments. Thus confirmation, so understood, confers no distinct sacramental character or additional status of membership."⁵⁵

⁴⁹ See Daniel B. Stevick, *Baptismal Moments, Baptismal Meanings*. (New York: Church Hymnal Corporation, 1987), 134ff.

⁵⁰ The baptism rite does include options for appropriate prayers if the service includes those being confirmed, received, or reaffirming their promises. *The Book of Common Prayer*, 309f.

⁵¹ TEC BCP, 412. Emphasis ours.

⁵² TEC BCP, 412.

⁵³ The directions for the rite actually indicate that this is a deliberate intention, with every baptism offering the opportunity for reaffirmation. The TEC BCP even goes so far as suggesting that the baptismal affirmations should be used on those days recommended for baptisms even if no baptisms are scheduled.

⁵⁴ TEC BCP, 412.

⁵⁵ Joe Goodwin Burnett, 'Reconsidering a Bold Proposal: Reflections, Questions, and Concerns Regarding a Theology of Confirmation.' *Anglican Theological Review*. 88 (2006): 69-83, 70.

Did the Americans succeed in whittling down to one the several potentially conflicting positions on confirmation? Well, they certainly knocked out one, but aside from removing confirmation as the ‘gateway’ to communion, do the TEC BCP rites make it clear that baptism is the sole point of entry to the Church and all its rites? Not really.

While at first glance the TEC BCP approach appears to completely separate baptism and confirmation, the reality is not so clear-cut. The introduction to the baptismal rite expressly indicates that the bishop, “when present”, is expected to preside. Where this is not the case, and a priest opts to use chrism at the anointing “it must have been previously consecrated by the bishop”⁵⁶, and in the introduction to the confirmation rite the significance of the bishop baptising becomes apparent when we read, “Those baptised as adults, *unless baptised with the laying on of hands by a bishop*, are also expected to make a public affirmation of their faith and commitment to the responsibilities of their Baptism in the presence of a bishop and to receive the laying on of hands.”⁵⁷ Immediately we can see three categories of baptism emerging: (1) those baptised as children (2) those baptised as adults by a bishop *with* the laying on of hands (3) those baptised as adults by a priest. In all three cases the baptism is understood to be “full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ’s Body the Church”,⁵⁸ including the eucharist, yet immediately that understanding is challenged by the continued expectation of a separate confirmation.⁵⁹

The Episcopalian Bishop of Nebraska, Joe Burnett, has noted that the issues inherent in the points above have been added to by a general confusion about the definitions of the terms *confirmation*, *reception* and *reaffirmation*, and “a wide diversity of liturgical practice” in the way the rites are administered.⁶⁰ In particular Burnett states that the use of chrism at confirmation by some bishops has continued to muddy the waters of understanding and “suggest an additional sealing with the Spirit in confirmation and thereby undermine the sufficiency of baptism as full Christian initiation.”⁶¹

Within the development, publication, and implementation of the TEC BCP we can see a clear example of the tensions between the various, and occasionally conflicting, understandings of confirmation, and the attempts of many liturgists to shift the focus to baptism. Ultimately, while they have resulted in some obvious changes, these attempts have met with mixed success. Some Episcopalian scholars have called for a renewed emphasis on confirmation, arguing that its relegation to pastoral service status – and subsequent decline in popularity and practice – has cost the church a valuable sacrament.⁶² Others, however, believe that the compromises noted above have not gone far enough, and have simply resulted in a lack of clarity and even confusion.⁶³ This latter view is summed up by John

⁵⁶ TEC BCP, 298. This mirrors the understanding of the Eastern Church in which the bishop is vicariously present at every baptism through the use of blessed chrism oil.

⁵⁷ TEC BCP, 412. Emphasis ours.

⁵⁸ TEC BCP, 298.

⁵⁹ In practice this expectation remains for all *three* categories as the laying on hands in the case of a baptism by a bishop happens *after* the baptism in a section of the rite identified by the heading *Confirmation, Reception, or Reaffirmation*. TEC BCP, 309. Daniel Stevick and others have argued that equally problematic here is the use of a *confirmation* rite for the *reception* of people from other faith traditions. See Burnett, 76.

⁶⁰ Burnett, 76.

⁶¹ Burnett, 76.

⁶² See Kathryn Tanner, ‘Towards a New Theology of Confirmation’. *Anglican Theological Review*. 88 (2006): 85-94.

⁶³ See, for example, both Burnett and Turrell.

Westerhoff: “The result is the establishment of two different understandings of confirmation, leaving history to judge and establish which will become the mind and will of the church (a typical Anglican way to resolve conflict).”⁶⁴

Aotearoa-New Zealand

Our Prayer Book Commission was just beginning its work when the initial drafts for the TEC BCP were being released and debated. As noted above, after the 1968 Lambeth resolution, New Zealand became the first Anglican province to approve (on an experimental basis) the admission of children to communion prior to confirmation. This situation, practiced widely in Waiapu diocese and spasmodically around the remainder of the province, was formalised at the 1980 General Synod, where it was agreed that the requirement for confirmation should be separated from admission to communion, with the former to be deferred until “a young man or woman shows adult responsibility, and wishes to be commissioned and confirmed for his or her task of being a Christian in society.”⁶⁵ Thus confirmation, while still retained and to some extent mandated, was separated from any suggestion of Christian initiation or church membership.

The 1980 decision had far-reaching implications for the church, but it was clear from the beginning that it would not be universally accepted or applied. A number of people disagreed with the changes and it was the 1990s before some dioceses formally accepted the decision.⁶⁶ Maori and Polynesian communities in particular were (and continue to be) reluctant to abandon the requirement for confirmation prior to communion. As a result, when the new regulations were drafted they included an ‘out clause’: “Variations in pastoral practice in relation to admission to communion may be found”. Confirmation is specifically listed as one of those possible ‘variations’.⁶⁷

While some ignored or worked against the changes, within much of the church in the 1980s and 1990s deliberate efforts were made to avoid confusion between *confirmation* and *admission to communion*. The latter was regularly offered between the ages of eight and ten, while sixteen became the de facto age of confirmation. This had a huge impact on confirmation numbers which, already declining, plummeted once admission to communion was dealt with separately. Of course the theological understandings behind the removal of the *confirmation rubric* could also be seen as a challenge to the practice of requiring children to be ‘admitted to communion’ following a period of instruction. For some, this seemed little more than a repackaged confirmation requirement, and if baptism were the one and only rite of entry to the eucharist, why would *any* other rite or programme be required? It was not long before admission to communion programmes vanished from many parishes, hot on the heels of confirmation.

When *A New Zealand Prayer Book / He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa* (ANZPB) was published in 1989 it was evident that there were significant differences between the way the New Zealand book and the TEC BCP approached Christian initiation. Where the Americans had physically separated baptism and confirmation, ANZPB does the opposite, and puts them together in a “Liturgy of Baptism and The Laying on of Hands for Confirmation and Renewal”. Not

⁶⁴ Westerhoff in Kubick, 154.

⁶⁵ Cited in Geoffrey Haworth, ‘Confirmation ... Dead Duck, Mineshaft Canary, or Bird of Paradise?’ A discussion paper prepared for the Christchurch Diocese Clergy Conference, October 2005.

⁶⁶ Haworth, 2.

⁶⁷ General Synod Standing Resolution SRL4.3

surprisingly, the explanation for this depends largely on who you talk to. One commonly expressed reason is that it makes it easier for everyone (and especially bishops) because baptisms and confirmations often happen at the same service. Another (slightly more theologically based) reason is because it goes some way towards *reuniting* the long-separated rites. Unlike earlier attempts to create a single, unified rite, however, ANZPB treats baptism and confirmation as quite different rites, albeit within the same liturgical framework.

The theology underlying the ANZPB baptismal rite is spelt out in its introduction, where we read that “the baptised person is accepted and *sealed by God with the Holy Spirit.*”⁶⁸ This might be seen as a reference to the sealing by anointing in the Early Church. In ANZPB there is the potential for this to be more a symbolic than actual sealing, as the use of chrism, while expressly permitted in the introduction, is not indicated in the rubric accompanying the post-baptismal signing.⁶⁹ Also, unlike the TEC BCP, the prayer for the seven-fold gifts of the Spirit is not included in the ANZPB baptismal rite. While it is explicitly mentioned in the (non-liturgical) introduction, a focus on the gift of the Spirit, therefore, placed firmly in the baptism rite by the Americans, is retained in confirmation in the New Zealand book.

It is worth noting that ANZPB was published a decade *after* the TEC BCP. In terms of liturgical scholarship, and particularly the work surrounding initiation, the extra ten years is significant. The IALC Boston Statement was released in 1985. Brian Davis, then Bishop of Waikato (who, as Archbishop, would later write the Foreword to ANZPB) attended that meeting, having been “induced to come because he had such widespread firsthand experience of ministering communion to children and of leading the way to changes in the provincial rites to enable this to happen.”⁷⁰ As noted above, the Boston Statement included a recommendation “that provincial baptismal rites be reviewed to the end that such texts explicitly affirm the communion of the newly baptised and that only one rite be authorised for the baptism whether of adults or infants so that no essential distinction be made between persons on basis of age.”⁷¹

While the church had, experimentally since 1970 and officially since 1980, agreed to admit unconfirmed children to communion, neither the ANZPB introduction nor baptismal rite contain any explicit comment on, or affirmation of, this. Further, despite being the issue at the heart of many of the changes, there is no mention of the relationship between baptism and eucharist in either ANZPB or the Education for Liturgy Kit produced as an educational introduction to new prayer book.⁷² This is probably at least in part due to the continued

⁶⁸ *A New Zealand Prayer Book / He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa*, (Christchurch: Genesis, First Published 1989), 379. Emphasis ours.

⁶⁹ Interestingly the Education for Liturgy Kit (ELKIT) that accompanied the release of ANZPB in 1989 states in a suggested ‘Workshop on Baptism and the Liturgy’ that the post-baptismal signing with the cross “symbolises God’s commitment to us.” Two paragraphs later, however, in a section on the use of oil “to chrismate the candidate” (stipulated in the introduction to the rite as being done at the signing), the ELKIT associates it with “the spirit [*sic*] resting on those anointed” and the anointing of priests and sovereigns that means it “can be seen as a sign of entry into the royal priesthood of all believers.” The implication, then, is that what this part of the rite actually *means* depends on whether or not oil is used. *Education For Liturgy: A Liturgy Kit for Use in Association with A New Zealand Prayer Book – He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa*. The Church of the Province of New Zealand, 1989, 113.

⁷⁰ ELKIT, 13.

⁷¹ Holeton, *Growing in Newness of Life*. 18.

⁷² This connection is clearly stated in the Standing Resolution on the eucharist (SRL4.3) which states “The sacramental means of entry and incorporation into the Body of Christ occurs through Baptism.” In the

enforcement of the traditional *confirmation rubric* among some parishes and ministry units, a practice, as we have noted, specifically allowed for under the General Synod Standing Resolutions.

Much more could be said about the ANZPB baptismal rite. Of all the ANZPB liturgies it is the one that has proven for many to be most problematic.⁷³ Most of the concerns raised relate to the *structure* of the liturgy and the decision to place the questions to candidates or parents / godparents *after* the water-bath. There is a clear difference between some of the fundamental theology underpinning the ANZPB baptism rite and many other Anglican prayer books, including the TEC BCP.⁷⁴ Our focus, however, is not on baptism, but rather confirmation, although it can be difficult to disentangle the two.

In the introduction to *The Liturgy of Baptism and The Laying on of Hands for Confirmation and Renewal* there is no specific description or definition of confirmation aside from the directive to parents and godparents of children baptised to encourage the child “to make a commitment to the Lord, and in Confirmation to receive, in the laying on of hands, the strengthening power of the Holy Spirit for witness and service.”⁷⁵ The baptismal rite also includes a clear mandate for confirmation in the post-baptismal words to the child; “N, you are now a pilgrim with us. As a member of Christ’s body, the Church, you will be challenged to affirm your faith in God and receive the laying on of hands in confirmation”.⁷⁶

Unlike the TEC BCP, ANZPB retains the specific commitments to Christian service in the confirmation rite, where they are made by the candidates alone. The traditional confirmation focus on *strengthening* is also present in the prayer accompanying the laying on of hands; “Creator Spirit, strengthen N with your gifts of grace ...” This is immediately preceded by the traditional prayer for the seven-fold gifts of the Spirit⁷⁷ which was moved to the baptism rite in the TEC BCP. Alongside the theme of spiritual strengthening is an emphasis on a personal commitment to the Christian life and service, a theme explicitly stated at four different points in the confirmation rite. To these two themes – *spiritual strengthening* and

same resolution, however, the finality of this statement is challenged by the inclusion by yet another ‘out clause’: “Variations in pastoral practice in relation to admission to communion may be found, but those once admitted (whether at Baptism, or when judged pastorally appropriate by priest and family, or at a special service after more formal instruction, or after receiving the Laying on of Hands for Confirmation), are welcome to receive communion in any parish in the Province.” Are *all* the baptised welcome at communion or not? The Standing Resolution suggests both yes and no. This is repeated in a pamphlet called *Guidelines for Christian Initiation* which was distributed along with *Preparing for Christian Baptism, Nurture, Confirmation & Renewal – A Resource Kit*, produced by the Theological Education by Extension Unit of the church in 1992. However, neither the Standing Resolutions nor the *Preparing for ...* Resource Kit are particularly well known.

⁷³ A survey by the Tikanga Pakeha Liturgical Working Group in 2007-2008 revealed that most respondents had concerns about the baptism liturgy.

⁷⁴ The Church of England’s *Common Worship* tends towards a similar baptism/response model, in stark contrast to the promises/baptism model of its predecessor, *The Alternative Service Book*, which followed the TEC example. See Spinks, 183. The ANZPB pattern is based on a baptismal theology that understands *grace* to be the basis of all sacramental action. This is underlined from the very beginning of the liturgy: “E te whanau a te Karaiti, God is love, God gives us life. We love because God first loves us. *In baptism God declares that love; in Christ God calls us to respond.*” ANZPB, 383. Emphasis ours.

⁷⁵ ANZPB, 382.

⁷⁶ ANZPB, 389.

⁷⁷ ANZPB, 392f.

personal commitment – the seldom-read *General Synod Standing Resolutions* adds *affirmation of faith*, both personally by the candidates, and collectively by the whole congregation.⁷⁸

From the introduction, the rite itself and the Standing Resolutions of the church, we can thus see an understanding of confirmation that incorporates:

- *A strengthening by the Holy Spirit for witness and service.*
- *A personal commitment to the Christian life and service.*
- *A personal affirmation of faith by the candidates.*
- *A corporate affirmation of faith by the congregation.*

These four fit comfortably within the understanding of confirmation as a *pastoral rite* focused on *strengthening* and *affirming*. Perhaps not as explicit, however, is an implied continuation of some of the *sacramental* understandings of confirmation. We can see these in the expectation that those baptised will be confirmed, with that expectation becoming a requirement if one wishes to be ordained. The implication of *any* requirement for confirmation is that baptism alone is not enough. This, of course, appears to be in conflict with the stated policy that baptism is the *full and final* point of entry into the Body of Christ, the Church, which remains the *official* position of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia. Weakening this position still further, however, and adding ANZPB to the list of prayer books that continue the tradition of multiple meanings for confirmation within Anglicanism, is the placement of baptism and confirmation within the one liturgy, a decision that is guaranteed to continue the perceived link between the two, with all that such a link implies.

Who Confirms?

Ask ten Anglicans a question and you will usually get at least a dozen answers, with the exception of “*who confirms people?*” Most Anglicans know that the only possible answer is “*the bishop*”. From the beginning confirmation has been an episcopal rite for Anglicans, which at first glance would appear to put us in the correct seat traditionally.

The origins of episcopal confirmation are found clearly in Hippolytus’ *Apostolic Tradition*. There it is the Bishop who completes the baptism rite and *seals* the candidates’ baptisms. This became the norm in the so-called *Roman Pattern* and was set firmly in place two hundred years after Hippolytus by Pope Innocent I in a letter to the Bishop of Gubbio:

The right of bishops alone to seal and to deliver the Spirit the Paraclete is proved not only by the custom of the Church but also by that reading in the Acts of the Apostles ... For it is permissible for presbyters, either in the absence of a bishop, or when they baptise in his presence, to anoint the baptised with chrism, but only with such as has been consecrated by the bishop: and even then they are not to sign the brow with that oil, for that is reserved to bishops alone when they deliver the Spirit of the Paraclete.⁷⁹

Innocent’s pronouncement may have an air of permanence, but in reality such was not to be. As noted above, the Eastern Church has never had a separate rite of confirmation presided

⁷⁸ *General Synod Standing Resolution SRLA.2.(a)*

⁷⁹ Austin, 12

over by a bishop, and within a few hundred years of Pope Innocent's instruction variations had emerged in the West and presbyteral confirmation was common in many places.⁸⁰

Of those churches that retained confirmation at the Reformation, only the Church of England insisted it be an episcopal rite. In 1972 the Roman Catholic Church, previously the one other major denomination to require confirmation *solely* at the hands of a bishop, moved to allow (and indeed, encourage) a priest baptising an adult to immediately confirm the newly baptised.⁸¹ Thus, by the late twentieth century, after several unsuccessful attempts at change, Anglicans stood virtually alone in requiring a bishop to confirm.⁸²

At the 1991 IALC meeting in Toronto there was an attempt to 'reframe' the bishop's role by encouraging "a broader understanding of the bishop's ministry consistent with Anglican tradition."⁸³ The intention was to see the bishop's liturgical roles in light of the wider context of his or her ministry as "chief priest and pastor" to all the baptised, and indeed as *principle baptiser*. The consultation concluded that, whenever possible, the bishop should preside at baptism and the eucharist, and that (drawing a careful definition of confirmation in the process) "the pastoral rite of confirmation may be delegated by the bishop to a presbyter."⁸⁴

Colin Buchanan notes that, given that most other churches had relaxed the episcopal requirements long ago, this recommendation was "wholly unrevolutionary."⁸⁵ However, given the previous reactions to suggestions of a 'bishop-less' confirmation, Buchanan says it was difficult for the liturgists present to visualise the bishops of the Communion agreeing to "such a cheeky proposal" and there was a "slight gasp" as the recommendation was moved by the then Archbishop of New Zealand, Brian Davis,⁸⁶ an action that appears to have had no impact whatsoever on the practices of that Archbishop's own province.

There is a valid argument to be made that the involvement of a bishop in confirmation heightens the importance and significance of the rite. Certainly a key role of the bishop is to represent and make evident the wider Church, and this can be an important symbol to include within the confirmation liturgy. There are, however, some practical considerations required here: Baptisms usually happen within a 'normal' Sunday service, confirmations, however, are often 'special' occasions, with the involvement of the bishop adding to that impression. The heightening of confirmation's significance carries a danger of subsequently *lowering* that of baptism. Where the bishop both baptises and confirms the balance is possibly better, however as long as priests (or, under certain circumstances, anyone) can baptise, but only bishops confirm, the disparity remains, with a risk of the focus falling the wrong way.

Just What Is Confirmation Then?

⁸⁰ Meyers, 'Fresh Thoughts', 335.

⁸¹ Meyers, 'Fresh Thoughts', 335. This was a direct result of the adoption of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*.

⁸² Turrell, 346.

⁸³ Meyers, 'Fresh Thoughts', 335.

⁸⁴ Holeton, *Growing in Newness of Life*, 229ff. The TEC BCP specifically notes that the "bishop, when present, is the celebrant" of baptism and a priest is only expected to preside "in the absence of a bishop."

⁸⁵ Colin Buchanan, 'Anglican Confirmation: Recent Trends' in Angela Berlis and Klaus-Dieter Gerth, *Christus Spes: Liturgie und Glaube im ökumenischen Kontext. Festschrift für Bischof Sigisbert Kraft*. (Peter Lang: Berlin, 1994), 98.

⁸⁶ Buchanan in Berlis and Gerth, 98.

It should be clear from the points above that neither The Episcopal Church nor our own has succeeded in distilling confirmation into one, integrated, meaning. While we *have* shifted our understanding of baptism, and in particular its relationship to the eucharist, forsaking in the process – for the most part – Cranmer’s *confirmation rubric* and removing the ‘gateway’ to communion that was for so long and for so many the *real* meaning of confirmation, the inevitable changes this signalled for confirmation have certainly not resulted in a single agreed understanding of what it means, which begs the question, is this a problem?

The reality is that multiple understandings of confirmation have existed for at least a thousand years. It could indeed be argued that the removal of the eucharist from the equation has actually returned to prominence the real meanings of the rite that existed before the English church (and others) obscured them. Of course, if the understanding that confirmation involves the conferring of the Spirit leads to a suggestion that baptism is somehow incomplete or *unconfirmed* without confirmation (the traditional Mason-Dix line), that presents problems and is potentially incompatible within the bounds of our currently accepted theology of initiation.

Others would argue, however, that the understandings of Christian initiation in general over the past forty years have become too fixated on the *events* of baptism and confirmation, at the expense of recognising the *process* inherent in both the *sacramental* practices of the Early Church (preparation-exorcisms-water-bath-anointing) and the *pastoral* focus of the Cranmerian system (baptism-catechumenate-testing-confirmation). Certainly this was the focus of many studies in the 1980s and 1990s, often involving models of confirmation such as ‘the ordination to the priesthood of the laity’ with a structured pattern lasting from baptism to confirmation to eucharist and on to the funeral. This idea picks up on the popular *journey* motif and embraces related theories such as James Fowler’s *stages of faith development*.⁸⁷

The *process* versus *event* debate has continued over the past twenty years within the wider revisions of Christian initiation rites in several churches. The process approach in particular seeks to understand the sacramental nature of Christian initiation within the whole process spread over several ‘unfolding events’.⁸⁸ There is a clear move towards this view in the Church of England’s current prayer book, *Common Worship*, and possibly even within our own ANZPB.

While some of those previously in favour of the process approach have since abandoned or revised their opinions, there are still those who argue in its favour. The issue, however, is that while we might like to accept that Christian initiation is a *process*, our official church theology of baptism is based around the *event*. Any suggestion, therefore, that the initiation process is not complete within the baptism event runs explicitly counter to our accepted position.

Some clearly believe the multiple meanings present in Anglican confirmation practice present a problem. John Westerhoff, quoted above, argues strongly that the issue requires not just addressing, but a solution.⁸⁹ Some who agree with him have suggested that the ongoing

⁸⁷ For examples of this approach see Dawson, *In Search of Meaning*, and a variety of writings by John Westerhoff.

⁸⁸ See Paul Avis, ‘Is Baptism ‘Complete Sacramental Initiation?’’, *Theology* 111 (2008), 163-169. It could be argued that this is a similar approach to that which says it is the entire eucharistic prayer (or liturgy) that is the point of consecration, rather than a specific set of words in a single paragraph or two.

⁸⁹ Westerhoff in Kubick, 154ff.

confusion caused by multiple understandings is cause enough to abandon confirmation altogether, shifting any vestige of the sacramental meaning into baptism and adopting another pastoral rite to provide appropriate opportunities for affirmations of faith and commitment to service, free from the baggage that has become attached to the term *confirmation*.⁹⁰

Maxwell Johnson echoes concerns about the implications for baptismal theology. While his focus is on the TEC BCP, his observation is just as pertinent to our own prayer book rites:

[I]n spite of the clear theology in the 1979 BCP that “Holy Baptism is *full initiation* by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ’s Body the Church,” the continued practice of confirmation, reception, and reaffirmation administered by Episcopal bishops (!), expected even in the case of recently baptised adults, cannot but be perceived as being part of Christian initiation itself.⁹¹

Anglicans have by no means been alone in this quandary. The World Council of Churches in its precursor to the highly influential 1982 report *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, noted that the potential for tensions between baptismal theology and confirmation practice existed in many denominations, especially where children were involved:

Those churches which baptise children, but refuse them a share in the eucharist before confirmation, may wish to ponder whether they have fully appreciated and accepted the consequences of infant baptism.⁹²

In elevating the significance of baptism and removing the requirement for confirmation prior to communion, Anglicanism, in this part of the world at least, has addressed at least some of the issues between the two rites. Again, we have not been alone in this task. In the next part of this resource we turn our attention briefly to the wider Church.

⁹⁰ See Burnett, Turrell and Meyers, ‘Fresh Thoughts’ for examples of these viewpoints.

⁹¹ Johnson, 362.

⁹² World Council of Churches Faith and Order Committee, *One Baptism, One Eucharist and a Mutually Recognised Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper 73 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1975), 18.

PART THREE

Confirmation in the Wider Church

Nor must we forget that – just as in the fourth century – the causes of liturgical revision were not solely within the churches. At least in the developed nations of the western world ... the different denominations were strongly influenced by the same socio-cultural factors around them ... so it is hardly surprising that ... they tended to come up with similar solutions to their common problems.¹

This resource has been prepared by, for, and with reference to Tikanga Pakeha within the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia – Te Hāhi Mihinare ki Aotearoa ki Nui Tireni, ki Nga Moutere o te Moana Nui a Kiwa, with all the limitations and deficiencies that implies. Even within such a narrow focus, however, it would be unwise not to at least acknowledge the larger context. As Paul Bradshaw sagely notes, the place we find ourselves in today is closely connected to, and the result of, the liturgical scholarship and socio-cultural upheavals of the past fifty years, events that impacted on and shaped the liturgical expressions of churches of every shape, size and denominational flavour throughout the developed world at least.² In other words, we are not alone!

In Our Own Backyard

As noted previously, not every part of our church accepted the changes to our theology of initiation in the late twentieth century. While there is no evidence today of any significant resistance to baptism being the only point of entry to the Church's rites within Tikanga Pakeha, the same is not true for Tikanga Maori and Pasifika.

Studies on Christian initiation theology and practice within the Aotearoa-New Zealand context are few and far between, and we have been unable to locate any from a specifically Maori and / or Polynesian perspective. We have spoken to many clergy and some laypeople from both Tikanga, however, and the anecdotal and observational evidence suggests that change has been much slower than in our own, and in many cases, nonexistent.

Confirmation has always been widely advocated and practiced within both Maori and Pacific Island communities. In the mid-1990s, then-Archbishop Brian Davis stated that he believed the continuing resistance among Maori Anglicans to changes in Christian initiation was “due to the preservation within Maori culture of a more traditional spirituality and the pressure of other agendas within the Maori church.”³ Today, Tikanga Maori bishops still report significant numbers of confirmation candidates, most of whom simply ‘show up’ when the bishop comes to take a service, usually with little or no preparation. In many communities, especially in rural areas, confirmation prior to communion is still an expectation. Challenges to this approach may be increasing, however even where entry to the eucharist is open confirmation is still far more common in Maori communities than their Pakeha equivalents.

¹ Paul Bradshaw, ‘The Homogenization of Christian Liturgy – Ancient and Modern: Presidential Address’, *Studia Liturgica* 26 (1996) 6-8.

² Bradshaw, 6-8.

³ Brian Davis, *The Way Ahead: Anglican Change & Prospect in New Zealand*. (Christchurch: Caxton, 1995), 62.

Tikanga Pasifika is in a very different situation to its partners. Anglicanism is a small denomination in most of the Pacific Islands, far behind Methodism and Roman Catholicism. In the Islands confirmation remains an expectation in both churches,⁴ a point that has most likely impacted on Anglican practice also. Certainly confirmation remains a requirement for most Anglicans prior to first communion in the Pacific Islands and the majority of Tikanga Pasifika churches in New Zealand. Again, there are some arguments against this coming from mainly a younger group of clergy, but these are far fewer than even within Tikanga Maori. If there is ever a move towards achieving standardisation of practice and belief among Anglicans in this province, it will most likely be Tikanga Pasifika that will be the last to shift.

The Anglican Communion

As with most things, every side of the confirmation debate is represented within the Communion, but it is significant to note that relatively few of the forty-four member churches have embraced the IALC recommendation “that all baptised persons be admitted to communion.”⁵ This is not the place for an exhaustive survey of Anglican belief and practice, but a selective tour through several provinces will give an indication of what’s happening.⁶

North America

Thirty years after the release of the TEC BCP a brief survey of the U.S. participants at the 2009 International Anglican Liturgical Consultation in Auckland indicated that the understanding that baptism is the full and final rite of entry to the Church, including the eucharist, seems to be accepted throughout the Episcopal Church.⁷ As with New Zealand, the removal of confirmation as a barrier to communion has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of confirmations, but the explicit expectation that those baptised as infants or adults (if not by a bishop) ensures a steady stream of candidates. This has undoubtedly been helped in the Episcopal Church by a renewed emphasis on the catechumenate and youth programmes such as *The Journey to Adulthood*, which we will explore further below.

Alongside the American revisions in the TEC BCP, the Church of Canada’s *Book of Alternative Services*⁸ (BAS) stands as an example of one end of the Anglican Christian initiation spectrum. Like the TEC BCP, the BAS baptismal rite includes a post-baptismal signing with the optional use of chrism, and a prayer for the gifts of the Spirit.⁹ Unlike its neighbour’s prayer book, however, the Canadian BAS contains *no* confirmation rite, just a paragraph in the (non-liturgical) introduction to baptism:

Confirmation, reception, and reaffirmation are various modes of response to baptism. Whether they involve making promises on one’s own behalf, seeking membership within a particular branch of the

⁴ While this is not surprising for the Roman Catholics, within Methodism, as we will note below, it is somewhat unique.

⁵ Holeyton, *Growing in Newness of Life*, 18.

⁶ We are grateful to the members of the most recent International Anglican Liturgical Consultation for their assistance with this.

⁷ There are sure to be the odd examples of dissent, but these are not evident and besides, they have other things to disagree about these days!

⁸ Anglican Church of Canada, *The Book of Alternative Services of the Anglican Church of Canada with the Revised Common Lectionary*, (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1985).

⁹ *The Book of Alternative Services*, 148. The introduction to the baptism rite specifically associates the anointing with the Early Church understanding that this was the point of the giving of the Holy Spirit.

Church, or reaffirming promises made long ago, each is directly related to the covenant made in baptism. The liturgy of baptism is consequently the primary context in which these renewals of the baptismal covenant take place.¹⁰

In North American Anglicanism, then, we find confirmation either abandoned or clearly identified (officially at least) as a pastoral rite separate to any forms of Christian initiation.

Africa

In Africa generally the traditional practice of requiring confirmation prior to first communion continues as the norm. The exception was the Anglican Church in Southern Africa where, in 1992, baptism was formally recognised as “full membership of the Body of Christ”,¹¹ leading in 1999 to the *confirmation rubric* being officially struck from the South African prayer book.¹² The decision was short-lived, however. At the same synod that removed the *confirmation rubric* a change was made to the canon concerning church membership, defining a communicant member as “a person who is confirmed within the Anglican Communion, or in another Church in full communion with it”. This change effectively makes confirmation mandatory again, although the canon does go on to offer as an alternative definition someone “who has been formally received into membership of the Church of this Province, and shall have received the Holy Communion three times at least during the preceding year.” Thus, while there is no *theological* or *liturgical* demand for confirmation with the Southern African province, to be a *full member* of the church “requires either confirmation, episcopally administered if within the Province, or baptism and habitual worship.”¹³

The Philippines

Practice varies in the Asian churches, but in general regulations surrounding baptism, confirmation and Christian education tend to be more strictly enforced than might be the case elsewhere.

In the Episcopal Church in the Philippines the *confirmation rubric* no longer applies with baptism being officially understood as full membership in the Church. Common practice, however, requires some form of basic instruction and a formal *admission to communion* process. This customarily happens anywhere from age five onwards.¹⁴

Having been a part of the American Episcopal Church until 1990, the Philippines church has mostly used the TEC BCP although a local version is available. The American influence continues to shape the way baptism and confirmation are approached, although the latter is possibly given more significance as a way to ensure at least a modicum of Christian education in a country where such is hard to come by outside the Roman Catholic system. As a result there has been a steady increase in confirmations over recent years.

¹⁰ *The Book of Alternative Services*, 149.

¹¹ From the *Acts & Resolutions of the Church of the Province of South Africa*, 1992. Quoted in Ian Darby, *Confirmation and Chrism: The admission into full membership of the Anglican Church in Southern Africa*, an unpublished paper, 2007. 3.

¹² Darby, 3.

¹³ Darby, 3.

¹⁴ Information on practice in the Philippines was provided by IALC member Rev'd Tomas Maddela in an email response to a request for assistance with this project.

England

The Church of England presents one of the more interesting examples of ongoing change in baptism and confirmation over recent decades.

In 1980 *An Alternative Service Book* (ASB) was published to stand alongside the official (1662) *Book of Common Prayer*. Heavily influenced by the work leading up to the TEC BCP, the ASB baptism rites contained a commitment to service *prior* to the water-bath and closely reflected the structure of the Early Church liturgy described in *Apostolic Tradition*. Widespread debate and criticism surrounding the ASB, and in particular its approach to Christian initiation, led to major changes in the new prayer book, *Common Worship*, published in 2000.

Common Worship contains separate baptism and confirmation rites, although here too the former is stressed as the primary act of initiation. The major changes from the ASB pattern are in the shape of the baptismal rite, where the commitments made by or on behalf of the candidates happen *after* the water-bath. As with ANZPB, baptism in *Common Worship* is seen as “God’s free grace” with no commitments required in advance, only responses afterwards.¹⁵ Confirmation is included alongside baptism in the Christian Initiation section of *Common Worship*.

According to recent comments, the changes made in the preparation of *Common Worship* have failed to quell calls for further revision and “nowhere are those calls more frequent than with the rites of Christian initiation”. Attempts to address the concerns raised following the release of the *ASB* have not gone far enough for many, and perhaps too far for some, with a common belief “that the relationship of baptism to confirmation has still not been squarely faced and that there are theological and pastoral anomalies because of this.”¹⁶

Rather than make a blanket ruling, the Church of England in 2006 gave diocesan bishops the authority to decide whether or not confirmation was a prerequisite for receiving communion within his geographical boundaries.¹⁷ The result has been that some bishops “notably encourage it, some try to discourage it and probably the majority ... are happy to leave it in the hands of the Parochial Church Council and parish priests.”¹⁸ There are, therefore, a great variety of practices, with each diocese doing more or less its own thing, although reports suggest admission to communion pre-confirmation is more common in urban dioceses than rural ones.¹⁹ In general, therefore, the Church of England has continued the practice of infant baptism with an expectation of confirmation somewhere post-adolescence.

Australia

Officially the 1662 *confirmation rubric* remains the policy of our closest Anglican neighbours. In reality, however, practice differs from diocese to diocese, with some allowing the admission of unconfirmed children to communion and others not.

¹⁵ See Spinks, 182.

¹⁶ Platten, 1.

¹⁷ Officially the parish priest has to apply to the bishop for permission to admit an unconfirmed child to the eucharist, so this really can not be seen as making baptism a ‘full and final’ entry point.

¹⁸ Bishop Stephen Platten, Bishop of Wakefield, responding by email to a personal request for information.

¹⁹ Peter Moger, the Church of England National Worship Development Officer, responding by email to a request for information.

Following a similar pattern to ANZPB and *Common Worship*, the Australian rites contained in *A Prayer Book for Australia* (APBA, approved for use in 1995) include both baptism and confirmation in the section headed 'Christian Initiation', with the traditional focus on the Spirit remaining in the confirmation liturgy.²⁰ The introduction to the section does offer the option of blending the two into a single event, something APBA makes much simpler than the older *Australian Prayer Book* (1978).

As with Tikanga Pakeha in New Zealand, anecdotal evidence suggests some renewal of interest in confirmation in Australia during recent years, with many bishops actively encouraging the rite, especially among older teenagers. An interesting by-product of this has been increased concern about the official insistence on confirmation for those baptised as adults, with the likely outcome being further debate about initiation within the province.²¹

Beyond the Communion

Anglicans have by no means been the only ones revising their Christian initiation rites over the past fifty years. Indeed, at some points we have lagged behind others and the reforms we have made have often been heavily influenced, if not triggered, by the work of other denominations. Whole libraries can and have been written about the ecumenical liturgical shifts of the last century, but we will just look briefly at a couple of them here.

The Catholics

Without question one of the most significant and influential events of the twentieth century was the Second Vatican Council (1963-65) and, with regards to liturgical reform, the resulting *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*. Among many other points picked up by the *Constitution* was the call for wide-ranging revisions of the Roman Catholic rites of Christian initiation. Over the years following the Council a variety of revised rites appeared, including a baptismal rite for children (1969), a confirmation rite (1971), and the most significant of them all, the *Ordo Initiationis Christianae Adultorum*, the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) published in 1972.

The RCIA is focused on restoring, for adults, the unity of baptism, confirmation and first communion. This alone made the RCIA a revolutionary step forward for Roman Catholics, but two other elements added important new developments to the mix.

Firstly, an integral part of the RCIA is the preparation process, focused on recapturing something of the ancient catechumenate.²² This lengthy process involves an emphasis on *formation* as much as *education* and culminates in the baptism rite at the Easter Vigil. It was the establishment of this process as normative for all Roman Catholic parishes that led to the second important development, already noted previously, wherein, because the bishop cannot be in *every* parish at the Easter Vigil, priests may be delegated to perform the confirmation part of the rite immediately following the baptism.

²⁰ It is worth noting that while many prayer books have a confirmation rite following the baptism liturgy, and some have chosen an integrated liturgy containing elements of both, none have followed the ANZPB example and included them both as two separate rites within one liturgical framework.

²¹ Dane Courtney, member of the Australian Anglican Liturgical Commission, responding by email to a request for information.

²² This very important point, which has had an impact on the work of many other denominations, including our own, is explored further in the next part of this resource.

Gerard Austin notes that in some ways it would have been more helpful if the RCIA had been published *before* the revised infant baptism and confirmation rites, as the adult version quickly became considered normative.²³ Aidan Kavanagh foresaw this when he wrote that the infant baptism and separate confirmation rites “subordinate the latter as soul subordinates body, as function subordinates form.”²⁴

In many ways the RCIA set the benchmark for initiation reform ecumenically. Even within Roman Catholicism, however, its impact on confirmation in practice has been negligible. Debates continue to rage over the appropriate age for those baptised as infants to be confirmed, with the latter still being seen as one of the three essential sacraments of initiation.²⁵ Loosely speaking the combatants fall into two camps; the reunified rite people who believe baptism, confirmation and first communion should preferably happen within a single liturgy, or alternatively, in separate services delayed by as few years as possible and retaining the correct order for the three; and the delayed rite people who believe that as well as being a sacrament of initiation confirmation is a rite of commitment that demands a maturity of age and faith, so baptism and first communion might happen in childhood, but confirmation should be delayed until the late teenage years at least.²⁶ During the 1980s and 1990s the delayed rite camp was the most common in terms of practice; today, however, in many places there is a renewed focus on celebrating the three rites in the traditional order.²⁷ This has undoubtedly been as a result of the growth in influence and practice of the RCIA.

The influence of these Roman Catholic developments, and especially the RCIA, is obvious in many of the liturgical revisions of the past four decades. While, as in Roman Catholicism, the statistical *norm* remains infant baptism, behind the revised baptism theologies and rites of many churches, including our own, is the understanding, based largely on understandings of Early Church practice, that adult baptism is *normative*. That tension between the *norm* and the *normative* raises major challenges for all the churches involved.²⁸ Certainly one of the effects of the RCIA and its quite stringent requirements for catechesis on Roman Catholicism has been a demand for the Church to take infant baptism at least as seriously as adult baptism.²⁹

The Methodists

In most Protestant churches the understandings and practice of confirmation have been far from universally common. In Methodism, John Wesley had no strong feelings about the rite, partly due to the general indifference to it in much of the Church of England in his day, and partly due to the influence of his father, a devotee of the Puritan movement who came to believe in the primacy of baptism.³⁰ It is quite probable that it was due to Wesley's indifference to confirmation that the rite continued in some Methodist contexts and vanished in others; he simply did not care enough to embrace or reject it.

²³ Austin, 41.

²⁴ Aidan Kavanagh, *The Shape of Baptism: The Rite of Christian Initiation*. (New York: Pueblo, 1978), 126f.

²⁵ Baptism, confirmation and first communion.

²⁶ Gerard Austin is the champion of the reunified rite camp, while Kieran Sawyer often leads the charge in favour of a delayed rite.

²⁷ In Australia, for example, it has become common for a priest to preside at confirmations as a result of this focus.

²⁸ In our own recent studies on confirmation several conversations with clergy about our theologies of initiation revealed discomfort with infant baptism emerging as a result.

²⁹ Kurt Stasiak, *Return to Grace: A Theology for Infant Baptism*. (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1996), ixff.

³⁰ Dawson, *In Search of Meaning*, 4f.

In New Zealand Methodism confirmation was strongly connected to church membership until the 1950s. Prior to that, to be a member of the Methodist Church of New Zealand required a “public profession of faith and responsible commitment.”³¹ In 1959 (more than a decade before the New Zealand Anglican Church began experimenting with the concept) the Methodists adopted as official policy the recommendations of a report on *Membership and the Place of Children in the Church* which (controversially) declared baptism, including that of children, to be the point of entry into church membership. This was a direct challenge to the traditional Methodist requirement for a “responsible commitment”, closely aligned with Wesley’s insistence on a point of personal conversion, so the Church Conference also acknowledged the importance of rites that “fulfilled” the membership gained through baptism and acted “as a form of ‘confirmation’ to safeguard the Methodist emphasis.” The end result of all this discussion was the agreement to a three-fold understanding of membership: “(i) The fundamental membership initiated by Baptism. (ii) The Responsible membership which is recognised and sealed at Confirmation. (iii) Membership in the institutional and legally constituted Church granted at Confirmation or later.”³²

Today, as noted above, confirmation remains reasonably common among Pacific Methodists, both in the Islands and New Zealand. Within *palangi* (Pakeha) Methodism, however, the rite has almost vanished. In a similar way to the effect of the Anglican shift away from its requirement for admission communion, the fact that confirmation is not required for *any* reason means there is little emphasis on, or encouragement for, confirmation today.

Do We Have The Right Rite?

A question that could (and possibly should) be asked about Anglican confirmation today is whether this is the *same* confirmation practiced by other churches? The answer is usually *no*, and increasingly the same answer would apply to comparisons between Anglican provinces.

Confirmation for the Roman Catholics is a rite of initiation. It remains a *sealing* of baptism and a requirement for full participation in the Church. For Methodists, Presbyterians and certain other Protestant denominations, confirmation is a clearly pastoral rite, focused on marking a transition into ‘adult’ commitment. It is also rarely practiced. For Anglicans in some places confirmation is still the ‘gateway’ to communion, while in many of those places and some others, it is also a rite of initiation with similarities to *both* the Roman Catholic and Protestant approaches.

Confirmation, then, means whatever each church says it means, which inevitably leads to some degree of confusion when you get people from different churches talking about it. Yet however we define confirmation, one thing that there seems to be general agreement on is the importance of appropriate *preparation* for it, and it is to this subject that we turn next.

³¹ Dawson, 8.

³² Methodist Church of New Zealand Faith and Order Paper, *Membership and the Place of Children in the Church*, 1959. Cited in Dawson, 11ff.

PART FOUR

Building Christians: Preparing for Confirmation

Recalling Tertullian's observation that Christians are "made, not born," catechesis for Christian education should intentionally be concerned with "building Christians," and any theology of confirmation should reflect that understanding.¹

So far in this resource we have explored briefly the history and various (and occasionally competing) understandings and theologies that provide the foundations for confirmation. Having given some attention to what confirmation is and why we do it, we turn now to the perhaps more practical matter of preparing for it.

Many of us remember our own confirmation classes, where we learnt the Lord's Prayer and Apostles Creed, and trawled our way through the rites of one prayer book or another, all in preparation for that day when the ancient bishop would come and lay his hand forcefully on our heads, before finally allowing us access to the holy of holies: the communion rail.

Times have changed. Very few Tikanga Pakeha parishes offer confirmation classes and none (that we know of) are still demanding confirmation prior to communion. For those who still present for confirmation, preparation is, in most cases, a far less formal affair than it once was. It is also likely to be very different from parish to parish. Some will take the preparation process very seriously, demanding a lengthy commitment and providing a carefully structured programme. Others will be less demanding and more flexible. Many, however, will be unsure *how* to go about confirmation preparation, *where* to find appropriate resources, *who* we should be confirming, and *what* those involved should have learned and done by the end of it. It is these four questions that we will attempt to address here.

How

Some form of preparation has *officially* been a requirement for confirmation from the very beginning. In the Early Church, before any such thing as a separate confirmation rite existed, preparation for baptism was often a long and arduous process lasting a year or more.² This was approached as a formation process, grounded in the theology expressed so eloquently in the second century by Tertullian that "Christians are made, not born."³

While we offer a wide variety of potential preparation resources in the appendix to this resource, research and experience in many parts of the world over the past forty years has pointed to the catechumenate as the most effective process for those preparing for baptism or confirmation. This recommendation comes partly as a result of the experiences of those involved,⁴ and partly from studies of the psychological impact of such programmes.⁵

¹ Gary Davis, 'Building Christians' in Kubick, 145f.

² Maxwell Johnson notes that it is impossible to know precisely how long the early church catechumenate lasted given various contradictory sources listing periods of between forty days and three years. Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation*, 90f.

³ Tertullian was writing about preparation for baptism of course, an important point as any suggestion that one is made a Christian at confirmation would be clearly problematic.

⁴ Chamberlain, *Forming Faith*, 38ff.

Archbishop Brian Davis, who was instrumental in the establishment of a catechumenate programme in New Zealand, argued that it presented a model wholly appropriate for initiating new members into a faith culture markedly different from the world around it, in much the same way that the Early Church approached the original catechumenate.⁶

In the Early Church, Tertullian's understanding was vital, given that Christianity represented an approach to life that was completely alien to those coming into it. One could not be *born* a Christian in such a context, but rather had to be *formed* in the faith one was choosing to embrace. While this certainly involved some *education* into the ways of the Church, its scriptures and beliefs, the primary focus was on enveloping the candidates in the life of the Christian community, in ways similar to what today's social workers and psychologists would describe as 'wrap-around care'. It was only once one was immersed in this life to the point where it had become one's own that baptism occurred, and it was *after* baptism that the mysteries of the Church – specifically the eucharist - were revealed and explained in depth.

Following the conversion of Constantine and the Edict of Milan, preparation requirements began to decrease.⁷ By the Middle Ages the formational period for baptism had all but disappeared, while under the influence of Thomas Aquinas and others there were sporadic attempts to introduce instruction periods prior to confirmation. These were far briefer and more educationally focused than the earlier examples, with evidence from the time, including a steady stream of regulations requiring such preparation, suggesting that it rarely happened.

We have already noted the Reformers' zeal for Christian education and the decision of some to appropriate confirmation as a rite to celebrate the completion of a period of instruction, thereby essentially reversing the focus of the Early Church where the process only existed to lead to the rite, to the point where the rite only existed to celebrate the process. We have also seen how Thomas Cranmer incorporated this understanding into his Anglican approach to confirmation, albeit with mixed results and little apparent success for several hundred years.

Like so many twentieth century ecclesiastical reforms, the decisive shift back towards a formal period of catechesis came out of Vatican II. *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* called for a restoration of the *adult* catechumenate, a directive that was realised in the 1972 *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA).

The structure of the RCIA catechumenate programme follows reasonably closely that of the Early Church, as described by Hippolytus in *Apostolic Tradition*. As in the Early Church (and this is an important point), it is primarily a process of preparation for *baptism*, with its very roots being in the desire to establish a single rite encompassing baptism, confirmation and first communion.⁸ The RCIA does, however, include an option for those already baptised preparing for confirmation.⁹

⁵ See, for example, Karen S. Cook, 'Conversion to Kingdom Living: Catechumenate as Confirmation Process'. *Liturgy*, 22 (2007): 5-10. Or, John H. Westerhoff, *Inner Growth, Outer Change: An Educational Guide to Church Renewal*. (New York: Seabury, 1979).

⁶ Brian Davis, *The Way Ahead*, 65. See also Davis in Kubick, *Confirming the Faith of Adolescents*, 138.

⁷ Chamberlain, 17. Mark Chamberlain points out that this was at least partly a result of the increasing numbers of candidates for baptism placing unmanageable strains on the catechumenate process.

⁸ See Johnson, 302.

⁹ See Chamberlain, 19f.

As we have already noted, we must not underestimate the influence of RCIA on the liturgical and theological reforms of other denominations, including our own. The Episcopalian 1979 *Book of Common Prayer* baptism rite incorporates many of the liturgical understandings inherent in the Roman Catholic programme, which also influenced the move towards a restored catechumenal process contained in the Episcopal Church 1994 *Book of Occasional Services*.¹⁰ Like the RCIA, the Episcopalian catechumenate is focused specifically on adults preparing for baptism, with this clearly outlined in the introduction:

It should be noted that the rites and prayers which follow are appropriate for use only with persons preparing for baptism. Validly baptised Christians present at instruction classes to deepen their understanding of the faith, including members of other Christian bodies preparing to be received into the Episcopal Church, are under no circumstances to be considered catechumens.¹¹

Others have also stressed the historical connection between the catechumenate and baptism, with some, like the RCIA, including options for those already baptised seeking confirmation or an opportunity to reaffirm their baptismal vows. Within Anglicanism the 1991 Toronto meeting of the International Anglican Liturgical Consultation strongly urged the restoration of the catechumenate, leading to renewed interest in many provinces.

In New Zealand in the 1990s two dioceses moved to create formal processes of catechesis.¹² Christchurch established a *Catechumenate Core Group* in 1994 “with the goal of establishing the catechumenate in every parish of the Diocese.”¹³ In 1996 a group established by Wellington diocese produced a resource for those interested in establishing a catechumenate group. Both groups were deeply involved in the planning and running of the National Catechumenate Conferences in 1994 and 1996.

So what is the catechumenate? One description is “a period of training and instruction in Christian understandings about God, human relationships, and the meaning of life”¹⁴ culminating in baptism, confirmation or the reaffirmation of baptismal vows. In our own province one of those responsible for its establishment describes it thus:

It involves an enquiry stage, a formation stage of basic instruction, an intensive candidacy stage, (immediately prior to baptism, confirmation or renewal), and a reflection and training for ministry stage. Lay people are involved in the educational and formation process as supporters and catechists (teachers). Learning takes place in a small group as the scriptures are read and discussed, and as the faith story

¹⁰ *The Book of Occasional Services 1994*. (New York: Church Publishing, 1995), 114-127.

¹¹ *The Book of Occasional Services 1994*, 116. This focus on baptism continues throughout the catechumenate process, although the very beginning of the introduction does state that it “culminates in the reception of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation.” (114) The use of the plural *may* reflect an underlying understanding at odds with the stated Episcopalian belief that baptism is the full and final rite of Christian initiation.

¹² We have been unable to find others and Chamberlain notes that some choose programmes like *Alpha* instead.

¹³ Chamberlain, 19.

¹⁴ *The Book of Alternative Services 1994*, 114.

of the people of God is seen to relate to the life journeys of the participants. The small group provides the opportunity for deep interpersonal sharing and reflection. And each of the main stages in the process are liturgically celebrated in the public life of the congregation. The whole congregation is involved in the formation of new Christians and is constantly reminded what it means to be a baptised people of God.¹⁵

Unlike those confirmation classes some of us suffered through, the catechumenal process, while concerned somewhat with education, is not so much focused on the memorisation of empirical data as on the experience of the Christian life, a life that calls for “a continuing process of conversion.”¹⁶ The aim, therefore, is not to produce candidates capable of reciting the Lord’s Prayer, Apostles Creed, Ten Commandments and Articles of Faith (the requirements listed in the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*), but rather the facilitation of “conversion moments” that produce candidates “more able to answer with honesty and integrity the questions posed on the day of baptism, membership reception, reaffirmation, or confirmation.”¹⁷ This is, of course, easier said than done.

As our list of available resources in the appendix shows, there are few specifically catechumenal confirmation programmes to choose from. While many resources incorporate elements of the traditional catechumenate, most choose against following the process too closely. Two obvious reasons for this are: (i) the catechumenate process is lengthy, anywhere between six months and two years (depending on the programme), demanding a major time commitment from both participants and catechists; (ii) the catechumenate requires significant human resources, both in terms of catechists and participants – a small group process simply does not work with one or two participants.

Some programmes have attempted to address the first of these issues by shortening the process, usually down to around three months. Aside from limiting the possibilities for topics and liturgical marker points on the way (twelve weeks is only twelve sessions unless meeting more than weekly), a persuasive argument against this is the reduction of the commitment demanded. There is good reason to believe that the level of commitment demanded determines the value participants place on the process, and the intensity of their experience.¹⁸

The second issue raised – the human resources required for a catechumenate programme – is the more problematic. Some have addressed this by focusing on diocesan or regional programmes, drawing participants and catechists from a number of parishes. While this can be a positive experience, it can also present issues, especially at the points where the process is marked liturgically. At those times a choice has to be made as to whether the participants will celebrate these *marker points* together in one context or separately in their home parishes. As the commitment, prayers and focus of the local congregation are important factors in the catechumenal process, this choice is a significant one.

¹⁵ Davis, 63f.

¹⁶ Karen S. Cook, ‘Conversion to Kingdom Living: Catechumenate as Confirmation Process’. *Liturgy* (22) 2007, 5-10, 6.

¹⁷ Cook, 6.

¹⁸ Chamberlain, 66f.

The issues are compounded where the programme includes some participants preparing for confirmation and others for baptism, with each requiring some differing focal points. This also presents a potential further muddying of the waters between the two, with the possible implication that *both* are initiatory rites.

Yet another potential problem arises when programmes involve participants from more than one denominational tradition. As previously noted, the very real fact that confirmation often means different things in different denominations makes joint preparation tricky at best.

There are undoubtedly challenges involved in developing and implementing a catechumenate, which is no doubt why both the established catechumenate groups in New Zealand are in recess at the time of writing. There is no reason, however, why the guiding principles behind the catechumenate cannot be present in other preparation programmes.

Peter Ball, in his work on the contemporary catechumenate, which has been very influential in contexts such as the Church of England, lays out five essential features for a good preparation programme:¹⁹

- *Welcome* – the programme should include an open environment that encourages the participants to ask questions and approaches the addressing of those questions by focusing on listening to and valuing the participant’s stories.
- *Accompanied Journey* – participants do not travel alone, and nor are they specifically led. The role of the catechist / companion is to accompany the participant on their travels, occasionally offering a guiding hand where required. This feature also emphasises the *journey* aspect of preparation, something that takes place over an extended period of time. This need not, and should not, be a brief trip.²⁰
- *Celebrations* – these are the liturgical *marker-points* for the journey which should happen at specific times within the process.
- *Faith Sharing* – lessons are learned and experiences shared by telling the stories of the participants, the companions, the scriptures, and the church. The *sharing* focus is a reminder that the participants are not simply passive recipients of whatever is offered to them. They come with their own experiences, understandings, and stories, all of which add to the process. The Episcopal *Book of Occasional Services* describes this feature of the catechumenate as “a continual reflection on Scripture, Christian prayer, worship, and the catechumen’s gifts for ministry and work for justice and peace.”²¹

¹⁹ Peter Ball, *Adult Way to Faith: Preparing for Baptism and Confirmation*. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1993).

²⁰ While it is difficult to assess just *how* long this process should take, research done in recent months in New Zealand indicates the majority of confirmation candidates are undertaking less than three months of preparation, with some spending less than a month. This is clearly not long enough. Bishop Victoria Matthews in a letter to clergy in 2008 noted that a “year of preparation would be ideal.”

²¹ *The Book of Occasional Services 1994*. 114.

- *Community* – alongside the participants and companions, the wider faith community needs to be part of the preparation process. This will include involvement in the liturgical marker-points noted above, but it may also involve the participation of other clergy and laypeople for specific group sessions, individual sponsors or mentors whom the participants meet with separately for discussion and reflection,²² and regular mentions in prayers and church notices, reminding the congregation that this process continues.

Mark Chamberlain notes that Ball's features largely mirror the traditional elements of the catechumenate,²³ however, they can apply just as well in a variety of programme styles.

Where

Finding appropriate confirmation resources can be harder than it might at first seem. The list of available resources we have compiled and included as an appendix to this resource offers some suggestions about *what* is out there, *which* contexts it might or might not suit, and *who* it might be appropriate for (as in the size or age of the group). Most of these resources are available through suppliers such as *Pleroma* and *The Anglican Resource Centre* in Wellington diocese, but where they are harder to find, or perhaps impossible to purchase, we have indicated where you might borrow them. We hope that these points will prove useful. There are, however, others that would be helpful, if only they existed!

Our research over the past two years has shown that, outside of church schools, very few people preparing others for confirmation are using resources specifically designed to be used in this way. Resources such as the *Catechism* in ANZPB, the confirmation liturgy itself, and the *Anglican* leaflets produced by Genesis Publications in Christchurch are all widely used in confirmation preparation and do provide some helpful information. None of them, however, offer a complete, formation-focused, programme.²⁴ Such programmes do exist and while some are relatively expensive, for the most part they pay attention to the features of a good preparation programme listed above.

There are some points to note and pitfalls to beware of when looking for a preparation programme:

Is it Anglican? We will address this more below, but for now we would just note that there are a number of well established programmes prepared by other denominations. Examples would include *Making Disciples* from an American Methodist background and, of course, the RCIA Roman Catholic resources. While these provide good, well-produced resources, they do not come from an Anglican perspective and, as we have seen previously, confirmation often means something quite different for Anglicans than it does for others.

²² For more about the importance of sponsors / mentors, see Cook, 7.

²³ Chamberlain, 30.

²⁴ Another popular confirmation preparation resource, *Going to the Supper of the Lord*, was produced some years ago as a preparation for admission to communion programme. The use of this, while possibly useful when discussing the eucharist, is potentially problematic if it perpetuates the idea that confirmation and then reception of communion are intertwined.

Even within the distinctly Anglican resources that are available there are significant differences in approach and direction. *This Is Our Faith*, for example comes from the Anglo-Catholic side of the Church of England and while it offers a wide range of non-denominationally specific focal points, its approach to Anglicanism reflects its context.²⁵ *The Confirmation Experience* series, on the other hand, also comes from the Church of England, but from a broad church context.

Whichever *style* of resource you choose, it is essential that what it teaches matches up with what you and, perhaps more importantly, your church believes. In a New Zealand context, for example, using a resource (even an Anglican one) that describes confirmation as a *sacrament of initiation*, or even a *completion of baptism*, would be completely inappropriate. Likewise, a programme that equates confirmation to church membership would be in clear conflict with what our church believes, officially at least.

How old is it? It is still possible to find resources for confirmation written as far back as the 1950s and there are plenty of examples from the 1970s. Many of these programmes still contain helpful elements, but many do not. Most date from times before work on restoring the catechumenate took place, and all of them fail to incorporate the vast theological and liturgical shifts of the past twenty-five years. A good rule of thumb is, if it's more than a decade old, approach with caution, if it's more than two decades, in most cases, avoid.

Where does it come from? There is unquestionably a major lack of good confirmation resources from the southern hemisphere. To the best of our (and Google's) knowledge, outside of materials developed in and for church schools, the *only* publically available, complete confirmation resource developed in and for a New Zealand Anglican context is the material in the *Preparing for Christian Baptism, Nurture, Confirmation & Renewal* resource kit prepared by the Theological Education by Extension (TEE) Unit in 1992. As noted in the appendix list, this is quite hard to find and in some need of updating.²⁶

It is almost inevitable that the use of some non-New Zealand material will be required if you are going to take confirmation preparation seriously. Doing so will also assist with gaining a wider perspective and with some topics will not be an issue. However, some contextual material should be seen as essential, especially in a church as unique as our own.

Who is it for? Is the material you are using appropriate for the group you are using it with? An example would be the use of a child-focused resource such as *Going to the Supper of the Lord* with an older age group.²⁷ In reality, most confirmation resources have a youth focus which may be unsuitable in contexts where there are an increasing number of 'adult' confirmations. Intellectual ability is also an important factor here, with a key question being 'what level of learning can this group handle?' Very few resources offer options for differing group dynamics, but some do and it can be well worth seeking them out.²⁸

²⁵ *This Is Our Faith* was actually adapted for the Church of England *from* a Roman Catholic resource.

²⁶ This resource was offered for sale in the early 1990s, so it is quite possible the large white folder is tucked away on a parish bookshelf somewhere!

²⁷ As we argue elsewhere, there are also good reasons why a resource designed for preparation for admission to communion is inappropriate as a confirmation preparation resource.

²⁸ The TEE resource from 1992, for example, assumes an older group of post-adolescents, while different participant's manuals for *The Confirmation Experience* can be purchased for different age groups.

Who

When it comes to *who* should be confirmed there are some easy answers and some not-so-easy. Obviously, no one who has not been baptised should be confirmed. That may seem to perpetuate the potentially unhelpful understanding that confirmation is a part of the process of Christian initiation, but it really just underlines the reality that if baptism is the full and final rite of Christian initiation, then *every other rite* must follow it.²⁹ Aside from baptism, however, other prerequisites for confirmation depend somewhat on what you believe it is, and most commonly this comes down to age.

If confirmation is primarily a sacramental sealing of baptism with the laying on of hands for the gifts of the Spirit, age is not really an issue. This is the position of the *unified rite* campaigners in the Roman Catholic Church who argue for children to be confirmed *preferably* immediately after they are baptised, but if not, as soon as possible. In this case the same arguments apply to confirmation as those supporting infant baptism. If, on the other hand, confirmation is primarily about affirming faith and committing to Christian service, age – or more accurately, *maturity* – becomes a major factor.

By the mid-1990s the second of these two understandings was the most common among Pakeha Anglicans, leading to sixteen becoming the de facto minimum age for confirmation.³⁰ Many writers have argued passionately against the confirmation of adolescents – once the Anglican norm – given the supposed unsuitability of the early teenage years for major decision making and commitments. Some, drawing on discoveries about the development of the brain, have argued that confirmation should be put off until the twenties or even early thirties.³¹ While this may seem extreme, it does take seriously the complexity of both the catechumenal preparation methods outlined above³² and the importance of the commitments being made. While options for renewal and reaffirmation may be offered at other times, the unrepeatability of confirmation suggests that this is *the* moment of commitment.

Our current guidelines offer no minimum or maximum age for confirmation, although both anecdotal evidence and available statistics suggest it is still largely seen as a rite for young people. There is a clear increase in the number of older (30 plus) candidates being confirmed, with some in their sixties and seventies, but this is the exception rather than the rule. For the majority, the mid to late teenage years remain the norm for confirmation, and the great lack of this age group in many parishes has obviously had an effect on practice. It has also become less common for parents to push their children towards confirmation, leaving the initiative to either the church or the young person themselves.

One factor that is challenging local trends is the continued arrival of new migrants, and especially those from Anglican provinces where Cranmer's *confirmation rubric* is still commonly enforced. Anecdotal evidence suggests that increasing numbers of thirteen to fifteen year olds from places such as Southern Africa are being put forward for confirmation before their parents will allow them to take communion. This is a challenge for the church on several levels and probably requires more exploration at an official level.

²⁹ This raises questions about the Christian rites of marriage, funerals, and possibly others, but they are not our concern here.

³⁰ This had been the minimum age included in the guidelines during the experimental time of the 1970s.

³¹ John Westerhoff is a strong proponent of this position. See his chapter in Kubick, 152ff.

³² Note that the RCIA – a model for most catechumenal programmes – is specifically for *adults*.

What

[N]one hereafter shall be Confirmed, but such as can say the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments; and can also answer to such other Questions, as in the short Catechism are contained; which order is very convenient to be observed; to the end, that children, being now come to the years of discretion, and having learned what their Godfathers and Godmothers promised for them in Baptism, they may themselves, with their own mouth and consent, openly before the Church, ratify and confirm the same; and also promise, that by the grace of God they will evermore endeavour themselves faithfully to observe such things, as they, by their own confession, have assented unto.³³

It remains common (and rightly so) for a bishop to meet with confirmation candidates before the rite to discuss their preparation and what they have learned. It is now uncommon, however, for a bishop to actually *test* the candidates to see if they really can say the creed, Lord's Prayer, Ten Commandments, or any of the other elements that once made up the compulsory learning component of confirmation preparation.

Officially confirmation candidates “will have been helped to explore and understand the faith of their Baptism, and their calling as disciples.”³⁴ This relatively vague and open-ended requirement represents a strong shift away from the sixteenth century understanding of confirmation as a *rite of education*, something that presented significant challenges, especially when working with people with intellectual or learning difficulties. This, as discussed above, is a move back to the more ancient catechumenal focus on experiential formation.

The question may be asked, however: does this mean there is no expectation that preparation for confirmation will include an educational element? One New Zealand bishop has expressed the hope that such preparation will include the study of “Scripture; the Prayer Books; Anglican history and theology; and the life of faith.”³⁵ This sounds like a significant study programme, especially if attempted in a relatively brief time-frame.

At issue here is the tendency for confirmation preparation to be one of the few – if not only – periods of Christian education many Anglicans receive. Some (and indeed the programme outlined above appears to lean in this direction) see confirmation as an opportunity to *build Anglicans* and attempt to instil as much of Anglicanism as possible into the process, as if this might be the only chance.³⁶ Far from being an affirmation of an educational approach to confirmation, however, we would see this more as an indictment of our general approach to Christian education.

There is no escaping the lack of emphasis on continuing education for the laity in our parishes, where annual Lenten Study sessions are often the only programmes on offer (and even then with sometimes dubious educational content). It would seem to us that much of what is sometimes crammed into confirmation preparation belongs naturally in a robust,

³³ *The Shorter Prayer Book*, 115.

³⁴ *General Synod Standing Resolution SRLA.2 (a)*.

³⁵ Bishop Victoria Matthews, Clergy Letter, 2008.

³⁶ For a convincing argument against this use of confirmation see Meyers, ‘Fresh Thoughts’, 330ff.

ongoing, Christian education programme, designed to cater for a wide range of backgrounds and abilities, and focused not just on young people or ‘new’ Anglicans, but also on life-long parishioners who often know little about their church.³⁷

Rites of Passage

We noted in the introduction to this resource that we have some issues with the term ‘rite of passage’ being applied to confirmation. Debates about whether or not it is appropriate have raged for some thirty years, mainly among academics. Part of the process towards answering that question is achieving some clarity about terminology.

‘Rites of Passage’ was originally a technical term used by anthropologists to describe certain rituals and processes regularly followed by tribes or groups within many communities to mark the transition between one phase of life and the next. Note the word *processes*; true rites of passage are *not* single events, but rather processes, often marked by several events. The key to understanding a rite of passage, however, is to see that it has as an ultimate goal a definitive change in status or role. Thus, liturgical events marking a change of school, a birthday, or the gaining of a driver’s license, while technically fitting the requirements to be a rite of passage, can only truly be one if they form part of a process marking the *whole event*, not just one part of it.³⁸

The essential thing to note about confirmation is that it fails to fulfil the most basic role of a rite of passage as a process leading to a change of role or status. As John Westerhoff bluntly puts it, “confirmation is not and never has been a rite of passage from one role and status to another. Confirmation is a rite of intensification, affirming role and status previously established at baptism.”³⁹ Or, put slightly differently, confirmation does not create something new, but rather magnifies something already in existence.

Some would prefer to describe confirmation as a rite of *faith* rather than *passage*. This picks up on the work of James Fowler on the various *stages of faith* Christians move through, and avoids the inevitable issues that arise if confirmation becomes merely a rite of passage for those of a certain age.⁴⁰ Problems remain, however, with describing confirmation in such terms if (and this seems to be very much the case) those at a variety of faith stages are encouraged to present for confirmation.

A final point to note is that confirmation falls down as a rite of passage in most places today simply because it is seldom practiced. True rites of passage are almost always universally followed by whoever it is they are for whenever it is they are intended to happen. This may have been more the case when almost every Anglican adolescent came for confirmation, but not anymore. A rite of passage practiced by few and only rarely holds little meaning in most people’s minds.

³⁷ There are some programmes that incorporate confirmation into a larger (and longer) educational / formational process. These are not commonly found in New Zealand, but they are available. A good example is the *Journey to Adulthood* programme (J2A) which is included in our resource list in the appendix.

³⁸ For a more complete explanation of the elements that go in to a rite of passage, see Chamberlain, 23ff.

³⁹ Westerhoff in Kubick, 160.

⁴⁰ This was the case, of course, when most candidates were put forward at twelve or thirteen, mirroring the Jewish rite of *Bar Mitzvah*. Some have argued that confirmation can be considered such a rite if you look at it in terms of *faith* stages rather than *life* stages (*a la* James Fowler).

Formation for the Future

The evidence indicates that, within Tikanga Pakeha at least, interest in confirmation is increasing. However, it also shows that many of those preparing people for confirmation have few resources at their disposal and little idea of how to go about preparing for confirmation effectively. It seems clear that the most effective preparation methods utilise the approach and ethos of the catechumenate, either in full or in part. Support for the catechumenate in this country, however, appears to be weakening. The groups responsible for its promotion in Christchurch and Wellington are in recess and the resources they have previously produced are no longer easily available. Our church should be concerned.

If we take baptism seriously – and we say we do – we must also take preparing for it seriously, and equally, we must pay attention to how we build on the foundations it lays. As with all building projects, this demands the use of the proper tools in the correct way to ensure a strong and enduring result. Mark Chamberlain's research has shown the potential for good results given the right approaches, yet few seem to be employing them.

CONCLUSION

Enabling an ongoing life of conversion is the desired outcome for all people of faith.¹

Our goal in this resource has not been to offer direction or advice for the future; for the most part this is up to others. What we would suggest, however, is that whatever else confirmation may or may not be, its goal, or the goal of anything that may supplant it, *must* be to enable people to further live out their baptisms.

It has been said that the greatest achievement of the RCIA – or perhaps the most strategic – was that it took the Church seriously, and by extension, demanded that baptism be taken seriously also.² We Anglicans, along with others, have picked up that challenge over the past four decades. Both theologically and liturgically, baptism has been given a greater prominence as the full and final rite of Christian initiation. The implications of that have been far reaching, including that we must now judge confirmation, along with all other rites of the Church, by how well they help us to reflect, or live out, the life begun at baptism.

Is confirmation essential for our Christian life? For some the answer is most definitely yes. Those who continue to hold to the Mason-Dix line will insist that a sacramental sealing, preferably immediately following but if not, at some later time, is required for baptism to be complete. This may sound somewhat out of step with attitudes and actions today, and it is. However, it does accurately describe the official position of Anglicanism for at least four hundred years, albeit without the ‘preferably immediately following’ bit.

Of course, the fact is, essential or not, the vast majority of young people during the past fifteen to twenty years have *not* been confirmed. Many of them have lived out their baptisms very well during that time, and many continue to do so. It is also true to say that many young children offer examples of the Christian life and commitment at ages when few would feel comfortable recommending confirmation. Both officially and in practice, then, we can see that confirmation is not essential: but is it helpful?

There are some, perhaps many, who would prefer that we abandon confirmation altogether. They claim, and there is certainly evidence to support them, that the rite is an anachronism in the contemporary Church and far too tainted by outdated understandings and attitudes to be of any use whatsoever for the future. Others, however, would argue that there’s life – and the potential for life-giving – in the old rite yet.

There is, of course, some truth in the saying that you only get as much out as you put in. Mark Chamberlain’s research has shown that with the right preparation and resources, confirmation can be a life-changing experience, with the potential for having a lasting effect on the participant and through them, on the Church. Equally, it can achieve little or nothing.³

There are persuasive arguments in favour of a more sacramental approach to confirmation, and certainly if the goal is to have it taken more seriously this might be a helpful place to

¹ Cook, ‘Conversion to Kingdom Living’, 6.

² Stasiak, *Return to Grace*, ix.

³ Chamberlain, *Forming Faith*, 67.

start. There is also something to be said for the fact that confirmation has been a part of Anglicanism from the very beginning, and from that beginning it has presented much the same problems and potentials that it does today.

There is also much to suggest that we should take our confirmation reforms further, removing it entirely from the realm of Christian initiation, and placing it as a pastoral rite with potential, but non-essential, benefits for those who wish to explore it. It has to be said that while the evidence in favour of this is strong, few have come close to making the break completely from confirmation's past initiatory association. Most who go down this track end up arguing for a new name to avoid the complications confirmation brings with it.

Whichever model you choose, if the intention is to retain confirmation in some form there is a lot of work to be done. Close attention needs to be paid to our theologies of Christian initiation (and there are more than one), our liturgical rites, and the training of clergy and lay leaders. Still more pressing, however, is the need to find ways and willingness to address the differences in initiation theology and practice between our Tikanga. The problems for unity here, especially in terms of the eucharist, are significant while we continue to model major differences that might be expected between denominations, but not within the one church.⁴

Most importantly of all, serious work needs to be put in to the production of appropriate resources for preparation and the training required to deliver it. As we have noted above, this issue is not confined to confirmation. Our church culture lacks any real emphasis on adult Christian education, with the vast majority of our parishioners receiving little or nothing post-Sunday School. The challenge and potential for any work on confirmation preparation will be to take it further and explore the possibility of a widely marketed ongoing formation programme designed to happen in every parish or ministry unit in the province.

We hope this resource has been, and will be, of some assistance, even if just as a beginning point for further reflection. The last word belongs to the late Archbishop Brian Davis, whose passion and perseverance has played a major role in the changes to our approach to Christian initiation over the past forty years. His words published fourteen years ago remain as apt today as they were then:

The reform of baptism and confirmation practice within the wider Anglican family of churches is by no means complete, some Anglican Provinces have not yet moved very far, or even at all. Here in New Zealand we have been one of the world leaders of change, but there is still much to be done if we are to benefit fully from the reform. The catechumenal process deserves wider application and the provision of supporting education and liturgical resources, while clergy and lay leaders need to be made more aware of the implications and opportunities the changes have brought.⁵

⁴ This conversation must begin from the understanding that these are *theological* differences, not cultural ones, and while the two might be closely related, the former covers less than two centuries, with a difference only in the last four decades.

⁵ Davis, *The Way Ahead*, 65.

APPENDIX

Resources for Confirmation Preparation

We have looked at a number of resources for confirmation preparation, particularly focussing on more recent or widely available resources, from an Anglican perspective. Many of these resources are from overseas, and so require some additional information / resources about the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia – Te Hāhi Mihinare ki Aotearoa ki Nui Tireni, ki Nga Moutere o te Moana Nui a Kiwa.

Unless otherwise noted, these resources should be available from the usual sources, such as the Anglican Resource Centre in Wellington, Pleroma in Hawke's Bay, and other more specialist Christian bookshops.

Anglican: Introducing the Faith, History and Practice of the Anglican Church

- For:** For adults and older teens.
For individuals or groups.
- Format:** A5 folder of 25 leaflets.
- From:** Anglican Church, Aotearoa New Zealand.
- Details:** By Graeme A. Brady. Christchurch: Genesis, 1983 (since revised).
- Topics:** Faith; God's Revelation (in Old Testament, New Testament, Church); Thinking for Ourselves; God the Father; God the Son (Incarnation, Atonement, Resurrection); God the Holy Spirit; The Church; The Church in England; The Reformation in England; The Anglican Communion; Ministry; Bible; Sacraments; Worship; Prayer; Christian Behaviour; Christian Stewardship; What Happens Next? (on death, resurrection, eschatology)
- Approach:** Confirmation described as personally confirming baptismal vows, "coming of age" in the Church, and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- Notes:** While the notes say *Anglican* can be used by adult confirmation candidates, it is not specifically a confirmation preparation resource. Its focus is on providing information about the Anglican Church, which we suggest needs to be augmented by group discussion, personal reflection, and/or mentoring relationships.
It is particularly helpful to have a locally produced resource; however it should be noted that it is now some years old.

Catechumenal Kit

- For:** For adults.
Process includes both small group work and sponsors/mentors.
- Format:** Wellington – A4 book, Christchurch - leaflets.
- From:** Anglican Church Aotearoa New Zealand, Tikanga Pakeha
- Details:** Anglican diocese of Wellington, 1996, Anglican Diocese of Christchurch, 1998.
- Topics:** Process happens in four stages – inquiry; formation; preparation; reflection and integration into ministry. Includes Scripture, prayer, worship, ministry.

- Approach: Uses an experience-reflection model, with baptism / confirmation taking place at the end of stage three. Sacramental, focussed on baptism, with confirmation and renewal of baptismal vows as possible alternative rites for participants.
- Notes: As previously noted, both Wellington and Christchurch Dioceses ran catechumenal programmes for some years, which are now in recess. In the discussion in this resource, it has been noted that while the catechumenate is not focussed on confirmation preparation, a catechumenal process (or elements of it), is a very effective model for faith formation and confirmation (see pp 40ff).
 These kits are adapted for local use, practical, and very flexible for different contexts.
 NB. These resources are no longer available for purchase. However some parishes may have them on their shelves, and copies are available for loan at Kinder Library.

Confirmation Book for Adults

- For: For adults.
 For individuals or groups.
- Format: Book, paperback, 11 chapters. 133pp
- From: Anglican Church, UK
- Details: By Sharon Swain. London: SPCK, 2008.
- Topics: God calls us; Baptism; God; Jesus Christ; The Holy Spirit; The Bible; Prayer; The Church and Worship; Confirmation; Holy Communion; Living as a Christian
- Approach: Focus on confirmation as making a personal commitment to Christ.
- Notes: Includes Bible work, questions for reflection, and a glossary.
 Each chapter concludes with several suggestions to choose from for further work, suggestions for research for those who want to dig deeper or are ready for more academic work, and an outline for a time of prayer.
 Useful, contains a number of discussion starters and suggestions for further work. Some information is quite specific to the Church of England, so this resource needs to be supplemented with local resources.

The Confirmation Experience: A Whole-Church Mentoring Approach to Confirmation in the Anglican Church

- For: For ages 11 to adult, specific logbooks geared for different needs.
 For groups of varying sizes, with strong individual mentoring component.
- Format: Leader's Book, outlining programme and 12 group sessions. A4, 65pp+handouts
 4 different individual logbooks: 11-14; 15-18; Adult; 11-Adult assisted
 2 books of prayers also available.
- From: Anglican Church, UK
- Details: By Susan Sayers. Stowmarket, Suffolk: Kevin Mayhew, 2006.

- Topics:** 12 group sessions:- The Fish (basic Christian faith); The Cross (Jesus); The Bible; The Rope (faith); Water, Wind and Fire (Holy Spirit); The Bread and Wine; The Confirmation; The Mobile Phone (prayer); The Map and Compass (Christian living); The Wallet (values); The Globe; Light and Salt (service)
The personal logbooks are not directly on the 12 group sessions but include 23 topics, and are a basis for individual development and meetings with the mentor.
- Approach:** Starts from the point that God does the confirming, with God's Holy Spirit strengthening the candidate for a life-long journey of adult faith and commitment, within the Church community.
- Notes:** A creative and flexible resource, with an emphasis on participation with the whole church community, individual mentoring, and using symbols and experiences alongside imparting information. The 'assisted' logbook provides for those who require more help, focussing on visual and team activities and low on word content.
Drawing on the catechumenate model, the confirmation usually takes place about two thirds of the way through rather than at the end of the process.
We consider this to be one of the better resources currently available that we have seen.

Emmaus: The Way of Faith

- For:** For adults.
For groups.
- Format:** Stage 2: Nurture. Leaders book A4, 120pp. Includes CD-ROM and handouts.
- From:** Anglican Church, UK
- Details:** By Stephen Cottrell, Steven Croft, John Finney, Felicity Lawson, Robert Warren. London: Church House Publishing, 2003 (2nd edn., 1st edn. 1996)
- Topics:** 3 parts, 15 sessions. Topics include:-
God; Jesus; The Holy Spirit; Becoming a Christian
Prayer; The Bible; The Church; Holy Communion
Christian living; Service; Work and Money; Love; Sharing the Faith
- Approach:** Not specifically confirmation focussed. Confirmation seen as one appropriate option for a rite of commitment, as part of the wider Emmaus discipleship programme.
- Notes:** The Emmaus programme comprises several courses, going from initial evangelism (1: Contact), through to a variety of courses on Christian life and discipleship (3: Growth – several titles). Draws on the catechumenate model.
Stage 2: Nurture is a course on Christian basics that can be used for Confirmation preparation.
A comprehensive and flexible programme, which aims to include the whole church community in the initiation process through sponsors and special services.

Faith Confirmed: Preparing for Confirmation

- For:** For teenagers.
For groups or individuals.
- Format:** Book, 19 chapters, illustrated. 101pp
- From:** Anglican Church, UK
- Details:** By Peter Jackson and Chris Wright. London: SPCK, 1999.
- Topics:** God; Sin; Jesus; Holy Spirit; Church; Creeds; Bible; Christian Living; Prayer and Worship; Sacraments; Baptism; Confirmation; Eucharist; Marriage; Confession; Ordination; Anointing the Sick; Life After Death
- Approach:** Focus on confirmation as personal commitment to Christ, affirming baptismal promises previously made on the candidate's behalf.
- Notes:** Each section includes questions and pointers for Bible study, thinking it through, and prayer.
Quite traditional, comprehensive approach. Seems particularly geared to a classroom setting.

The Journey to Adulthood (J2A)

- For:** Six-year programme commences at ages 11-13, through to late teens.
For groups.
- Format:** Several folders worth of planning and teaching materials.
Electronic download.
- From:** Episcopal Church, USA
- Details:** Created by St Philip's, Durham, North Carolina.
<http://leaderresources.org/j2a> (Sample pages available)
- Topics:** Each two year segment has a focus on the whole person, covering Self, Society, Sexuality, and Spirituality, in depth, in the light of the Gospel.
Rite-13 – participants enter programme between ages 11-13.
Includes a celebration of turning 13 in a celebration loosely modelled on Jewish bar mitzvah.
J2A – at the end of this second segment of the programme, there is a course in preparation for confirmation (about age 16). After this segment, and before entering the next, participants also make a pilgrimage.
YAC (Young Adults in the Church) – more focus on active participation in congregation and ministry.
- Approach:** Confirmation described as public affirmation of faith and commitment.
- Notes:** *J2A* is a comprehensive youth programme in three parts, with the emphasis on spiritual formation. Confirmation is incorporated into the second segment. It includes group sessions, liturgical celebrations, studies, games and fun, service work, and a pilgrimage.
J2A is an excellent Anglican (Episcopalian) resource, but it requires considerable commitment in people-hours, and is not cheap. It's suitable for larger parishes looking for an intensive, high-commitment programme.
NB. A stand-alone confirmation programme has been developed by the same people, called Sealed and Sent Forth (see below).

Making Disciples: A New Approach to Confirmation

- For:** For teenagers.
Individuals work with a mentor.
- Format:** Coordinator's Guide, A4, 50pp.
Mentor's Guide, paperback, 70pp.
Mentor Support DVD, short introduction to each session.
Confirmand's Journal, paperback, 54pp.
- From:** United Methodist Church, USA, designed to be used in different denominations.
- Details:** By William H. Willimon. Inver Grove Heights, MN: Logos Productions, 1997.
- Topics:** 13 one-on-one sessions:-
Getting Acquainted; God; Jesus; Holy Spirit; Worship; The Bible; Saints and Gifts; Ministry; Baptism; Spiritual Life; Death and Resurrection; Life in the Church; The Faith Journey Continues
- Approach:** Confirmation described as a renewal of baptismal promises, with God confirming baptismal covenant and candidate publicly affirming commitment to God and the Church.
- Notes:** A flexible resource, with a particular focus on discipleship rather than information, through nurturing the individual mentoring relationship. Can be adapted to include larger group activities. Not specifically Anglican, so requires some tailoring for an Aotearoa New Zealand Anglican context.

Preparing for Christian Baptism, Nurture, Confirmation, and Renewal: A Resource Kit

- For:** For teenagers and adults.
Process includes both small group work and sponsors/mentors.
- Format:** Large looseleaf binder (most resources photocopyable), plus four booklets.
- From:** Anglican Church Aotearoa New Zealand, Tikanga Pakeha
- Details:** The Provincial Board of Christian Education: Tikanga Pakeha, 1992.
- Topics:** General resources include Folio I – Introduction and Folio II – Guidelines for Small Groups.
Folio V includes confirmation preparation resources.
Suggested areas to cover:-
Understanding the Christian Faith; Understanding Christian Mission;
Understanding Their Gifts; Understanding the Anglican Church in Aotearoa;
Retreat or Event for Decision.
As part of this process, includes some existing step-by-step resources (e.g. *Exploring Christianity*, *Lifespring Module LS2*), but also suggests other resources may be used, and lists some options.
- Approach:** Specifically designed for use with *A New Zealand Prayer Book: He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa*.
- Notes:** A locally produced resource, designed to be adapted for local needs. While it is now a few years old, it provides a thorough basic pattern rather than a prescriptive programme. The resource is comprehensive and adaptable – for example, newer programmes or modules could easily be incorporated into the process in place of the ones provided.

NB. Some copies of this resource may be available from Archbishop David Moxon. Many parishes may have it on their shelves (look for a large white folder), and it is available for loan from Kinder Library and some Ministry Educators.

Sealed and Sent Forth

For: For adults and older youth.
For groups.

Format: Electronic download.

From: Episcopal Church, USA

Details: By Julia Bates Toone, and Diocese of East Carolina.
<http://leaderresources.org/sealedandsentforth> (Sample pages available)

Topics: 15 two-hour sessions.
Sessions cover the basics of Christian faith, Anglicanism (Prayer Book, Anglican Worship, Church History, Anglican theology), incorporating experiential learning, worship, community.

Approach: Confirmation described as public affirmation of faith and commitment.

Notes: Developed in part from the Journey to Adulthood programme.
While we have not had an opportunity to see the whole resource, it appears to be a relatively traditional group-based study course. It would require some adaptation for the Aotearoa-New Zealand context.

This Is My Faith: A personal guide to Confirmation with an Order of Holy Communion

For: For teenagers or adults.
For individuals, could be a resource for group work.

Format: Book, small paperback, 4 parts, 4 short sections in each part. 152pp

From: Anglican Church, UK

Details: By Douglas Dales. Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2001.

Topics: Becoming a Christian (what is a Christian? making decisions; baptism; the gift of the Spirit)
Being a Christian (prayer; Bible; Christian life; spiritual growth)
Belonging to the Church (creeds; Church; seasons; why be a Christian)
Being with God (preparing for Holy Communion; the shape of the Eucharist; in His presence, ambassadors for Christ)

Approach: Focus on Confirmation as personal affirmation of faith in Christ, renewing baptismal promises.

Notes: Includes prayers and questions for reflection.
Particular attention on receiving communion, as it comes from a context where confirmation is usually still related to first communion. Some information and the Order of Service specific to the Church of England context.

This Is Our Faith: A Popular Presentation of Church Teaching

- For:** For older teenagers or adults.
For individuals, could be a resource for group work.
- Format:** Book, A4, illustrated. 90pp.
- From:** Anglican Church, UK. Anglican edition of *Your Faith*, a Roman Catholic resource (first published 1995).
- Details:** By Rosemary Gallagher, John Trenchard, Jeffrey John, Revised edition edited by Michael McGreevy. Chawton, Hampshire: Redemptorist, 2001.
- Topics:** 17 chapters, including material on:-
Finding meaning in life; The Old Testament; Jesus (several chapters); Sin and Suffering; Prayer; the Church; Baptism; Confirmation; Eucharist; Ordination; Marriage; Reconciliation; Anointing the Sick; Death and New Life; Mary
- Approach:** Confirmation described as a celebration of the presence of the Holy Spirit within us, an unfolding of the meaning of baptism as part of the lifelong journey of faith.
- Notes:** Organised around the theme of God's Spirit at work. Anglo-catholic and sacramental approach.
Attractively presented and readable. The content is mostly information and instruction, so would require some preparation of discussion and activities for use with a group.

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