

AGENDA 2.2.4

The practice of holy communion and infants

(See also Agenda 2.3.6)

PROPOSED MOTION

Submitted by General Church Council

BE IT RESOLVED that Synod affirms the conclusions contained in '*Infant Communion: a reappraisal*' (CTICR 2012), see also DSTO Vol 1 E '*Infant Communion*', 1986), namely, "that the Church not introduce the practice of admitting infants to holy communion, but that the Church offer to families the preparation and admission of children to communion at the earliest appropriate age, paying due attention to the connection between communion and life-long formation".

REASONS FOR THE MOTION

1. At its 1981 General Convention the LCA recognised the practice of the separation of first communion and confirmation as an acceptable form of confirmation ministry. As a result many congregations now admit younger children to the sacrament of the altar. In 1986 the CTICR prepared a statement on Infant Communion which was adopted by the General Church Council. That statement was of the opinion that the practice of infant communion was unacceptable for the LCA.
2. A South Australia–Northern Territory Pastors Conference in 2003 asked the CTICR to reopen the topic of infant communion, with a view to a widespread discussion throughout the LCA and a review of the Church's practice. The CTICR commissioned people to write papers for discussion at meetings: a paper supporting the CTICR's original 1986 document on infant communion, a paper critiquing the 1986 document, and papers that reflected on infant communion in the light of biblical, historical and pastoral perspectives. These papers provided the basis for a comprehensive discussion at the 2009 General Pastors Conference (GPC). Two District Pastors Conferences in 2010 discussed the issue once more and offered further feedback to the CTICR.
3. The CTICR then prepared the document '*Infant Communion: a reappraisal*', completed in 2012 and presented as part of its report to the 2013 LCA Convention of Synod.
4. The CTICR report to the 2013 Synod stated that "it does recommend that the age of first communion be significantly lowered. But no age has been specified since the decision as to the earliest appropriate age should be made by the pastor in consultation with the parents."
5. Neither the 2013 General Convention of Synod nor GPC discussed the 2012 '*Infant Communion: a reappraisal*' document.
6. St John's Unley congregation has submitted a proposal to the 2018 Synod "that the LCA encourage the practice of admitting very young children, including infants, to Holy Communion".
7. This proposal was referred to the 2018 GPC for advice and recommendation to Synod.
8. The GPC resolved to affirm the conclusions of the 2012 CTICR statement on Infant Communion, namely, that there is no change to the church's position as stated in the 1986 Doctrinal Statement and Theological Opinion (DSTO) document '*Infant Communion*' but that the church offer to families the preparation and admission of children to communion at the earliest possible age, paying due attention to the connection between communion and life-long catechesis.
9. The GCC has noted GPC's resolution and College of Bishops' advice that this constitutes a recommendation from GPC to General Synod. GCC therefore has resolved to submit this proposed motion to General Synod in view of the clear recommendation from GPC on this matter.