

## *I. Customary for Confirmation/Reception/Reaffirmation*

*Note: There may be pastoral reasons to make exceptions to the guidelines that follow. Please do not hesitate to discuss any such concerns with the bishop.*

Before the service:

- ♦ If possible, please have the group being confirmed/received or making reaffirmation meet with the bishop briefly for introductions and a prayer at least 20 minutes *before the service*.
- ♦ Please be doubly sure to have rehearsed them in the parts of the service they are to speak, and remind them to bring their prayer books or service leaflets with them when they are presented. Their being able to participate is of the first importance.

The bishop will not second-guess you about whom you present for confirmation and whom for reception, as situations can become very complex. The bishop explains his view, for what it is worth, in the appendix to this customary. As long as faith is professed and hands are imposed, it would seem that ritual sufficiency is reached.

The color for the service is that of the season, except that white or red may be worn on otherwise “green” days. Green remains a perfectly acceptable color. Please advise the bishop of your choice.

Please also advise the bishop as to which parts of the service your congregation has some experience of as sung. Where possible and not a burden, the bishop would prefer that there we sing the dialogue (“sursum corda”), preface, doxology (“by whom and with whom . . .”) and its great Amen, [Lord’s prayer], pontifical blessing, and the dismissal. If none of this is a comfortable possibility for your parish, please say so. Please be sure to print the text of the pontifical blessing (in the altar book p. 232, and *The Hymnal 1982* S-173) in the service folder, even if it is not to be sung.

*Please use the propers of the day for all Sunday morning confirmations. On other occasions we will need to discuss the choice of lessons.*

The deacon or priest reading the gospel should come to the bishop for a blessing before going to the place where the gospel is read. After “The Gospel of the Lord” and the people’s response, the gospel book should be brought to the bishop, open, for veneration.

#### *Presentation and Examination of the Candidates*

The bishop wishes to make eye contact with all the candidates during the examination and baptismal covenant, so they should be arranged in a semi-circle or other convenient group near the bishop’s chair.

During the prayers for the candidates, unless the baptismal liturgy is being celebrated and the congregation is already on page 305 of the prayer book, do not announce the page number or indicate it in the leaflet, as a long pause to turn pages here just confuses people, and they must turn back. *It is simplest to say, “the response to the petitions is, ‘Lord, hear our prayer.’ ”* Then just start praying without indicating a page number in the service folder or by way of announcement. Please do use this litany, and *insert any local needs or concerns* in petitions of similar form, with the same response, at the end of the petitions for the candidates. The bishop will then conclude with the collect. If you elect to use Eucharistic Prayer D, local petitions can be put there in the “remember” section, if you like; but using Prayer D in an already-lengthy rite is not the bishop’s first choice. (Please keep in mind that the “remember” sections in Prayer D are addressed to God, not the congregation, and should be written accordingly.)

At the time for confirmation, reception, or reaffirmation, please bring the candidate to the bishop and pronounce his or her name distinctly. Even if candidates wear name cards, present them by name, because some names are not easy to pronounce without hearing them. If the candidates are to be received or are making

a reaffirmation, indicate that as well. Candidates for all three rites kneel.

If the architecture permits the group to stay together, please do not send the candidates back to their seats. This enables the bishop to greet each one at the peace.

After the peace, please make any necessary announcements; the bishop will then say the offertory sentence.

The deacon or priest who sets the table should put the chalice and paten side by side, not front and back, with chalice on the right.

The bishop is accustomed to use the lavabo.

BCP, p. 322: “It is appropriate that the other priests present stand with the celebrant at the Altar, and join in the consecration of the gifts. . . .” Thus, at the eucharist, priests in the parish should join the bishop. Please see the customary for celebrations at which the bishop presides for details. Reminder: lay persons should assist with the chalice only after all the clergy of the parish are fulfilling their servant ministry of feeding. The rector or priest in charge *must* join the bishop in distributing Holy Communion.

At visitations, we use either Rite I or II *according to the use your parish follows*, from the offertory on. You may select the eucharistic prayer. Prayers A and B are preferred for these occasions. If you select Prayer D, you or a deacon should read the “remember” intercessions in the places indicated.

Vessels for the distribution should be made ready during the fraction anthem, before the invitation is said. Concelebrants will communicate themselves.

The benediction is ordinarily the episcopal blessing, said or sung, as you desire. In Lent the Prayers over the People from BOS is used.

The dismissal should be said facing the people.

## APPENDIX

“In the course of their Christian development, those baptized 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.

“Those baptized as adults, unless baptized with 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.”

### *A personal viewpoint*

As mentioned above, I will not second guess you about whom you present for confirmation and whom for reception. What follows is how I understand the matter. I acknowledge that there are other approaches very much alive in the church, and do not in any sense insist on my interpretation.

I take the paragraphs just quoted from the Book of Common Prayer in their plain and literal sense. In our church confirmation is understood to be a combination protestant/catholic moment when a baptized person takes an adult stand for Christ in the presence of the local church and before the bishop as representative of the catholic church, and then receives the laying-on of hands (with anointing) for strengthening by the Holy Spirit. This is not what many protestant groups intend, *regardless of how many years of instruction or depth of Bible learning the process involves.*

Thus everyone who has not yet made a “mature public affirmation of their faith and commitment to the responsibilities of their Baptism” before a bishop in the historic succession is appropriately presented for confirmation. This specifically includes Roman Catholics who received the very differently-intended Roman rite

of confirmation while a child, and specifically includes the Orthodox, whose (repeatable) rite of chrismation is not equated to confirmation in their theology when they talk among themselves. The idea of chrismation being the same as confirmation was developed for the benefit of western thinkers at the Council of Florence, when the idea was introduced in order to get foreign aid for the Armenians by demonstrating that they really did have the same number of sacraments as had Rome. Similarly, the notion of chrism as a virtual “bishop in a bottle” does not bear the stamp of antiquity.

Basically, according to the literal sense of the prayer book, the only people to be presented for “reception into communion,” then, are those former Roman Catholics whom you are convinced have already made a *mature* public affirmation of their faith before a bishop in historic succession. The relationship with the Lutherans complicates this tremendously, and I will trust the decision you and the candidate make, but please remember that almost no Lutheran has been confirmed by a bishop, whether in or out of historic succession. Also, when Roman Catholic adults are confirmed, it is by the priest who prepared them. My expectation is that the confusion will be dealt with in the next round of liturgical revision by returning to the proposal of the 1970s for a single rite for reaffirmation. In the meantime, my tactical solution is that both those confirmed and received receive the laying-on of hands (and chrismation). This solution is experiencing broad use, and coming to be called “reception with the laying-on of hands.” Notwithstanding everything I have written, *please do not make the decision whether to present for confirmation or reception become a stumbling block for those who have scruples in the matter.*

I am happy to discuss any questions you or candidates might have.