

Holy Communion

Permission for a lay person to assist in the administration of the elements at a Service of Holy Communion

The distribution of the consecrated elements by a person who is not ordained is permissible through special authorisation by the Bishop. The authorisation is given by the Bishop at the joint request of the incumbent and the Parochial Church Council. The request should take the form of a resolution passed by the PCC.

Such permission is automatically given to Readers and Church Army Officers, and is included in their licences. It may be given to any other lay person whom the incumbent and PCC consider suitable and acceptable to the congregation. Such a person will normally be a regular communicant and aged not less than sixteen. Permission is given by the Bishop for a period of three years whereupon it can be renewed for a further period.

Those who are given permission will need to receive preparation for performing this ministry. After permission has been given it may be thought appropriate to have a short ceremony of admission either in private or public, at which the lay ministrants commit themselves to ministry in this form.

Permission to assist in the administration at a Service of Holy Communion is not the same as permission to take Holy Communion to the sick and housebound, which is covered separately (see below).

Taking Holy Communion to the sick and housebound

As part of the Church's ministry to the sick and housebound, it is appropriate for previously consecrated elements to be distributed in homes and hospitals in the context of a shortened liturgy¹.

Deacons and Readers are authorised to administer communion to the sick by virtue of their licenses. Other lay people may be authorised to exercise this ministry if supported by their incumbent (or Area Dean in a vacancy) and PCC, and given appropriate training. Requests for authorisation should be made to the Bishop, permission is given for periods of three years at a time.

Clergy are reminded that the celebration or administration of Holy Communion in a hospital should always be agreed with the Hospital Chaplain.

Communion By Extension

In accordance with the guidelines produced by the House of Bishops in October 2000²:

- Authorised provision for Communion by Extension is given principally in response to the needs of a single cure with a number of authorised places of worship, or a group or team ministry.

¹ "Holy Communion at Home or in Hospital" Common Worship: Pastoral Services pp.74ff

² See <http://cofe.anglican.org/worship/liturgy/commonworship/texts/other/extension/extensionend.html#guidelines> or Common Worship booklet "Public Worship with Communion by Extension" CHP, 2001, pp.32f.

- In such circumstances worshippers gathered in one of the places where Holy Communion has not been celebrated may receive communion by extension brought from a church where Holy Communion has been celebrated, with a minimal interval of time between the services.
- The provision is intended primarily for Sundays and Principal Holy Days, but may be appropriate on other occasions.

Definition:

The phrase ‘Communion by Extension’ is the distribution of the elements of Holy Communion previously consecrated in one church in a benefice to other congregations and churches within the same benefice or team ministry.

Minister:

The service should only be led by a person who has been specifically authorised for this purpose by the Bishop. Such a person will normally be a licensed deacon or reader, and must be properly prepared to conduct such a service.

Permission:

Permission to use the rite of Communion by Extension must be obtained in writing from the Bishop and will normally be given for a specific occasion or for a limited period in response to specific pastoral circumstances.

Application for Permission:

An application to use the rite should be made by the incumbent or priest in charge of the benefice or the team rector in a team ministry. In a vacancy the application can be made by the Area Dean. The application must have the full backing of the PCCs of any parishes involved.

The application is made to the Diocesan Bishop and the following information must be given:

- A statement giving the reasons why the request for Communion by Extension is being made.
- The names of those who will preside at the rite and their current status within the church (eg. deacon, reader).
- The place and time of the Eucharist from which the consecrated elements are to be taken.
- The place(s) and time(s) where Communion by Extension is to be conducted.

Form of Service:

The form of service published by Church House Publishing – “*Public Worship with Communion by Extension*” should be used³. This booklet also contains guidance notes and regulations.

General:

It is important that those who conduct this rite are properly prepared.

The sacrament so administered should normally:-

- have been consecrated the same day,
- be administered in both kinds,
- be conveyed to the church in a secure vessel kept for the purpose,
- be completely consumed within the service.

The Celebration of Holy Communion away from Licensed Buildings

If a church is unusable (e.g. as a result of structural defect or fire) then a licence is required for services of Holy Communion to be conducted elsewhere.

³ Also to be found at: <http://cofe.anglican.org/worship/liturgy/commonworship/texts/other/extension/extensionfront.html>

Similarly, a licence is required if a room or building is to be used for the celebration of Holy Communion for the convenience of parishioners (e.g. if the church building is some distance away from some local community).

The celebration of Holy Communion is permitted in private houses (for the sick, housebound and terminally ill) and also residential homes and hospitals (in the latter case in agreement with the hospital chaplain).

The Bishop's permission must also be sought when it is proposed to hold celebrations of Holy Communion (on a regular basis) in places of worship belonging to other denominations (which are members of the World Council of Churches and the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland). Any regular pattern must take shape as soon as possible in a formal sharing agreement under the Sharing Church Buildings Act 1969.