

Policy on the Administration of Holy Communion

Covering: assisting with the distribution of Holy Communion; the administration of Holy Communion to the sick, housebound and those in residential care; and Public Worship with Communion by Extension.

1. Introduction and scope

- 1.1 This policy sets out the arrangements in the Diocese of Gloucester for three related but distinct forms of ministry:
 - assisting an ordained minister with the distribution of Holy Communion during a celebration of the Eucharist (Part A);
 - taking Holy Communion to those who are sick, housebound, or resident in care homes and similar settings (Part B); and
 - Public Worship with Communion by Extension (Part C).
- 1.2 These are three separate ministries governed by different rules. In particular, the authority to assist with distribution or to take Communion to the sick and housebound is now delegated to parish clergy, whereas Communion by Extension continues to require the specific permission of the Bishop in each case. The distinctions are explained in the sections that follow.
- 1.3 This policy replaces the guidance issued to the diocese in 2016 following the [Administration of Holy Communion Regulations 2015](#).

2. Legal and liturgical framework

This policy should be read alongside:

- [Canon B 12](#) (*Of the Ministry of the Holy Communion*), under which no person may distribute the sacrament unless ordained or otherwise lawfully authorised;
- the [Administration of Holy Communion Regulations 2015](#), which came into force on 1 October 2015 and permit the Bishop to delegate the authorising of lay people to distribute Holy Communion;
- [Canon B 15A](#) (*Of the admission to Holy Communion*), governing who may be admitted to Holy Communion;
- [Canon B 37](#) (*Of the ministry to the sick*);

- the [House of Bishops' Guidelines on Communion by Extension \(2000\)](#) and the Notes to *Public Worship with Communion by Extension*, which govern that rite; and
- the relevant Common Worship provision for the [Ministry to the Sick](#).

Nothing in this policy overrides the requirements of the [Church of England's safeguarding framework](#), which applies to all who exercise these ministries.

Part A — Assisting with the distribution of Holy Communion

3. Authority to authorise

- 3.1 With effect from 1 January 2016, and continuing under this policy, incumbents and priests-in-charge in the Diocese of Gloucester have the Bishop's delegated authority, in cooperation with their PCCs, to authorise lay people to assist with the distribution of Holy Communion within their own parishes. It is not necessary to seek this permission from the Bishop.
- 3.2 During a vacancy, this authority passes to the Area Dean.

4. Who may be authorised

- 4.1 A person authorised to assist with distribution must:
 - be an actual communicant of the Church of England, in good standing with their parish;
 - be a person in whom the clergy and congregation will have confidence;
 - be physically able to undertake the ministry; and
 - have received appropriate training from their clergy for the ministry they will exercise.
- 4.2 A child may be authorised to assist with distribution only if they have first been admitted to Holy Communion in accordance with the [Admission of Baptized Children to Holy Communion Regulations 2006](#). A pupil of a church school may, with the headteacher's permission, assist with distribution at a service in that school.
- 4.3 Readers and Licensed Lay Ministers are authorised to exercise this ministry under the terms of their licences. They do not need to be authorised separately under the process in this Part.

5. Process and records

- 5.1 When the incumbent or priest-in-charge has commended names, the PCC authorises them by resolution in the following form:

This PCC, meeting on [date], resolved that [names], commended by [the incumbent / priest-in-charge], should be authorised for a period of [x] years to assist with the distribution of Holy Communion in accordance with the Administration of Holy Communion Regulations 2015.

- 5.2 The parish office should keep a record of those authorised, including their names and addresses, the date of the PCC resolution, and the date on which each authorisation expires. It is good practice to publish the list on internal church noticeboards and websites, and a list should always be kept visible in the vestry. The archdeacons will expect to see these records at visitation.

Part B — Holy Communion to the sick, housebound and those in residential care

6. Nature of this ministry

- 6.1 This Part concerns taking Holy Communion, from elements consecrated at a celebration in church, to those who are unable to be present at public worship because of sickness, frailty or confinement — whether in their own homes, in hospital, or in residential or nursing care.
- 6.2 This ministry is normally exercised by the parish priest or another ordained minister, and by Readers and Licensed Lay Ministers under their licences. Where a parish wishes to authorise other lay people to share in it, the provisions below apply.
- 6.3 The consent of the sick or housebound person must always be sought by the parish priest before a lay person takes them the sacrament.

7. Authorising lay people for this ministry

- 7.1 The authority to authorise lay people for this ministry is delegated to incumbents and priests-in-charge (and, in a vacancy, the area dean), on the same basis as Part A and subject to the same conditions as to communicant status, good standing, confidence, capability and training.
- 7.2 It is expected that those authorised for this wider ministry will already be assisting with the distribution of Holy Communion in church, and that only a small number of adults will be nominated for it. **Children are not authorised to take Communion to the sick or housebound.**
- 7.3 Those who take Communion to the sick and housebound require additional preparation beyond that needed for assisting in church, including familiarity with the authorised Common Worship provision for the [Communion of the Sick](#) and sensitivity to the pastoral setting. It is good practice for a newly authorised minister to accompany an experienced one before ministering independently.

8. Safeguarding and DBS

- 8.1 All who undertake this ministry must have completed the safeguarding training required by the diocese for their role before they begin and must be familiar with the diocese's [safeguarding policies](#).
- 8.2 The role of assisting with distribution ("Communion Assistant") is not, in itself, eligible for a DBS check. However, where a lay person visits vulnerable adults in their own homes or in care settings on a **regular basis** (broadly, once a week or more, or four or more times in any thirty-day period) and provides advice, guidance or other support in the course of doing so, they are likely to qualify as a pastoral visitor and to require an **enhanced DBS check**. In such cases the appropriate safeguarding process, including the DBS check, must be completed before the person begins visiting.
- 8.3 Incumbents should assess, for each person and each pattern of visiting, whether the DBS threshold is met, and should seek advice from the Diocesan Safeguarding Team in any case of doubt.

9. A note on hospital chaplaincy

- 9.1 Within a hospital, the administration of the sacrament to patients is normally the responsibility of the hospital chaplaincy team, exercised under the chaplaincy's own arrangements and subject to the NHS trust's policies (including on patient confidentiality). Parish clergy visiting a hospitalised parishioner should, as a matter of courtesy and good order, inform the chaplaincy, preferably beforehand, and should not assume responsibility for sacramental ministry in the hospital without doing so.

Part C — Public Worship with Communion by Extension

10. What Communion by Extension is — and is not

- 10.1 Public Worship with Communion by Extension is a public act of worship in which a congregation, gathered where no priest is available to preside, receives Holy Communion from elements consecrated earlier the same day at a celebration of the Eucharist elsewhere, with a minimal interval between the services.
- 10.2 **It is not a celebration of the Eucharist.** It is an alternative to Holy Communion, not a substitute for it, and is to be regarded as exceptional and provisional, anticipating circumstances in which a priest will again be available to preside. It is not a means of resolving difficulties in the resourcing of ministry, nor of introducing a sacramental element into house groups or other gatherings.

11. The Bishop's permission

- 11.1 Unlike the ministries in Parts A and B, Communion by Extension is **not** covered by the delegated authority of parish clergy. It is governed by separate and more rigorous regulations and requires the **specific permission of the Bishop** in each case.
- 11.2 Permission must be sought from the Bishop via the Bishop's Chaplain. A request will normally be made by the incumbent, who will set out clearly when and where the main service and the extension service are to take place, and the connection between them.
- 11.3 Permission:
- must relate to specific pastoral circumstances;
 - will normally be given in writing;
 - will be either for a particular occasion or for a limited duration; and
 - will be kept under regular review by the Bishop.
- 11.4 A congregation should not come to rely on Communion by Extension as its main means of receiving Communion, and a celebration of Holy Communion must continue to take place regularly in each church concerned. The rite will normally be used on Sundays and Principal Holy Days, and only exceptionally on other occasions.

12. Who may lead

- 12.1 A service of Communion by Extension may be led only by a person specifically authorised by the Bishop for this purpose. This authority is distinct: it is not conferred by ordination as deacon, by a Reader's or Licensed Lay Minister's licence, or by any authorisation to distribute Holy Communion under Part A.
- 12.2 The person authorised to lead will normally be a **Deacon, Reader or Licensed Lay Worker** (Canon E 7), appropriately trained for this ministry. Authorisation of anyone outside these categories would be exceptional.
- 12.3 Those authorised under Part A to assist with the distribution of Holy Communion may share in giving communion within the service but may not lead it.

13. Conduct of the service

- 13.1 The consecrated elements must be brought from the celebration of Holy Communion to the church in a seemly and dignified manner, placed upon the Holy Table, and covered with a clean white cloth.
- 13.2 All who take part in the administration must treat the consecrated elements in a seemly and dignified manner and observe the rubrics in the authorised rite.

- 13.3 Care must be taken to ensure that the consecrated elements are adequate for the number of communicants. **If the bread and wine prove insufficient, there can be no supplementary consecration in the course of the service**, since no priest is presiding. Any consecrated elements remaining after the distribution are to be consumed reverently by those who have ministered.
- 13.4 The authorised liturgy is that provided in [Public Worship with Communion by Extension](#) (Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England), together with its accompanying Notes.

14. Review

- 14.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years, and in any event following any change to the relevant canons, regulations or House of Bishops' guidance.

Issued: July 2026