**Holy Communion****- further advice and practicalities**

**Who are to be admitted to Holy Communion?**

Canon B15A regulates who may receive Holy Communion. Please note that regular adult communicants ought to be received into the Church of England either by Confirmation, or by a rite of Reception if they are already Episcopally Confirmed. While it is understood that good pastoral reasons prevent interrogation at the altar rail, nevertheless incumbents should take reasonable care that Holy Communion is not given to the unprepared, the unbaptised, and to those who intend wilfully to misuse the sacred elements.

The Bishop is happy to receive baptised Christians into the Church of England at a Confirmation service, but it may be done - the Bishop's permission having been sought - by the incumbent, using the rite from [Christian Initiation](https://www.churchofengland.org/christian-initiation/rites-affirmation-appropriating-baptism#mm049).

Excluding someone from Holy Communion is an extremely grave step, only to be done in consultation with the Bishop.

**The administration of the Holy Sacrament by lay persons**

Following the amendment of Canon B12 in July 2015, the General Synod has now approved regulations whereby a Diocesan Bishop may give authority to incumbents and priests-in-charge to give this authorisation. These regulations came into force on 1st of October 2015.

The Bishop has taken full advantage of these regulations and, according to Regulation 3 of the incumbents and priests-in-charge in this Diocese may authorise communicants of good standing to distribute the Holy Sacrament in their parish. This authority extends to Area Deans where the parish is in vacancy, but it does not at present extended to chaplains (owing to synodical oversight) who must still apply either directly to the Bishop, or ask the parish incumbent/priest-in-charge to authorise lay assistants functioning in that parish.

The regulations specify that:

* Those chosen to share in Eucharistic ministry must be of good standing within the life of the Church and regular communicants within the Church of England - this includes children who are baptised and regular communicants;
* Each PCC (or, in the case of school, the headteacher) must consent in relation to each person authorised to administer Holy Communion;
* Authorisation must be given to each person in writing specifying the period for which authorisation is given, and whether this extends to taking the sacrament to the sick and housebound. A list of those authorised should also be included in the minutes of the PCC and made available, e.g. at a Visitation, on request.

Furthermore the Bishop expects the incumbent or priest-in-charge to prepare and train those who will exercise this ministry. This training should emphasise that it should be exercised in a reverent and prayerful manner. Attention should be given to the overall membership of the group of those chosen for this ministry, especially to ensure suitable diversity in terms of ethnicity, gender and age.

In this Diocese, the list of those authorised is to be reviewed at the last meeting of the PCC in each calendar year, with those authorised then being authorised for the following year. If a decision is made not to renew any person’s authorisation, it is important that this should be for good reason and that there be pastoral sensitivity communicating that decision to the person concerned.

Please note

* It should be remembered that all Licensed Lay Ministers, Licensed Lay Workers (this does not include authorised or commissioned lay ministers) and clergy who are beneficed, licensed or hold permission to officiate, have permission to assist in the administration of the Sacrament without special leave being sought.
* Licensed Lay Ministers and other authorised lay persons may administer either the paten or the chalice and, for such an occasion, they need not be robed unless they wish.
* Authorisation to take the Sacrament to the sick and housebound does not constitute authorisation to celebrate Holy Communion by Extension. Permission for Holy Communion by Extension still must be sought from the Bishop.

**Dispensation from weekly celebration of Holy Communion**

[Canon B14A](https://www.churchofengland.org/more/policy-and-thinking/canons-church-england/section-b#b26) provides that the reading of Morning and Evening Prayer as required by Canon B 11 or the celebration of the Holy Communion as required by Canon B 14 may be dispensed with, on an occasional basis, by the PCC and the Incumbent (or Area Dean, during vacancies) working together. Where this is intended to be a regular or longer term pattern of worship (ie more than a month), the Bishop must authorise it. Either way, the PCC must pass a resolution making clear the purpose and dates/duration of the change. Further guidance can be sought, either from the Bishops Chaplain or from the [Diocesan website](https://d3hgrlq6yacptf.cloudfront.net/6154babbee922/content/pages/documents/dispensations-under-canon-law-december-2020-.pdf).

**Hygiene and the chalice**

From time to time there is public concern, usually arising from an epidemic such as the flu virus or the recent Covid 19 pandemic, that sharing of the common cup might be a means of infection. However, research on the chalice as a possible means of transmitting infection has shown that the risk is [extremely small](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7439816/). In the case of the Covid 19 virus the risks presented by congregational proximity – especially when masks were removed and singing was congregational – were far greater.

This can be reduced even further by the application of the normal rules of hygiene:

* A chalice of gold, silver or other suitable metal is to be preferred to pottery, particularly unglazed pottery.
* The rim of the chalice should be firmly wiped with a purificator after it has left the lips of each communicant. The same part of the purificator should not be used repeatedly, nor should it be allowed to become sodden.
* Anyone with cuts, sores or abrasions on their lips should receive communion in one kind.
* Simultaneous Communion (aka intinction), where practiced, should only be administered by the minister*.* ***Congregants should not be dipping their own bread into the chalice.***
* In addition to ritual ablutions, the chalice should be thoroughly cleaned after use.
* In times of a perceived threat to public health guidance may be offered either nationally or by the Archbishops or more locally by the Diocesan Bishop whose advice can be sought, if necessary.

**Gluten-free bread and non-alcoholic wine**

Regarding the elements for Holy Communion, Canon law and good practice require that the bread of the Eucharist, which may be leavened or unleavened, must be “of the best and purest wheat flour that is convenient to obtain” (Canon B17). (In the spirit of this, when leavened bread is being used - ‘ordinary bread’ - the supply ought to be of fine quality bread, rather than cheap, mass-produced bread.)

Gluten-free bread, made of the best quality obtainable, does not contradict Canon B17, but ought to be made with wheat flour from which the gluten has been removed (as is the case in most church suppliers) rather than made from another substance together.

It should be noted that some people, intolerant of gluten, are sensitive even to the smallest trace of gluten, in which case care should be taken to keep the gluten-free wafers separate and to avoid touching said wafers after touching the regular wafers.

The use of non-alcoholic wine, where it is pastorally appropriate, is perfectly legal being still “fermented juice of the grape, good and wholesome” (Canon B17) - the alcohol having been removed. (Drinks of grape juice or other non-alcoholic beverages are not the same thing, and are neither Scriptural nor canonical.)

**Aumbries (reservation of the Sacrament)**

An aumbry is a locked cabinet fixed to or set into the wall of the church, installed in a side chapel or by the main altar.

It is exclusively for the reservation of the Sacrament (ideally both kinds) for the Communion of the sick and, in exceptional circumstances (see B3.6), for Holy Communion by Extension. These elements should be changed about once a week.

It is desirable that the aumbry should be marked by a suitable light.