



## The Diocese of Southwark

11 September 2017

To all Clergy of Incumbent Status

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

### Administration of Holy Communion

The Christian community is the gathering of those who, irrespective of age, have been baptised; most have in due course been admitted to Holy Communion and confirmed. In each generation the Church has encouraged Christians of all ages to play a full and active part in our common life and worship, as servers, readers, musicians and so on.

The General Synod has now passed the Administration of Holy Communion Regulations 2015. The Diocesan College of Bishops are now keen to open up to communicant children and young people the ministry of administration of Holy Communion. These children and young people need not be confirmed but they must have been admitted to Communion and be regular communicants.

This is a ministry that should flow naturally from a young person's own lived membership of the Body of Christ, and particularly his or her participation in Holy Communion. It is not a token of theological understanding; still less a reward for good behaviour. As with any church activity, there should be full consultation with parents before permission is granted.

The criteria for identifying and training ministrants will probably be well-established in parishes and other contexts, and should be the same for children and young people as for their older counterparts. Age need not be a factor: those who are mature enough to be confirmed or otherwise admitted to Communion will generally be able to embrace the demands of the role. A guiding principle for all is that they should be regular communicants themselves.

Indeed, it should be unnecessary (excepting home Communion and the consumption of excess wine after the service) to enforce distinctions between adults and children in the exercise of this ministry. The formal procedures for appointing individuals for this ministry are attached.

It is advisable that training of ministrants take place at regular intervals to train in good practice and enable new ministrants to participate in this ministry while others are enabled to rest from it. Some example training materials that may be useful in developing something appropriate for your own Churches are available from the Ministry Department: please contact Sue Stewart [sue.stewart@southwark.anglican.org](mailto:sue.stewart@southwark.anglican.org).

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Places and traditions are important and to be respected. Questions and considerations will be prompted by individual buildings and liturgical styles. We hope that resolving them through reflection and discussion will serve to deepen participation in the worshipping life of the Church.

We commend these new arrangements to you with thanksgiving for our Eucharistic fellowship and with great joy in our partnership in the Gospel,



The Rt Revd Christopher Chessun  
Bishop of Southwark



The Rt Revd Dr Richard Cheetham  
Bishop of Kingston



The Rt Revd Jonathan Clark  
Bishop of Croydon



The Rt Revd Karawei Dorgu  
Bishop of Woolwich



### Authorisation to distribute the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in Public Worship

Anybody who distributes the elements of bread and wine at the Eucharist must be authorised to do so, either by ordination, by holding the Bishop's Licence, or specifically for this ministry by the Bishop under the relevant regulations (see Canon B12). These regulations have now changed, with the adoption of the Administration of Holy Communion Regulations 2015. The new rules give Bishops greater discretion in this area, and the Bishop of Southwark, after consulting the Area Bishops, has decided to adopt the practice set out here, with effect from Pentecost 2017.

#### Appointment

Subject to the further conditions below, individuals are authorised to distribute Holy Communion in a Parish as follows:

- The Incumbent or Priest-in-Charge should consult the churchwardens and members of the PCC before drawing up a list of candidates for the PCC's approval;
- The PCC, if satisfied with this list, should formally signal its approval by adopting a resolution in the form "This PCC commends the following individuals as suitable for authorisation to distribute the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper in the Parish of : [ ]"
- At this point the individuals are able to commence exercising this ministry within their Parish Church
- Those currently appointed are notified to Archdeacons as part of the Inspection, and the question as to who has been thus authorised by which PCC resolution will form part of the Articles of Inquiry
- A list of names of the individuals authorised, the parishes and dates of commencement is kept on behalf of Archdeacons at the Area Office
- During a vacancy, the Area Dean may undertake the role of Incumbent

#### Qualifications

Those who are authorised to distribute Holy Communion should be regular communicant members of the Church in question. They should not be the subject of any safeguarding concern unless a specific exemption shall have been sought and obtained through the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor. If they are below the age at which confirmation is normal in the church, they need not be confirmed, but if they are not confirmed they must have been formally admitted to receive communion under the Admission of Baptized Children to Holy Communion Regulations 2006.

Those appointed should be fully engaged in the worshipping life of the church. Appointment to distribute Holy Communion should not be used to confer status or otherwise give some benefit to the individual. Rather, there should be a sense of a calling to this ministry which is perceived by both the individual and the Incumbent / PinC. As part of this discernment due consideration should be given to the individual's ability to carry out the role properly.

#### Authorisation of Children

The main purpose of this change in the rules is to encourage Churches to welcome children and young people to join in this important and fulfilling ministry. For public worship in the Parish Church it should be possible for them to do so on equal terms with adults, in whatever way is judged right and fits with the normal practice of the Parish. The only difference is, obviously enough, that those under eighteen should not be asked to consume consecrated



wine left over at the end of the distribution. There is no separate process for appointment, authorisation or preparation of children except that it should of course be done only with the full consent of parents or guardians.

In the case of school services, it is up to the Incumbent or Priest-in-charge and the Head Teacher to decide together whether young people should be involved in administering Holy Communion, and if so to choose them and agree how they should be prepared.

### **Training**

The Incumbent or Priest-in-Charge should ensure that all persons authorised to distribute Holy Communion are promptly trained in how to carry out this ministry in accordance with the rites of the Church of England. Example training materials will be made available on the Diocesan website.

Training should be conducted in such a way that it is suitable for all who need to be trained. If children need to be trained separately from adults, this may be a sign that the children in question are not yet grown up enough to be authorised, or else that the training is unnecessarily complex.

When trained, those administering Holy Communion do so at the direction of the Incumbent or Priest-in-Charge.

### **Time Limits**

Appointments are for a fixed term of three years, but there is no limit on the number of terms for which an individual may be re-appointed, upon due consideration, and these terms may be served consecutively. The individual may relinquish the post early or it may be terminated at the direction of the PCC or the Bishop.

### **Home Communion**

These rules are for those appointed to administer Communion as part of Public Worship. Authorisation for this purpose does not authorise the individual to administer Communion by Extension in the home, or otherwise to administer communion outside the setting of Public Worship in the Parish Church. Authorisation for Home Communion will continue to be operated under the direct supervision of the Incumbent or Priest-in-Charge and in accordance with Diocesan safeguarding procedures.