

### **N3.8 *Public Worship with Communion by Extension***

The reduction in the number of stipendiary clergy has made it more difficult to ensure that a priest is available to preside at the Eucharist in every church each Sunday. Communion by Extension permits a duly authorised minister to administer communion in the context of public worship. However, because it is desirable that wherever possible the service should be a Eucharist at which a priest presides, Communion by extension should always be seen as a provisional alternative rather than the normal practice.

Consequently, Communion by Extension in any benefice is only permitted where the permission of the Bishop has been secured in writing and where these regulations are followed. Permission will normally be granted for a time-limited period before a review.

The provision of Communion by Extension is available to benefices and parishes where there are more churches than licensed priests. It also exists to assist large group or team ministries where it is not possible for a priest to preside at the Eucharist in each church on every Sunday at a reasonable time. In such circumstances worshippers gathered in one of the churches where the Eucharist has not been celebrated may receive Communion by Extension from a church in which a celebration has taken place, with a minimal interval of time between the two services.

The provision is intended primarily for Sundays and Principal Holy Days.

A particular congregation should not come to rely mainly upon this means of eucharistic participation. Care must be taken to ensure that the Eucharist is celebrated in each church regularly.

If a priest is unaccountably absent, or is suddenly taken ill before a Sunday Eucharist, it is still the obligation of the churchwardens to read the service of Morning or Evening Prayer with the people. The provision of Communion by Extension may be used, however, when there is more notice of a priest having been taken ill and there is no other priest to step in. In such circumstances, the Rural/Area Dean must be notified and the co-operation sought of the Parish Priest of a nearby parish who can provide the consecrated elements. The churchwardens need to approach a Deacon or authorised Lay Minister to conduct the service for the parish. Except in such an emergency, the authorisation of lay ministers only covers the parish

or benefice where they are on the electoral roll or for which they hold the Bishop's licence.

Eucharistic provision during a vacancy is not to be made by a regular recourse to this provision. The rite can only be used in this context with the prior agreement of the PCC and with the provision of one or more appropriately trained and authorised ministers. The rite is not to be used as an expedient provision to cover clergy holidays.

While parishioners sometimes express the opinion that they prefer a service to be led by someone they know (e.g. a Reader) rather than a visiting priest, the presence of a visiting priest demonstrates that every congregation is part of a larger Church and is a visible expression of the Church Catholic.

Communion by Extension is akin to the Communion of the Sick because of the use of the consecrated elements taken away from a celebration of the Eucharist. The main differences concern the public nature of Communion by Extension and the need for a somewhat different set of skills and qualities on the part of the authorised lay minister. It is required, therefore, that the service will be led only by a person who has been specifically authorised for this purpose by their area bishop. Such persons will require training before permission to officiate is granted, and a preparation course is available from the Department of Discipleship and Ministry at the Diocesan Office

Authorised ministers will normally already be Deacons, Licensed Lay Workers or Readers. In these cases, ministers must wear the appropriate vesture. Other authorised lay ministers should be smartly dressed but need not wear robes.

The order of service to be used is available in the service booklet Public Worship with Communion by Extension, published by Church House Publishing. The authorised minister should place the consecrated elements on the altar at the beginning of the service and should return to the altar at the point of the distribution of Communion. The minister should not stand at the altar during the service itself or in any way contribute to a confusion of roles with that of a priest.

People carrying the Bishop's Mandate to assist with the distribution of the elements in church and to the sick under Canon B12 are welcome to assist at services of Communion by Extension. However, their mandate does not permit them to conduct such services.

Special care is to be taken to guarantee that the conduct of the worship is reverent, and especially that the consecrated elements are

treated in a seemly and dignified manner, both in church and as they are carried between places of worship. Those responsible for the service must ensure that the consecrated elements are adequate to the needs of the congregation. If the bread and wine prove insufficient for the number of communicants, there can be no supplementary consecration during the course of the service. Any consecrated bread and wine which is not required for the purposes of Communion must be consumed either during the service or immediately after the service has ended.

The Bible readings used at a service of Communion by Extension will follow the lectionary for the day set out either in the Book of Common Prayer or in the lectionary of *Common Worship*. Unless the respective churches are following different authorised lectionaries, the readings at the service of Communion by Extension should be the same as those used at the Eucharist from which the consecrated elements have come.

The Bishop's permission will be forthcoming when the Parish Priest has both won the agreement of the Parochial Church Council (and the Church Councils or Committees in a Team Ministry) and has provided teaching for the people about the manner in which a congregation participates in the Eucharist 'by extension' when the service which they have is clearly not the Eucharist. They are two services but only one celebration.

Communion by Extension is not to be used to introduce a sacramental element into the life of house groups or seasonal study groups in the parish. Occasional celebrations of the Eucharist are a good component of such groups, but a priest must be present and preside.

These regulations are to be taken together with the notes and rubrics which accompany the authorised rite. Any of these notes and rubrics which are additional to the Bishop's Regulations are to be observed with care.