

COMMUNION BY EXTENSION

Guidance for Incumbents/Churchwardens

General Principles

1. We who worship the risen Lord also rejoice that he is present among us. He remains active in his mission as we seek to be faithful to him and to his call for us to serve the world in which we live. The Christian life is one of being a disciple in the world, and from this daily discipleship we are gathered in order to worship. So, being built up by the word and sacraments, we return to our daily witness inspired afresh by the Holy Spirit to be fruitful in our service of others.
2. The preaching of the Word and celebration of Holy Communion are foundational in the building up of the local Church. They are a sign of our fellowship in Christ and a means of grace, supporting the People of God in daily life.
3. Communion by Extension is not a celebration of Holy Communion / the Eucharist. It is an arrangement by which a community which is not able to celebrate Holy Communion may participate in an earlier celebration by receiving the bread and wine from that celebration. While Communion by Extension offers an opportunity for a congregation to receive Communion in the context of a service of worship, it is an alternative to Holy Communion and not a substitute for it. For this reason, the circumstances in which it should be used are limited.
4. Over centuries, the frequency of Eucharistic celebrations and the regularity with which Christians have received Communion have varied enormously. At the present time, when many congregations have grown accustomed to the celebration of Holy Communion more regularly than at any other time in history, there is also a great deal of pressure on clergy who are responsible for a large number of churches. However, in making provision for Communion by Extension, the Church of England has unequivocally indicated that it is not the answer to difficulties in resourcing ministry where the availability of clergy is limited.
5. Conscious of the need to ensure that our use of the gift of Holy Communion to sustain the life and mission of the Church is faithful to the theological rationale for Communion by Extension, we wish to discourage its use in all but exceptional circumstances. Whatever use may previously have been made, we want to ensure that no congregation is dependent upon Communion by Extension.
6. Since Communion by Extension should be used only in exceptional circumstances, it follows that most deacons, lay ministers or others will rarely, if ever, be asked to lead a service of Communion by Extension. Our commitment as a diocese to invest in lay ministry, and to deploy lay leaders to support parishes and deaneries, involves

developing the opportunities for lay ministers to exercise the functions of their office according to their calling and gifting, and not using them to stand in for priests. For this reason, we ask incumbents and churchwardens to take every opportunity to enable congregations to participate in the rich variety of services of daily prayer and services of the Word through their leadership by lay ministers. Incumbents in particular, supported by the School of Mission, should train and nurture lay ministers in this valuable expression of their ministry.

7. Across the Church of England, use of Communion by Extension is limited to occasions when the express permission of the bishop has been obtained, and this guidance is offered to help incumbents and churchwardens in the Diocese of Winchester to determine how and when to seek that permission.
8. This guidance should be read in conjunction with House of Bishops' Guidelines on Communion by Extension (Appendix 1) and the introductory notes to Public Worship with Communion by Extension (Appendix 2), the principles of which it seeks to apply.

When to Use Communion by Extension (CxExt)

9. Services of CxExt are intended to be used exceptionally and provisionally. This means that there must be exceptional reasons which justify the use of CxExt, and the CxExt should only be used to fulfil a need for a time-limited period. In rural areas, where there may be limited clergy to resource Eucharistic services, incumbents and churchwardens will need to give careful consideration to the development of a sustainable pattern of services, Eucharists as well as services of Morning/Evening Prayer and services of the Word.
10. CxExt is intended to allow one congregation ("the extension service") to share in the consecrated elements from an earlier Eucharist celebrated by another congregation ("the main service"). Before requesting permission for CxExt, incumbents and churchwardens should have in mind the need to set out clearly when and where the main service and the extension service are to take place, and the coherence of the connection between them. A service of CxExt is not a celebration of the Eucharist, and the liturgy provided is intended to make this distinction clear as well as to express the connection between the main service and extension services.

Common Scenarios

11. In cases of the occasional absence of a priest from a Eucharistic service, arrangements should normally be made to cover the service by making use of PTO clergy or the clerical registry, or the service should be made non-Eucharistic. Any request for permission to use CxExt should be made only after these options have been thoroughly considered.

12. Permission for CxExt WILL normally be given in cases where all of the following factors apply:
- a. Where there is a clear sense that one Eucharistic community is participating by extension in the celebration of a Eucharistic community to which it is related;
 - b. Where the extension service is on the same day as or is a celebration of the same festival as the main service;
 - c. Where the need for CxExt is justified by the limited availability of priests at specific times or for periods of time, for example at principal feasts, or during the long term absence of a clergy person;
 - d. Where there are good theological reasons that a worshipping community should expect to maintain its Eucharistic pattern of worship at those times.
13. Permission for CxExt will NOT normally be given in any of the following situations:
- a. Where it is reasonable (taking into consideration the size, location and resources of a community) to expect another priest to be found to preside at HC;
 - b. For a service of CxExt where another Eucharist is available in the same place on the same day;
 - c. To allow a Eucharistic community to extend its own Communion to a subsequent service for that same community, e.g. to the following Sunday service; or
 - d. On the basis that presidency at CxExt is necessary or useful for the training or ministerial development of deacons, LLMs or other ministers.

Communion by Extension – Sundays and Principal Feasts

14. Because CxExt is not a celebration of Holy Communion, a service of CxExt will not satisfy the requirement under Canon C14 that Holy Communion be celebrated in every parish church on Sundays and principal Feast Days. At certain times of the year, permission for CxExt to be used may be more widely given, but incumbents and churchwardens should always consider whether a gathered service or a non-Eucharistic service could be used on such occasions.

Communion by Extension – “Grey Areas”

15. In some circumstances, CxExt could appropriately be used to ensure that the Sacrament is available to particular communities.

Communion in Care Homes

16. One of the key “grey areas” concerns ministry in residences for the sick or elderly. It is vital that provision is made for Communion to be made available to those who cannot attend services in a church building. As the guidance about CxExt indicates, a much stronger case can be made for Communion being taken to the sick than for the sacrament being reserved for any other purpose.

17. Communion may be taken to those who live in care homes. This may be done by any priest, deacon, LLM or LLW, or by any Eucharistic Minister whom the incumbent or priest-in-charge is satisfied has been suitably trained. No other permission is required for Communion to be distributed in this way.
18. However, if Communion is to be distributed in the context of a service held at the care home, permission for CxExt should be requested. In these circumstances:
 - a. Greater flexibility will be given in relation to the arrangements;
 - b. The request should normally be made after a conversation with the Suffragan Bishop or Archdeacon;
 - c. It is expected that provision will be made for a priest to preside at a full service of Holy Communion in that place from time to time.
19. Common Worship liturgy for CxExt may be found [here](#).¹ A liturgy for the distribution of Communion to the Sick (which may be used in a residential home) is found [here](#).²

Mid-Week Communion Services

20. Occasionally, a mid-week communion service will provide an opportunity for Eucharistic worship to an elderly or infirm congregation that would not easily be able to attend a Sunday service.
21. The norm for this sort of occasion will be a service of Holy Communion at which a priest presides. Permission will not normally be given for CxExt to be used in circumstances where Extension would be the primary way of providing Communion to a mid-week congregation. Permission may be given in exceptional circumstances which affect such a congregation, and should be requested only after a conversation with the Suffragan Bishop or Archdeacon.

¹ <https://www.chpublishing.co.uk/books/9780715123256/common-worship-public-worship-with-communion-by-extension>

² <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/common-worship/wholeness-and-healing/wholeness-and-healing#mm085>

How to Seek Permission for CxExt

22. The Bishop of Winchester has made the following directions to assist incumbents and churchwardens in providing the bishop with the information needed to support their request:

- a. The incumbent/p-i-c must make a written request to the diocesan bishop, setting out the circumstances in respect of which permission is sought (dates, places, minister, etc.), and explaining the reasons for seeking permission to use CxExt;
- b. Permission will only be granted for CxExt to be used occasionally;
- c. Permission will only be granted for a limited period of time, and not normally renewed. Requests for permission to use CxExt on more than one occasion should explain what alternative arrangements are being made for services after the expiry of the permission.
- d. The only form of service which is permitted to be used for services of CxExt is the service of "Common Worship: Public Worship with Communion by Extension".

November 2017

APPENDIX 1

PUBLIC WORSHIP WITH COMMUNION BY EXTENSION

Guidelines issued by the House of Bishops

1. In making authorized provision for Communion by Extension, the House of Bishops has principally in mind the needs of a single cure with a number of authorized places of worship, or a group or team ministry. In such circumstances worshippers gathered in one of the places where Holy Communion has not been celebrated may receive communion by extension from a church where Holy Communion is 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. A particular congregation should not come to rely mainly upon this means of eucharistic participation, and care should be taken to ensure that a celebration of Holy Communion takes place regularly in each church concerned.
2. The practice of Communion by Extension as envisaged by the authorized service has some affinities with the communion of the sick, from elements which have been consecrated at a celebration in church. The main differences concern the public nature of Communion by Extension, and the consequent need for careful attention to the overall shape and content of the service. For this reason it is required that the service should be led only by a person who has been specifically authorized for this purpose by the bishop. Such a person will normally be a deacon, Reader or lay worker licensed under Canon E 7, and must wear the appropriate vesture. The choice of readings is governed by an authorized lectionary provision followed either by a sermon or a suitable devotional reading. Those who have been given permission (under the provisions of Canon B 12) to assist in the distribution of Holy Communion may assist in that way, but the minister who leads the service must have a more specific authority from the bishop, and be appropriately trained.
3. Communion by Extension should not be regarded as a means of introducing a sacramental element into the life of home groups, or other parish groups, whether on an occasional or a regular basis. The House of Bishops recognizes the value of an occasional celebration of Holy Communion in such circumstances, when a priest must preside.
4. The service of Communion by Extension has been drawn up to make clear that it is not in itself a celebration of Holy Communion, and yet enables a worshipping community to participate in Holy Communion 'by extension'. When it is introduced to a congregation care should be taken to explain the close relationship between the two services; there is but one celebration of Holy Communion, from which the consecrated elements are brought.
5. The notes which accompany the service make clear that explicit permission must be obtained from the bishop for the use of this rite, and that such permission should relate to specific pastoral circumstances. Such permission will normally be in writing, and will be either for a particular occasion or for a limited duration. The bishop should regularly review the use of this rite in parishes where it is used. Communion by

Extension must always be regarded as exceptional and provisional, looking to circumstances when a priest will be available to preside at a celebration of Holy Communion.

6. Communion by Extension will require that special care is given to the conduct of the service, and especially that the consecrated elements are treated in a seemly and dignified manner. Those responsible for a service should ensure that the consecrated elements are adequate to meet the needs of the congregation, and that any consecrated bread and wine which is not required for the purposes of communion is consumed either during or immediately after the service.
7. These Guidelines should be read closely with, and be regarded as subordinate to, the notes and rubrics which accompany the authorized rite, which must be observed with care. They are intended to supplement and interpret the notes and rubrics in the service, and the House of Bishops will revise and reissue these guidelines from time to time.

APPENDIX 2

PUBLIC WORSHIP WITH COMMUNION BY EXTENSION

Notes to the Published Liturgy

1. Explicit permission must be obtained from the bishop for the use of this rite. This permission should relate to specific pastoral circumstances, thus emphasizing the exceptional nature of this ministry. See also the Guidelines issued by the House of Bishops.
2. In parishes or cures in which Public Worship with Communion by Extension has been authorized, care should be taken to ensure that a Sunday celebration of Holy Communion continues to take place regularly in each church. Public Worship with Communion by Extension will normally take place on Sundays and Principal Holy Days. Exceptionally, the rite may be appropriate on other occasions.
3. This service is led only by a person specifically authorized by the bishop; this may be a deacon, Reader or other lay person who has received appropriate training. Those who have permission under Canon B 12 may share in the giving of communion.
4. If the minister is a deacon, Reader or lay worker authorized under Canon E 7, the appropriate vesture is worn.
5. Care should be taken to ensure that those who play any part in the administration of Communion by Extension treat the elements in a seemly and dignified manner and observe the rubrics in the rite provided.
6. Proper provision must be made for the consecrated bread and wine to be brought to the church from the celebration of Holy Communion in a seemly and dignified manner. They should be placed upon the Holy Table and covered with a clean white cloth.
7. Proper care should be taken to ensure as far as possible that the consecrated elements are adequate to meet the needs of the congregation. If the bread and wine prove insufficient for the number of communicants, there can be no supplementary consecration in the course of this service.