



Diocese of Nova Scotia & Prince Edward Island

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November 2, 2022 – *All Souls' Day*

Dear friends,

I write to you following conversations earlier this Fall with the Bishop's Advisory Council (Archdeacons) and Regional Deans, when I shared that it was my intention to allow for the re-introduction of the Common Cup in due course and sought feedback from each of them. I was aware at that time, and am even more so now, that most of the Anglican dioceses across the Canadian Church, and many in the Church of England, The Episcopal Church of the United States, and beyond have already done so. I am now prepared to allow for those parishes who wish to do so - after intentional consultation with Parish leaders and parishioners - to re-introduce the Common Cup for public worship. This is not a requirement or an expectation of you and your parishes, but rather permission.

Last week, at meetings with the House of Bishops, I received consecrated wine from a Common Cup for the first time since the pandemic restrictions began in March, 2020. I also took time to speak with a few bishops over the course of the week about experiences in their dioceses with the re-introduction of the Common Cup. Even though permission was given in some dioceses a number of months ago, I learned that many parishes have opted not to return to the use of the Common Cup at this time. It is also clear from listening to some of my fellow bishops that practices for receiving consecrated wine are not uniform across their dioceses. Some parishes are using a pipette to place small drops of consecrated wine on consecrated bread or wafers, while others are using individual cups filled from a common cruet or cup, or have returned to the Common Cup. Some are using one method exclusively, while others employ more than one method for the administration of consecrated wine. I suspect the same will be true in our diocese and I am prepared to make allowance for that. I know that we are all doing our best to offer sacramental care that enables parishioners to partake in the fullness of Holy Communion, whether that is by offering communion in one kind only or offering one or more options for the reception of consecrated wine.

What I am asking, as noted above, is that you engage in a time of reflection and consultation with Parish leaders and parishioners about re-introducing the Common Cup, if you have not already done so. It is important that this decision does not reflect the desires or piety of the priest/s alone but is the expressed desire of the congregation/s. I fully understand that we are moving into flu season and that Covid is still in our midst causing serious illness and death. The re-introduction of the Common Cup might reasonably cause alarm to some. It is important to attend to that anxiety and fear. My decision, however, is based on scientific research from noted epidemiologists that has not changed that drinking wine from a Common Cup does not pose a significant health risk, as long as safe practices are followed (please see attached article for fuller details). These include ensuring that those administering the Chalice are wearing medical-grade masks, that the Chalice is wiped and then turned one-quarter turn after each person consumes, and that vessels are washed in hot, soapy water following ablutions. Maintaining some physical distance

between those receiving communion is also advised. Should a priest/presider not be comfortable drinking from the Common Cup after others have done so, the consecrated wine may be poured down a piscina or onto consecrated ground. It is important to note that epidemiologists have continually advised that singing without wearing a medical-grade mask poses more of a risk for the transmission of Covid-19 than receiving wine from a Common Cup. The use of medical-grade masks for all participants in worship and frequent handwashing are strongly recommended as the best defense against Covid-19, according to health experts, not to mention staying home if you are feeling unwell.

While I realize that for some of you the decision to allow for the re-introduction of the Common Cup will be met with joy, for others it may cause distress. Please take time to have good conversations with your colleagues and the members of your congregations as you consider this option and reach out if you need support. Even if this is something your parish has discussed and you agree to return to the use of the Common Cup, please take time to communicate this well in advance so that parishioners are prepared for this change in practice and know when to expect it. If your parish has been administering consecrated wine by another method and now wishes to return to the use of the Common Cup, please consider whether another option would also be helpful, especially in this time of transition, and remind parishioners that receiving in one kind only is still considered full communion.

I am communicating this information via the clergy email list only at this time, but it is not confidential. It will be included in the NetNews on November 9th, after our diocesan guidelines relating to Covid-19 have been amended to reflect this change relating to the use of the Common Cup. I am aware that the Parish of Saint George in Halifax re-introduced the Common Cup yesterday, on All Saints Day. They did so with my permission and support, after a period of consultation and communication with parishioners and following a request to me some weeks ago and ongoing communication with and from the Rector and Wardens over a period of months.

If you have questions or concerns, please reach out to your Archdeacon or Regional Dean, contact my office, or invite me to clericus or Regional Council. Please be assured of my prayers for you and the people of your parish, not to mention my gratitude for your leadership during a time of tremendous challenge and change in the life of the Church. We are not through this yet, but I trust that we are all finding ways to be nourished and equipped for the ministry to which we have been called. Regardless of the decisions you make with your parish about whether to re-introduce the Common Cup at this time or not, I ask you to uphold one another in the bonds of Christian love. While the Common Cup is a powerful symbol of the unity we share in Christ, so too is our love for one another, reflected visibly in acts of kindness, respect, compassion and care.

Every blessing,

