

Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island
**Bishop's Policy 1.1.4: Administration of Communion from the Reserved Sacrament
(Diaconal and Lay) (revised February 9, 2024)**

This policy fully replaces Bishop's Policy 1.1.4: Lay Distribution of the Eucharist to Shut-Ins (09-02-2024).

1. PURPOSE

Clergy, Licensed Lay Ministers, Authorized Eucharistic Ministers

The celebration of the Eucharist is a significant act of the gathered community in our Diocese. The practice of bringing the consecrated sacrament to those who have not been able to gather in this configuration is an ancient practice and ministry. It is a loving and hospitable extension of the ministry of the gathered community to share in this practice. The following guidelines and suggested practices are designed to support, with care, the distribution of the Eucharistic elements to the faithful. Intended for the sick, shut-ins, those unable to be present at the Sunday Eucharistic celebration, and in institutions such as nursing homes and prisons, it does not imply an extension of priestly ministry to Deacons or to authorized Licensed Lay Ministers. Those individuals who feel called to exercise this ministry must apply to the Bishop, with the endorsement of their Rector (or a reasonable designate identified by the Bishop) and Parish Council. This ministry is separate and unique from that of parish Eucharistic ministers and Licensed Lay Ministers.

2. OVERVIEW

"Since its very beginning, Christianity has had the sharing of a sacred meal of bread and wine as its principal act of worship. The Ancient Church often called it the "agapé" or "love feast"; and it has been known variously as the "Lord's Supper"; the "Divine Liturgy"; "Mass"; "Holy Eucharist" and "Holy Communion." We know that since at least the second century C.E. Christians have kept, or "reserved" some of the blessed bread and wine for distribution... so that those absent from the Sunday liturgy might be included in the worship of the whole congregation. The Eucharist is at its heart a shared meal, and it has always been the Anglican way that Holy Communion may not be received by one's self alone. Each person should feel welcome and included in the worship of the whole congregation. It is important, therefore, that when the Reserved Sacrament is brought to an individual, the one bringing must each time also receive."

(Rev'd Dr. Eric Griffin, "Concerning the Administration of the Reserved Sacrament," © 2015)

In the Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, the distribution of the Reserved Sacrament to those in hospital, or shut in, or living in retirement and nursing homes is widespread. A full celebration, however, of the Holy Communion liturgy may not always be appropriate in these facilities, especially when the sacrament is brought privately to an individual. Deacons, and more recently Licensed Lay Ministers, suitably trained and with permission to distribute the sacrament, may be authorized to distribute Communion from the Parish Reserved Sacrament.

In order that it be made clear that the communicants are being included in the worship of the Sunday congregation, care must be taken to avoid any implication of a new or supplementary re-consecration of the elements of the bread and wine.

3. PERMISSIONS

The parish needs to have the opportunity to discuss and study the practice of lay distribution to those who are not present at the parish Eucharist, before requesting the Bishop's permission to do so. It is desirable that a meeting of the whole congregation be held.

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In requesting permission, an account should be given of the preparation of the parish, the preparation of those who would be receiving this ministry, and a reasonable belief that parishioners will accept this ministry.

The Rector's authorization to distribute the sacrament must be received on each occasion. It is preferable that this be done on the same day, directly from the parish celebration of the Eucharist. This helps to reinforce the link with the parish, symbolizing the reaching out of the gathered church to its scattered members (*see 5.C.*).

4. CHOOSING and LICENSING LAY DISTRIBUTORS

Lay distributors should be carefully chosen and trained from among a parish's Licensed Lay Ministers. The Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island provides two different licenses for the lay administration of the Sacrament by a designated individual. One is for in-parish, Eucharistic services (*and not covered by this policy*). The license covered by this policy is for the Administration of Communion from the Reserved Sacrament (Diaconal and Lay) outside the church proper. This license is NOT included with the standard permissions for either a parish Eucharistic minister or a Licensed Lay Minister and must be applied for separately. If granted, it shall be for a term of 3 years and may be renewed by the Bishop on the written request of the Rector and Parish Council. Acknowledged by their congregation and approved by Parish Council as being suitable for this ministry, Lay Distributors must:

- supply a clear Criminal Record and Vulnerable Sectors check and abide by all safety restrictions of the Parish's SafeR Church policy regarding visits and home visits;
- be regular communicant members of the parish, at least 16 years of age, and be sincere in practicing their faith;
- be commissioned to perform this ministry and receive the Bishop's license at a public worship service; and
- have some ability to work with people and be willing to be part of a ministry team.

5. GUIDELINES AND PRACTICES

- A. Sunday Eucharistic Celebration:** Nothing resembling a "Deacons' Mass" may take place in the Diocese. When a Deacon or Licensed Lay Minister is officiating in a parish on Sunday morning (or any other principal worship service of a parish or congregation) Communion from Reserved Sacrament should NOT occur.
- B. Institutions:** While it is unfortunate that a full celebration of the Eucharist does not take place more frequently in such institutions as nursing homes and prisons, usually because a Priest is not available, care must be taken that only those properly prepared and authorized by the Rector to do so will administer the Reserved Sacrament. Residents of these institutions may be unable to attend a public celebration of the Eucharist for extended periods of time, thus making it appropriate that the Eucharist be celebrated with them, and attempting to include members of their family,

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members of their parish family, the parish community, and friends. A public Communion service, acknowledging that this is a service to be offered under special circumstances (the preference being a priest-led Eucharistic Celebration) to avoid any confusion about the sacrament, should use the *Book of Alternative Services*, beginning on page 257, as its guide. It should always be made clear to participants by the person officiating that Communion is being administered from the Reserved Sacrament. The Communion from Reserved Sacrament should simply be:

Greeting (*page 256*)

A short reading of Scripture (*selection provided page 256-257, or in consultation with the Rector*)

A Confession and Absolution

(suggested, but not mandatory; using the Absolution found on page 258, substitute 'us' for 'you' and 'our' for 'your' or use the Absolution shared by all as found at the top of page 692, Home Prayers; there are no manual gestures of blessing the gathering are to accompany these words)

**All Most merciful God,
forgive us our sins against you
and against each other.
Strengthen us to overcome our weaknesses,
that we may live in love
as you would have us live,
for the sake of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

The following declaration might be used immediately prior to the Lord's Prayer or the Invitation:

The Church of Christ, of which we are members, has taken this bread and wine and given thanks according to the Lord's command. We now share in the communion of his body and blood.

The Invitation

Communion

Doxology and Dismissal

- C. Individual Communion:** When a member of the community cannot be present at the community Eucharist but wishes to receive Communion, it is desirable that members of the community bring the consecrated elements to that person immediately upon completion of the Sunday celebration. The continuity between Communion and community celebration is thus made clear. When this is not possible Communion could either be brought from a weekday celebration or from the Reserved Sacrament.

Ideally, if there is a consistent and organized program in the parish for communicating the sick and those unable to be at the celebration, consideration should be given to a form of commissioning or sending which could take place each Sunday, at the conclusion of the liturgy, at which those who will be taking the sacrament (Deacons or Licensed Lay Ministers) are given the bread and the wine to take, and are prayed for by the gathered community, which also offers prayers for those who will receive the sacrament. This practice may be observed weekly or may be adopted for seasonal Home Communions, such as Christmas and Easter.

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A model (taken from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*) suitable for local adaptation) for commissioning, follows:

***Gracious God,
loving all your family with a mother's tender care:
As you sent the angel to feed Elijah with heavenly bread,
assist those who set forth to share your word and sacrament
with those who are sick, homebound, and imprisoned.
In your love and care, nourish and strengthen those who will receive this sacrament,
and give us all the comfort of your abiding presence,
through the body and blood of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.***

6. PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

If possible, a team, including a musician, should undertake this ministry together if the service is to take place in a home for special care or institution.

If the Sacrament is taken to a private residence, it may be desirable that more than one person be present. Any pastoral visits of this nature should adhere to the Parish's SafeR Church policy. In certain pastoral circumstances it is desirable that more than one person be present.

Transportation of the elements:

A suitable Pyx for the consecrated bread may be used.

A suitable glass vessel with a secure top for the consecrated wine should be used.

Appropriate linens and hardware, along with hand sanitizer, help to assure safe distribution.

Any consecrated bread or wine that remains should be consumed by the lay distributor.

7. RESOURCES

Approved resources include *The Book of Alternative Services*, *The Book of Common Prayer*, the Service of the Word from "Eucharistic Prayers, Services of the Word, and Night Prayer" Supplementary to *The Book of Alternative Services* © 2001, and the document "Public Distribution of Holy Communion by Deacons and Lay People," prepared by the Doctrine and Worship Committee of the Anglican Church of Canada. All of these are presently available at the Anglican Church of Canada website, Authorized Liturgical Texts. Other resources may be used in consultation with the Rector and Bishop.