

1st July 2020

UP-DATED GUIDANCE ON ADMINISTRATION OF SACRAMENTS DURING CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

This up-dated information is coming to you in light of the easing of Lockdown and subsequent legislative changes by Governments in both jurisdictions which permit church buildings to re-open, as long as Government and Church Guidelines are upheld.

Holy Communion

There are three options for the administration of Holy Communion at this time.

(1) Home Communion:

If you wish to administer Home Communion, especially in response to requests, you may do that. The 'household' should prepare their own bread and juice and you should bring elements for yourself. Social distancing must be maintained.

(2) Online Holy Communion:

Guidelines have previously been distributed on the practice of online Holy Communion during the exceptional circumstances during Covid-19.

At that point it was emphasised that these were only temporary guidelines. This is still true and the following guidance should be viewed in the same way. **Permission for the practice of virtual Holy Communion is given as a short-term response to the current crisis and this will be withdrawn as soon as congregations can safely receive Holy Communion together when physically gathered.**

Due to the facts that not all congregations are meeting physically over the Summer and that we share a common desire to keep congregations safe the provision for live online services of Holy Communion is still in place.

Due to some confusion being expressed about how the previous guidance should be applied in practice, revised guidelines are being provided as follows:

Guidelines for online Holy Communion

1. All who participate in an online service of Holy Communion may engage in a full and meaningful way spiritually whether that is

- (i) as the minister takes bread and wine or
- (ii) as they share bread and wine, which they have made ready in advance to use, as the minister presides.

2. As we celebrate Holy Communion online it is important that we recognise and signal that, though scattered, we are a community who are gathered round this Table. Therefore the service should be live:

- (i) a platform like Zoom is ideal
- (ii) for those unable to share Holy Communion in this way, the possibility of sharing with other local congregations should be explored

(3) Physical Holy Communion

Given that other options are available and that Societies and Circuits will be working hard to ensure the safety of all during weekly Sunday worship, it may be better for Societies to wait until the Autumn before offering Holy Communion as part of gathered congregational worship. Safe administration of Holy Communion makes significant demands on the whole congregation, by the Autumn we will have developed our experience of ensuring social distancing and hand and respiratory hygiene during worship so that we can administer safely and in a way which allows our focus to be on what the Lord's Supper means rather than on social distancing.

However, if you and the Church Council wish to go ahead over the July and August and offer Holy Communion as part of gathered worship please speak with your District Superintendent, and observe at least the following guidance:

- (i) Have a clear one-way system as people go to the front to receive overseen by stewards as people should not pass each other on their way up to and down from the Communion rail
- (ii) People must return to the same seat and take care to avoid touching pews/chairs
- (iii) People should stay standing to receive
- (iv) Observe social distancing of 2 meters at the Communion Rail
- (v) For the time being only the minister should administer. It is normally good practice that others would share in the administration of bread and wine but in these circumstances it is easier to control hygiene if it is the responsibility of one person
- (vi) The minister should use hand sanitiser as you begin the Communion liturgy and before touching bread or glasses. Furthermore, it is advisable to use hand sanitiser between 'Tables'
- (vii) The presiding minister should give bread into peoples' hands, 'dropping' the bread rather than 'placing' it to avoid contact
- (viii) Small glasses must be used and those preparing them must take great care with hygiene
- (ix) Glasses could be placed on the Communion rail by the minister and picked up by the person receiving, again to minimise the possibility of contact
- (x) There should be no shaking of hands during the sharing of the Peace
- (xi) Ministers should make a conscious effort to not touch their face or other potentially contaminated surfaces while distributing

Baptism

As with physical Holy Communion as part of gathered worship our general advice is that you do not administer baptism over the Summer months, except of course, for emergency situations.

If you do have emergency requests for baptism please consult your District Superintendent.

We will up-date this advice at the beginning of August in anticipation of baptism services being possible in September.