

Guidance

Administration of Holy Communion Regulations 2015

Introduction

The new Administration of Holy Communion Regulations came into force on 1st October 2015. They make new provision for the authorisation of lay people to distribute the sacrament at Holy Communion in accordance with Canon B12. They extend the range of those who may be authorised, **to include for the first time baptised children who are admitted to Communion**, and they also significantly extend the range of people who may **grant** the authorisation. This document is intended as guidance for bishops and others who are acting under the regulations.

The regulations make provision for authorising individuals to distribute the sacrament in a parish church, a school, a guild church or a cathedral. This is a wider range of contexts than were provided for in the previous regulations, which referred only to parishes.

In general, the bishop is responsible for authorisation (though he or she may delegate the responsibility). The exception is that, where authorisation is to be granted for services in a cathedral, the responsibility rests with the Dean. Deans may not delegate their responsibility.

Delegation of responsibilities by bishops

The diocesan bishop may:

- (a) grant all authorisations (other than those relating to services in a cathedral) him- or her- self;
- (b) delegate the power to grant authorisations to a suffragan or assistant bishop, or an archdeacon, within the diocese;
- (c) delegate the power to grant authorisations to incumbents, priests-in-charge or (during a vacancy in any benefice) rural deans within the diocese. This delegation may be granted to one or more individuals, or generally to all incumbents etc within the diocese. In London, the bishop may also delegate to the vicar of a guild church.

Each bishop will need to consider whether, and to what extent, to delegate responsibility for granting authorisations in his or her diocese.

Applications for authorisation

If responsibility for authorisation rests with the bishop or senior staff of the diocese, applications must be made by the incumbent, priest-in-charge or rural dean. No form of application is prescribed by the regulations, so the precise form is a matter for the diocese. In all cases the appropriate consent must be obtained.

If authorisation is to be granted locally, no application is required, but the appropriate consent must still be obtained.

Who may be authorised

Any regular communicant may be authorised to distribute the sacrament under the regulations. This includes confirmed children, and also children who are not confirmed but are admitted to Communion under the Admission of Baptized Children to Holy Communion Regulations 2006.

Conditions for authorisation

As noted above, only regular communicants may be authorised. The person granting the authorisation should be satisfied that the person is a regular communicant and is in good standing. A person should not be authorised where the person granting the authorisation is aware of safeguarding concerns relating to him or her (e.g if the person is subject to a safeguarding agreement).

No-one may be authorised without the consent of:

- the PCC (in a parish context);
- the head teacher (if the authorisation is of a child for the purposes of services in a school);
- the guild church council (in a guild church); or
- the Chapter (in a cathedral).

Record keeping

It is very important that each diocese continues to maintain a record of those who are authorised under the Measure. If, therefore, bishops wish to delegate responsibility for authorisation to parish clergy, it will be necessary to request a return, listing all those authorised, to be completed by the incumbent or priest in charge each year and sent to the diocesan office. If bishops or senior staff continue to be responsible for authorisation, they should keep a complete list of those authorised and the date on which the authorisation expires or is to be reviewed.

Limitations on authorisation

Authorisation may be granted subject to conditions.

Authorisation may also be granted “generally or...only for the purposes of public worship”. Children should be authorised **only** for the purposes of public worship, and not for home Communion or Communion in institutions. If there is a wish to authorise an adult to distribute the sacrament at home Communion or in institutions, before authorisation the House of Bishops’ practice guidance on Safer Recruitment must be complied with. Authorised adults who will be visiting vulnerable people should be aware of relevant safeguarding policies and have undergone appropriate safeguarding training before acting on the authorisation.

Other issues

The Regulations require authorisations to be regularly reviewed. We suggest that the simplest way to achieve this is to make authorisations time-limited (although the regulations would also allow for indefinite authorisation with regular review). If the person still wishes to be

authorised under the Regulations, the position will then be reviewed before granting a new authorisation.

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November 2015