

GENERAL SYNOD

ADMINISTRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION REGULATIONS 2015

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

BACKGROUND

1. At the November 2012 group of sessions, the General Synod resolved, on a Diocesan Synod Motion from Southwell and Nottingham:

‘That this Synod request that Canon B 12 and the Regulations taking effect under it be amended so that:
 - i. the Holy Sacrament may be distributed by any authorised regular communicant (including children admitted to the Holy Communion under the Admission of Baptised Children to Holy Communion Regulations 2006);*
 - ii. if the diocesan bishop agrees, the necessary authorisation may be given in relation to any parish by the incumbent, priest in charge or (during a vacancy) rural dean;*
 - iii. no person shall be authorised to distribute the Holy Sacrament without the support of the parochial church council of the parish or, where the Holy Communion is celebrated in a school and the person concerned is a child, of the head teacher of the school; and*
 - iv. the authorisation given in relation to any parish is required to be kept under regular review in accordance with guidelines issued by the diocesan bishop.’*
2. Before regulations could be brought forward to implement this resolution, an amendment had to be made to Canon B 12 to remove the requirement for **the bishop** to grant authorisation. Amending Canon No. 35, which amends Canon B 12 to remove that requirement, has now received the Royal Assent and Licence and will be laid before the Synod for enactment at the July group of sessions.
3. The draft Administration of Holy Communion Regulations 2015 (‘the draft regulations’) will give effect to the Synod’s resolution of November 2012. They will replace the regulations of the Church Assembly made in 1969 (‘the 1969 regulations’) which presently govern the administration of Holy Communion by lay people.
4. An illustrative draft of the regulations to be made under Canon B 12 once it had been amended was annexed to the explanatory memorandum for Amending Canon No. 35. Comments were received on that draft, as a result of which a revised draft was prepared and considered by **the House of Bishops** in December 2014. It agreed that the draft regulations should be put before the General Synod for approval in that revised form.

THE DRAFT REGULATIONS

5. **Regulation 1** deals with citation.
6. **Regulations 2 to 8** deal with the position in relation to parishes.
7. The draft regulations make the provision requested by the Synod in November 2012 in relation to parishes, enabling bishops either (a) themselves to authorise individuals to distribute the sacrament (or to delegate the responsibility for giving such authority to a suffragan bishop or archdeacon) (**regulation 2**) or (b) to give general or specific authority to incumbents, priests-in-charge or (during a vacancy) rural deans to authorise individuals in this way (**regulation 3**).
8. Under **regulation 4(1)** a person may not be authorised unless the person giving the authority is satisfied that that person is a regular communicant of the Church of England.
9. Under **regulation 4(2)** in general a person may not be authorised without the consent of the parochial church council of the parish concerned. However, under **regulation 4(4)** where the authorisation is to distribute the sacraments at a service in a school, the authorisation of the head teacher of the school (and not the PCC) is needed.
10. Under **regulation 4(3)** in accordance with the resolution of November 2012 those who may be authorised include children who are admitted to Holy Communion under the Admission of Baptised Children to Holy Communion Regulations 2006.
11. **Regulation 5** allows a bishop to impose conditions on an authorisation, or to specify the circumstances in which it might be used. This is one of the respects in which the draft regulations differ from the illustrative draft annexed to the explanatory memorandum for Amending Canon No. 35. The power will allow a bishop, for example, to ensure that where the power of authorisation is delegated, it cannot be exercised unreasonably.
12. **Regulation 6** allows an authorisation to have effect generally or only so that it has effect for the purposes of public worship. (This will, for example, permit an authority given to a child to be limited to public worship, so as to avoid authorising them to minister in inappropriate circumstances.)
13. **Regulation 7** requires the incumbent or priest-in-charge of a parish to keep the authorisations given in the parish under review.
14. **Regulation 8** deals with the position where there is a vacancy.
15. Neither the 1969 regulations nor the illustrative draft regulations annexed to the explanatory memorandum for Amending Canon No. 35 made provision for the position in relation to guild churches or cathedrals. However, there seems no justification of principle for omitting them from the new arrangements. The draft regulations therefore now make provision for guild churches and cathedrals, in both case by applying the regulations for parishes with suitable modifications.

16. **Regulations 9 to 11** deal with guild churches. In their case the position is broadly the same as in relation to parishes, with the vicar of the guild church and the guild church council exercising the functions of the incumbent and PCC of a parish.
17. **Regulations 12 and 13** deal with cathedrals. In their case responsibility for authorising lay people to distribute the Holy Communion in the cathedral will rest with the dean, subject to obtaining the consent of the cathedral chapter.
18. **Regulation 14** revokes the 1969 regulations.

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