

GENERAL SYNOD

**DIOCESAN SYNOD MOTION:
AMENDMENT TO CANON B12 AND REGULATIONS**

Paper from the Southwell and Nottingham Diocesan Synod

‘That this Synod request that Canon B 12 and the Regulations taking effect under it be amended so that:

- a) The Holy Sacrament may be distributed by any authorized regular communicant (including children admitted to the Holy Communion under the Admission of Baptised Children to Holy Communion Regulations 2006);*
- b) If the diocesan bishop agrees, the necessary authorization may be given in relation to any parish by the incumbent, priest in charge or (during a vacancy) rural dean; and*
- c) No person shall be authorized to distribute the Holy Sacrament without the support of the parochial church council of the parish.’*

1. The regulations regarding the licensing of lay assistants at Holy Communion were made by the Church Assembly in November 1969. The church has changed since then, with a wider development of lay ministries, the admission of children to communion before they are confirmed, and the more recent addition of the additional Eucharistic prayers for when significant numbers of children are present. Therefore the regulations regarding lay assistants at communion need re-visiting, and this Diocesan Synod motion from Southwell and Nottingham, brought to General Synod for your consideration, is an attempt to do so.
2. Lay ministry is now promoted and developed significantly in many churches, with lay people of all ages being encouraged to develop their gifts within the church setting and to serve and minister as appropriate. The increased involvement of lay ministers from a range of denominational backgrounds and Christian traditions, including in ecumenical partnerships, has brought with it strength in variety of worship and leadership. The recognition and authorising of these developments in lay ministry regarding assisting at the Eucharist now need to be taken in context at the local level.
3. In 2006 General Synod moved forward with the final approval of the Admission of Children to Holy Communion before Confirmation, after a long journey and very positive experiences in a number of ‘experimental dioceses’. This legislation has seen more children and young people being fully involved in the life of the church and developing their own ministry gifts before coming to Confirmation at a time more appropriate for them and their individual spiritual development. The experience of

Children and Communion has been widely positive, with no lack of reverence but rather a clear demonstration of the grace of God for us all. The time now seems right for some of these young people to be able to assist in distribution during Holy Communion.

4. In September 2012 two new Eucharistic Prayers were authorised for use when a significant number of children are present, or when it is otherwise pastorally appropriate to meet the needs of children present. The Liturgical Commission worked with General Synod to produce prayers that retained theological depth while also being accessible to younger people and encouraging imagination. These two prayers were long-expected, and have been received well in churches as a step forward in encouraging children and young people to be able to participate more in worship. Another helpful step would be for children and young people where appropriate to assist in the distribution.
5. In his report ‘The Way Ahead’ in 2001 Lord Dearing firmly placed church schools at the centre of the church’s mission and ministry. Many church schools have moved forward with that original vision, and increasingly church schools regularly celebrate Holy Communion as part of their pattern of worship. This can seem exclusive rather than inclusive when the children and young people present are limited in their involvement and participation in the worship, and are unable to assist in Communion even though they may be regular communicants in their local church.
6. The proposed change will allow children and young people who are regular communicants of the Church of England but have not yet been confirmed, to be authorised to assist as and when appropriate at Holy Communion. For many this is a matter of justice, as the church increasingly recognises the unique gifts and ministries that children and young people bring to the church. As equal members, children should be given every opportunity to serve the whole church and demonstrate that all are welcome and all are cherished in God’s family.
7. Clause a) makes clear that any lay person who is a regular communicant could be considered to assist at Holy Communion. Children and young people will have, by that point, already received preparation for receiving communion, and it is anticipated that appropriate training, preparation and supervision will also take place for those appointed to assist.
8. Clause b) is worded deliberately to allow freedom in each diocese to either retain bishop’s authorisation or delegate this down to incumbents and PCCs. This provides an opportunity for the authorisation of this aspect of local ministry to be placed into the hands of local leaders. In the increasing concern for bishop’s workloads here is an opportunity for one matter to be delegated down to the local level.

9. Clause c) ensures that this change is not about a 'free for all'. Each assistant, be they a young person or adult lay leader, will be considered carefully by the appropriate local body.
10. Where a child or young person is approved as a lay assistant in the local parish church it is accepted that similar involvement in the School Eucharist would be appropriate. Clearly the Headteacher would also need to be engaged in such a decision; indeed the school could nominate pupils to the PCC for such authorisation.
11. This proposal is about lay ministry, the place and role of children and young people in our churches, and local leadership and authorisation. The necessary minor change to the Canon and regulations will demonstrate that the church takes both lay ministry and the proper inclusion of children seriously.

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**Published by the General Synod of the Church of England
and on sale at the Church House Bookshop**

31 Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BN

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£1