

The Administration of Communion by a Deacon When a Priest is not Present

A number of congregations are not able to have a priest present each week for a celebration of the Holy Eucharist. When this is the case, congregational interest and attendance often decline. The ministry of deacons, one of whose responsibilities is to “assist the bishop and priests in public worship and in the ministration of God’s Word and Sacraments” (BCP, p. 543) is one way to help congregations in which the celebration of the Eucharist is not possible weekly.

This ministry is not to replace the efforts of a congregation and the bishop to obtain long-term priestly care for the congregation. If a congregation finds itself unable to find or pay for a full or part time priest, it needs to look toward establishing a ministry team that includes a locally trained priest for its long-term sacramental care.

With the permission of the bishop and the deacon’s supervising priest, deacons may administer Communion in congregations where there is no priest available to celebrate the Eucharist, effective June 1, 2009. This activity can take place:

- As a one time event;
- As a regular interval in which a deacon administers Communion in a congregation on the weeks when the supply priest is not scheduled to be present;
- On a weekly basis when a congregation does not have a supply priest.

Each deacon decides if this is the ministry that he or she would like to perform, with the permission of the bishop. When desirable, two deacons may want to travel together to a congregation to administer Communion (but only one deacon has his or her expenses reimbursed).

Transitional deacons may participate in this ministry, under the guidance of the bishop.

Source of the consecrated Sacrament

Permission to take consecrated Sacrament must always be received from the priest at whose church the Eucharist is being celebrated. Persons taking it are to inform the priest when the administration will take place (for example, later in the day or the week). It is appropriate to include a charge either before or after the postcommunion prayer at the Eucharist at which the Sacrament is consecrated in order to send forth the deacon or Eucharistic minister who is transporting the Sacrament.

The preferred source for the consecrated Sacrament to be administered is from another church that has a celebration of the Eucharist earlier in the day than the congregation to which the deacon is going. Doing so is a clear sign of the connection that each congregation has with others in the diocese. Deacons should be responsible for taking the consecrated Sacrament from one church to another. If the timing of worship services does not make this possible, Eucharistic ministers may take the consecrated Sacrament from one church to another.

When such a procedure is not possible due to the times of worship services or the distance involved, deacons or Eucharistic ministers may take consecrated Sacrament from a celebration of

the Holy Eucharist on a Sunday or weekday at one congregation, place it in an aumbry or tabernacle at the church where no priest is present, and administer it no later than the following Sunday.

A third option, that of reserving the consecrated Sacrament at one celebration of the Eucharist for use in a subsequent week when a priest is not available, is to be avoided except with the express permission of the bishop.

Reimbursement of travel expenses of the deacon to and from the congregation, and any honorarium paid are to be decided before the deacon undertakes this ministry. The congregation is to pay for mileage and for any out of pocket expenses, such as lodging, that the deacon incurs in the performance of this ministry. If the deacon is preaching, the congregation pays an honorarium equal to the honorarium that it would pay a supply priest. If the deacon is not preaching, the congregation will pay an honorarium equal to one-half what it would pay a supply priest. A list of the current minimum honorarium due a supply priest is available in the diocesan office.

The congregation is to adhere to federal income tax regulations and Church Pension Fund regulations for reporting honoraria. Any honoraria over \$600 per year require the congregation to file a 1099 form. Any honoraria over \$250 per quarter paid to a priest or deacon for whom contributions are being paid to the Church Pension Fund require that Pension Fund payments be made on behalf of that person's account. The diocesan office can provide details.

The Shape of the Liturgy

The order of service should clearly state that the member of the clergy who is administering Communion is a deacon.

The worship service begins with the Liturgy of the Word, either Rite I or Rite II, (p. 323 or p. 355 for the Holy Eucharist, or optionally, the Daily Office as allowed by the rubric in the Book of Common Prayer, p. 322 or p. 354). A licensed Worship Leader (as stated in Canon III.4.4), if available, is to officiate at the Liturgy of the Word. Transitional deacons assigned to a congregation prior to ordination to the priesthood may officiate. The deacon is to be present and vested as a participant in the liturgy. Members of the laity should read lessons and psalms. The deacon reads the gospel.

Careful consideration needs to be made as to who will preach. If there is a licensed Preacher (Canon III.4.5) in the congregation, that person normally preaches. Deacons may preach on occasion, especially when it is appropriate for the sermon to focus on diaconal ministries. Another person may read a prepared sermon. If a transitional deacon is performing this ministry in the congregation to which he or she is assigned prior to ordination to the priesthood, then the transitional deacon is the usual preacher.

The deacon and representatives of the congregation offer the Prayers of the People, as appropriate.

Following the Liturgy of the Word (and the receiving of the people's offering), the service continues as outlined in the BCP, p. 408.

The deacon reverently places the consecrated Sacrament on the altar, during which time a communion hymn may be sung. After doing so, the deacon will return to a place in the choir to lead one of the following prayers:

Option A: Rite I

O Father of Light, thou gavest life when thy Spirit hovered over the face of the waters. Thine was the gift of a Son, who was with thee from before all worlds, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end of all that which hast been or ever shalt be. By thy grace, in him and through him is wrought the wonder of our salvation. Forasmuch as without thee we are not able to please thee, bring us with all certainty to receive the Son Jesus Christ as he is present in the mystery of Sacrament now set before us, to our health and gladness. Prepare our hearts to embrace true life, which comest to all pilgrims that seek Him on the road to Emmaus. For these priceless things which thou hast bestowed upon us in his Holy Name, we thank thee. Amen.

Option B: Rite II

O Father of Light, you gave life when your Spirit hovered over the face of the waters. Yours was the gift of a Son, who was with you from before all worlds, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end of all which has been or shall be. By your grace, in and through him is wrought the wonder of our salvation. Forasmuch as without you we are not able to please you, bring us with all certainty to receive the Son Jesus Christ as he is present in the mystery of Sacrament now set before us, to our health and gladness. Prepare our hearts to embrace true life, which comes to all pilgrims that seek Him on the road to Emmaus. For these priceless things which you have bestowed upon us in his Holy Name, we thank you. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer is said, the deacon first saying, "Let us pray in the words our Savior Christ hath (has) taught us."

And then, omitting the breaking of the Bread, the deacon proceeds with what follows in the liturgy as far as the end of the postcommunion prayer, and then dismisses the people.

If any of the consecrated Bread or Wine remain, apart from any which may be required for the Communion of the sick, or of others who for weighty cause could not be present at the celebration, the deacon and other communicants will reverently eat and drink it.

The service will be recorded in the service book as "Liturgy of the Word and Administration of Holy Communion."