

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

With the permission of the bishop and the deacon's or Eucharistic Visitor's supervising priest, deacons and Eucharistic Visitors may administer Communion in congregations where there is no priest available to celebrate the Eucharist. 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 a supply priest is not scheduled to be present;
- On a weekly basis when a congregation does not have a supply priest.

When desirable, two deacons and/or Eucharistic Visitors may want to travel together to a congregation to administer Communion (but only one person has his or her expenses reimbursed). Transitional deacons may participate in this ministry, with the permission 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 acknowledge publically, before or after the postcommunion prayer at the Eucharist at which the Sacrament is consecrated, the purpose for which the bread and wine have been consecrated.

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 or Eucharistic Visitor is going. Doing so is a clear sign of the connection that each congregation has with others in the diocese.

When such a procedure is not possible due to the times of worship services or the distance involved, deacons or Eucharistic Visitors 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 a deacon or Eucharistic Visitor to and from the congregation, and any honorarium paid are to be decided before this ministry is undertaken. The congregation normally pays for mileage and for any out of pocket expenses, such as lodging, that are incurred. If a deacon is preaching, the congregation pays an honorarium equal to the honorarium that it would pay a supply priest.

The congregation is to adhere to federal income tax regulations and Church Pension Fund regulations for reporting honoraria. The diocesan office can provide details.

The Shape of the Liturgy

The order of service should clearly state that the person who is administering Communion is either a Eucharistic Visitor or 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.

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 or Eucharistic Visitor reverently places the consecrated Sacrament on the altar, during which time a communion hymn may be sung. After doing so, the person will return to a place in the choir or other location that will not imply that a priestly ministry is occurring.

The Lord's Prayer is said, the deacon or Eucharistic Visitor 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 or Eucharistic Visitor 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, Eucharistic Visitor, 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."