

LAY DISTRIBUTION OF THE EUCHARIST TO SHUT-INS OR THOSE IN NURSING HOMES

The Diocese Of Nova Scotia & Prince Edward Island

INTRODUCTION

Many people, because of advanced age or limited mobility, are referred to as being "shut-in", either in their own homes, in senior's residences, or in homes for special care. They are often unable to attend weekly worship services.

Depending on the number of shut-ins in the parish, clergy are able to bring Communion to each individual only a limited number of times a year.

Because of these factors, some parishes have thought it advisable to study the feasibility of having lay people distribute the Sacrament to the sick or shut-in members of their congregations to supplement, not replace, the ministry of the clergy to the sick and shut-in.

LAY DISTRIBUTION

The parish needs to have the opportunity to discuss and study the practice of lay distribution to those not present at the parish Eucharist, before requesting the Bishop's permission to do so. It is desirable that a meeting of the whole congregation be held.

In requesting permission an account should be given of the preparation of the parish, the preparation of those who would be receiving this ministry, and a reasonable belief that parishioners will be likely to accept this ministry.

On each occasion when lay distributors take the Sacrament to a shut-in, they must have received the rector's authorization to do so. It is preferable that this be done on the same day, directly from the parish celebration of the Eucharist. This helps to reinforce the link with the parish, symbolizing the reaching out of the gathered church to its scattered members. The lay distributor can remind the communicant of the connection with the parish Eucharist.

The form of service to be used for the administration shall be that provided in the Book of Alternative Services (page 257 ff) or the Book of Common Prayer (p582) including ;

- a) the Peace - a mutual greeting
- b) one or more collects
- c) a reading from Scripture, normally the Sunday's Gospel
- d) prayers, including an expression of penitence, a prayer for forgiveness, such as the Collect for the 21st Sunday after Trinity, and the Lord's Prayer.
- e) the administration of the Sacrament
- f) Thanksgiving and the Grace.

A sample Order for the Distribution of Holy Communion is included with these guidelines.

At the parish Eucharist, the shut-in members should be included in the prayers of the people, and the congregation encouraged to uphold them in their private prayers.

The shut-in members who are the intended recipients should be contacted and have given their consent before the day when they will be receiving the Sacrament.

CHOOSING LAY DISTRIBUTORS

Lay distributors should be carefully chosen and trained.

They should be regular communicant members of the parish, at least 16 years of age, and be sincere in practicing their faith.

They should be commissioned perform this ministry and receive the Bishop's license at a public worship service.

This license shall be for a term of 3 years and may be renewed by the Bishop on the written request of the Rector and Parish Council.

They should have some ability to work with people and be willing to be part of a ministry team.

They should be acknowledged by their congregation as being suitable for this ministry and be approved by Parish Council.

The Diocese of Nova Scotia provided a single license for the lay administration of the Sacrament, regardless of the circumstances or location of distribution.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

A suitable Pyx for the consecrated bread may be used.

A suitable glass vessel with a secure top for the consecrated wine should be used.

If possible, a team, including a musician, should undertake this ministry if the service takes place in a home for special care.

If the Sacrament is taken to a private residence, only one person is needed, but in certain pastoral circumstances it may be desirable that more than one person be present.

Any consecrated bread or wine that remains should be consumed by the lay distributor.

Permission for distribution of Holy Communion outside a normal parish situation will be dealt with by the Bishop on a special care basis.

See *Occasional Celebrations of the Anglican Church of Canada*, ABC, 1992, for a service entitled "Commissioning for Lay Ministries in the Church", page 112 - 113.

Public Distribution of Holy Communion by Deacons and Lay People, ABC, 1987.

See *The Book of Alternative Services*, page 256-260 for a section entitled "Communion Under Special Circumstances".