

Appendix 5 : Receiving Holy Communion

(approved by PCC Jan and May 23)

Receiving Holy Communion

Purpose

This paper considers the traditions, theology and practical considerations concerning the receiving of Holy Communion. It follows on from the recommendation at PCC in 2022, where it was agreed that Communion would still be offered in one kind for the foreseeable future. This was subsequently revisited, updated and communicated via the pew sheet in August that receiving in one kind would be maintained.

This document is a basis for discussion and decision-making on behalf of the gathered community at Holy Trinity.

Position at Holy Trinity since 2022

Once churches were re-opened after the Pandemic lockdowns, the decision whether to re-introduce receiving in both kinds was very much for individual church leadership teams to make. Latterly, there has been more direction from the Church of England COVID Task Force “unless there are clear and objective reasons not to, Holy Communion should now be offered in both kinds...” (Church of England, 2022). As a Holy Trinity leadership team, it was felt at that time that re-introduction was not advisable: Infection rates were volatile; clergy, operating solo, clinically vulnerable, and there was a lack of personnel to distribute the chalice with the dignity which it rightly demands.

We are now five months on, and it is timely to revisit the position to inform a discussion at PCC.

Anglican Tradition

It has always been the tradition in the Church of England to receive Holy Communion in both kinds, i.e. the consecrated bread and wine as the body and blood of Christ.

Holy Communion is a shared sacramental meal at which the risen Christ presides. In relation to the elements of bread and wine, *Common Worship* states that:

In Holy Communion the Church, following the example of the Lord, takes, gives thanks, breaks and gives’.

The way in which these actions are carried out has symbolic significance, not least in relation to how they express the gathered community’s celebration of a shared life in Christ. Traditionally, and symbolically, this is best achieved through the sharing of one bread and one cup, reflecting the teaching of St Paul:

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

(1 Corinthians 10.16).

The sharing in one bread and one cup is also present in the Gospel accounts of the Last Supper (**Matthew 26.26-27; Mark 14.22-23; Luke 22.17, 19-20**).

Eucharistic Theology

The Holy Eucharist is the sacrament in which the people of God gather in God's holy place to celebrate God's presence with us and God's ministry amongst and through us. We do this by following the mandate given to us by Jesus (the Word made flesh) on the night before he died. We break bread, pour wine and remember him as God-with-us: unconditional love in human form as his body and blood, "given for us".

From the 13th century, the universal church taught the doctrine termed "transubstantiation", that the "substance" (the inner nature) of bread and wine was transformed into Christ's body and blood, whilst the "accidents" (the external appearances) remained the same. The reformers of the 16th century began to debate the theology of Holy Communion, Martin Luther passionately believed that the bread and wine became the body and blood of Christ, but refused to accept the "secular" doctrine of transubstantiation, as it was based on the principles of Aristotelean philosophy. He believed we should simply trust the words of Jesus ("this is my body"; "this is my blood") and not impose human explanations.

The church and its leading theologians spent the following centuries hovering around the notion of a "Real Presence" of Christ in Holy Communion. The radical 16th century reformer, Zwingli, took an extreme view teaching that the Lord's Supper was a memorial symbolising what Christ had done for us. This view emerged in the reformed free churches of the 18th and 19th centuries and in our own time. The 17th century Anglican mystic, Richard Hooker, taught that the transformation of the Eucharist was of those who received it in faith. From the 19th century, with the revival of the Anglican church under the **Oxford Movement**, belief in the Real Presence of the Body and Blood of Christ in the bread and wine of the sacrament and the gift, yet mystery, of its spiritual power to transform God's people became widespread. The liturgical expression of regular worship in the Anglo-Catholic tradition emphasised this belief. The spiritual power of God's love to transform those who receive the consecrated bread and wine through the presence of the resurrected Christ was affirmed as being central to Anglican belief and practice. Receiving the body and blood of Christ in the forms of bread and wine is part of the miracle of transformation which transforms all who receive in faith into the living body of Christ, the Church. Such teaching emerged in the **Parish Communion Movement** of the 1930s, which led to the service of Holy Communion being the main Anglican Sunday service from the 1950s onwards.

Theological Facts about the Bread and Wine of Holy Communion

- ❖ By the power of the Holy Spirit the love, which is **God, becomes present among us in Jesus**, whose body was broken for us, and his blood poured out for us on the Cross.
- ❖ Jesus Christ – the manifestation of God's redeeming love for us – is **fully present in the consecrated bread, alone**, and the consecrated wine, alone, through the influence of the Holy Spirit.
- ❖ **Consecration** – can only be by an ordained priest, according to the teaching of the church as handed down from the first apostles. Consecration (Latin: *con* = with; *secrat* = holy) is

the solemn act of **setting something apart**, by invoking the power of God's holy spirit for **something ordinary to become something holy, or sacred**.

- ❖ Once consecrated, the bread and wine are treated **with reverence and respect**. The priest must consecrate both bread and wine – because Jesus commanded us to do so. God's holy people may receive either consecrated bread or wine, or both together. **The fulness of the redeeming presence of Christ and the transformative power of God's love through the presence of the Holy Spirit exists in its entirety in the consecrated wafer alone.**
- ❖ The administration of the Holy Communion must also be done with **great reverence for the Blessed Sacrament**. Therefore; we must avoid offering a general choice when the congregation come forward to receive (unless there is serious pastoral need) as this would diminish the wholeness of the presence of Christ in the sacrament.
- ❖ If Holy Communion is to be offered in **one kind**, it must be **the bread** (Jesus said: **"I am the bread of life"**).
- ❖ When we spend time in **prayer and adoration of the blessed sacrament** in a Holy Hour, for example, **we meditate on the consecrated bread as the whole Body of Christ**, not ever the Precious Blood.
- ❖ We **only reserve the consecrated bread** in the tabernacle, to be taken to the sick, never the wine.
- ❖ The practice of **intinction (dipping the bread into the wine)** is no longer permitted. It poses a grave risk of contamination of both bread and wine by contact with unsanitised fingers. The house of bishops advises this practice to cease through the authority of the priest. I will not permit the practice at Holy Trinity. There is a scriptural basis for not dipping, too – 'Jesus said, **"Truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me... it is one of the twelve...who is dipping into the bowl with me."**'. (**Mark 14:19-20**) and **"One of you is going to betray me... it is the one to whom I give this piece of bread, when I have dipped it in the dish."** (**John 13 23; 26**).
- ❖ It is a myth and completely without scientific evidence that wine reacts chemically with the precious metal of the chalice to create antiseptic properties.

Practical Considerations and Theology.

Practical considerations, such as the number of communicants and, in times of risk of contagion, will sometimes require the ideal of **'one bread, one cup'** to be adapted according to circumstance. Such adaptations need to take account of the **primary symbols associated with each element**. In relation to the bread, the Church of England's current **Advice on the Administration of Holy Communion (1 July 2020)** states that **'For the time being we encourage the use of individual communion wafers** or bread that has already been divided rather than large wafers or loaves of bread that are broken and shared', and **after the priest has sanitized their hands**. In relation to the wine, the primary symbolic association is different in that it relates not only to the wine itself, but to the manner in which it is received, drinking from a common cup. Even when, because of the number of communicants, several chalices are used to administer communion, they are shared

vessels rather than individual cups. Drinking from a common cup is a strong symbol of unity, and of a Christian's belonging to Christ. Before the crucifixion, Christ prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want' (**Matthew 26.39b**). The cup from which the communicant drinks is not their own, but Christ's cup of self-sacrificial love. In the **current situation**, there appears to be **no obvious adaptation** of the way in which the consecrated wine is administered **that permits this key symbolic association to be expressed**.

The use of individual cups is not customary in the Church of England and carries significant public health risks. Furthermore, there are practical problems with their liturgical use in the Church of England. This relates to any consecrated wine that may remain in individual cups after the communicant has received. **Common Worship** states that 'Any consecrated bread and wine which is not required for the purposes of communion is consumed at the end of the distribution or after the service'. In times of serious contagion, it would not be possible for any consecrated wine that remains in individual glasses to be consumed safely by anyone other than the communicant.

There are some situations, however, in which communicants lawfully receive bread alone, or wine alone. The **Notes to the Celebration of Holy Communion at Home or in Hospital, and for the Distribution of Holy Communion at Home or in Hospital** indicate that 'where necessary [Holy Communion] may be received in one kind, whether of bread or, where the communicant cannot receive solid food, wine.' This **Note** refers, in particular, to the administration of Holy Communion to the sick and housebound, but others might also do so habitually, for instance, those who are alcoholics or who have coeliac disease (and there are no gluten-free wafers available).

Whilst it is normal practice to administer Holy Communion in both kinds to children, the Guidance on Celebrating the Eucharist with Children observes that 'if a parent declines to allow their own child to receive consecrated wine, then communion should be administered in one kind only to that child.'

In these specific circumstances, receiving Holy Communion in one kind alone is permitted by the authority of the bishops and is not controversial.

Legal Considerations

At the time of the **Reformation**, even before the publication of **Article 30**, statute law was enacted stating that Holy Communion should be distributed in both kinds. **Common Worship (main volume), p.182**.

The legislation also made provision for a generic situation in which that practice should not be followed. The Reformers took account of the fact that **there could well be occasions when it was necessary for the cup not to be administered to the people, i.e. when there was a risk of contagion e.g. plague**. Where that was the case, they **provided for communion to be administered in one kind only**. Thus, the **Sacrament Act 1547, s.8**, notes that 'the... blessed sacrament [shall] be hereafter commonly delivered and ministered unto the people... under both kinds, that is to say of bread and wine, except necessity otherwise require.' In other words, it recognises that there may be circumstances when the requirement for delivery of both bread and wine need not be complied with. **Delivery in one or other kind alone is lawful provided that a true necessity can in law be demonstrated. In the first instance, the responsibility for deciding whether such a 'necessity' exists rests within the discretion of the presiding priest, but s/he**

should not deviate from the general law except in a case of genuine necessity, such as where the health and safety of the communicants may be compromised.

The examples given in the ***Legal Advisory Commission's*** opinion, ***Holy Communion: Administration of the Sacrament (September 2011)*** are namely those individuals who for some reason cannot receive either bread or wine. But the opinion also observes that 'necessity' can also cover large numbers of communicants 'if there is a reasonable fear of contagion from use of a common cup or chalice.' The health risks potentially posed by a common cup during the Covid pandemic suggest that it should not be used. In such a case, the minister should consider such advice as may be forthcoming from the diocesan bishop in the exercise of his or her responsibilities (Canon C 18).

THE GUIDANCE IN 2020 (THEN)

The ***Church of England guidance on Holy Communion issued on 1 July 2020*** for the resumption of public worship, following the easing of Government restrictions, indicates that the **president should receive communion in both kinds and that the congregation should communicate under the form of the consecrated bread alone. It is not permissible for the bread alone to be consecrated, or for the president to receive in one kind alone** (either practice would be a 'variation... of substantial importance' in the form of service in the language of Canon B 5).

THE GUIDANCE IN 2022 (NOW)

There is being **now no bar to shared vessels used in public worship**, and many churches have returned to the use of a common cup to administer the consecrated wine.

(18th July 2022 3.2 The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group Update on version 3.1)

The **LITURGICAL COMMISSION's** opinion, adopted by the House of Bishops is that ***'the Sacrament Act 1547 makes provision for cases where a necessity not to deliver a common cup arises: in such a case the normal requirement that the sacrament be delivered in both kinds is disapplied by statute. It is because ecclesiastical law provides for what is to happen where there is a necessity not to deliver a common cup (i.e. the usual requirement for communion in both kinds is dispensed with) that there is no legal basis for individual clergy to make alternative arrangements such as the adoption of individual cups.***

The 1547 Act was repealed under Mary I; revived under Elizabeth I by the **Act of Supremacy 1558**.

Conclusions

"If it is necessary on public health grounds to suspend the common cup ***there is no basis for making alternative arrangements*** such as the provision of individual cups. ***The requirement for Holy Communion to be administered in both kinds is naturally suspended under the general terms of church law.***" (+ Robert Exon, Chair of the Liturgical Commission).

COVID-19 Opening and managing church buildings Issue Date Version Number Issued by 18th July 2022 3.2 The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group Update on version 3.1

1. The current version has been updated according to current government guidance. Specific COVID-19 risk assessments are no longer required but good health and safety practice should still be followed.

2. Public worship: what is the current Church of England guidance around Holy Communion?

There is now no bar to shared vessels being used in public worship, and many churches have returned to the use of a common cup to administer the consecrated wine. It is important for churches which are not currently administering Holy Communion in both kinds to keep this practice under active review. Since bread and wine are always offered to communicants unless there is a clear and objective reason (a 'necessity') to do otherwise, churches need to be certain that such a reason exists for the normal practice of administration in both kinds to be disrupted. For some of the last two years, the existence of Covid-19 in the general population coupled with low levels of immunity and high numbers of serious cases was that persuasive reason.

(18th July 2022 3.2 The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group Update on version 3.1)

The Current Position Regarding Infections

The latest rates, updated daily at <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>, continues to be volatile, and are compounded by the rise in other viruses (including 'flu).

What is the advice for Clinically Extremely Vulnerable people?

If you are clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) you are no longer advised to shield. However, you should continue to follow the government guidance for people who are clinically extremely vulnerable and are advised to continue taking extra precautions to protect yourself, such as limiting close contacts, shopping or travelling at quieter times of the day, keeping rooms ventilated and washing your hands regularly.

Churches should consider how they can provide for the needs of CEV people, which may include clergy, lay leaders and PCC members, as well as members of congregations and visitors. CEV clergy may wish to discuss with their bishop or archdeacon the best way to proceed given their specific circumstances.

(18th July 2022 3.2 The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group Update on version 3.1)

The Decision

With vaccination rates high and serious cases low, ministers need to consider whether that reason still exists, bearing in mind local infection rates and factors influencing transmission in the local population. It is important to highlight that this is guidance, not instruction; those directly responsible for activities in churches and other buildings are advised to make decisions in the light of this and guidance from local public health bodies in accordance with their specific circumstances.

(18th July 2022 3.2 The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group Update on version 3.1)

The Rector and Church Wardens invite the PCC of Holy Trinity, Horfield to assess the current situation in the light of the information set out in this paper regarding the receiving of Holy Communion:

Do we:

- 1. Continue to distribute Holy Communion in one kind (wafer) only and review the situation again after Easter?**

- 2. Do we reintroduce Holy Communion in both kinds as before?**
- 3. Do we reintroduce Holy Communion in both kinds making it clear that the decision to receive in one kind, or both kinds rests with the communicant?**

*The Revd. Canon David McGladdery, SCP – Rector
Caroline Plaice – Church Warden & Safeguarding Lead;
Carolyn Larcey – Church Warden & PCC Secretary.*

Epiphanytide, 2023

Approved - receive in one kind PCC meeting 25.01.23

Approved - receive in both kinds PCC meeting 24.05.23

To be noted, as advice, in future cases of national or international pandemic where the safeguarding of the health of the congregation is a priority.