



DIOCESE OF  
**Bath & Wells**

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# **EXTENDED COMMUNION**

**in the diocese of  
Bath and Wells**

## **Guidelines for clergy, Readers and PCCs**

### **Background**

‘Extended Communion’ is a provision whereby, in the absence of a priest to preside at the Eucharist, a congregation may nevertheless be nourished with the consecrated bread and wine of Holy Communion. It is an exceptional provision for which the Bishop’s explicit permission is required. It is a separate provision from taking communion to the sick or housebound in their homes from the reserved sacrament (which any Reader may do without further licensing, and which other lay people, usually people already holding ‘chalice and paten’ permission, may be additionally authorised to do).

The House of Bishops’ guidelines also make clear that ‘Communion by Extension’ should not be regarded as a means of introducing a sacramental element into the life of home groups, or other parish groups, whether on an occasional or regular basis. The House of Bishops recognises the value of an occasional celebration of Holy Communion in such circumstances, when a priest must preside.’

'Extended Communion' began to be a regular practice in the 1970's and was openly discussed in the 1980's. A number of factors led to its rise:

- The increasing expectation of congregations that Sunday worship will include communion;
- A decline in the number of stipendiary priests;
- Pastoral reorganisation, especially in rural areas;
- The licensing of lay people to distribute communion;
- The practice in other churches, especially the Roman Catholic church, where communion from the reserved sacrament has become a more regular feature of its practice.

The General Synod first discussed provision for communion by extension in 1993. The final report was approved in 1999. In 2001 an order of service was published entitled 'Public Worship with communion by extension'. The term 'Holy Communion' is deliberately not used to make clear that this service is not a celebration of Holy Communion. However, it is to be hoped that the service will be conducted in a celebratory way!

Where Extended Communion is used in the diocese, it should always be advertised as 'Public Worship with communion by extension.'

## **Guidelines**

Extended Communion allows for bread and wine, consecrated at a Sunday service in one church to be taken that same day to another church (usually in the same benefice), where an authorised service called 'Public Worship with Communion by extension' is celebrated, led by a person, usually from the benefice, authorised by the Bishop (whether deacon, reader or other lay person trained for this ministry), during which the consecrated elements are shared.

The guidelines for this provision, together with the forms of service to be used, are clearly set out in 'Public Worship with Communion by Extension', Church House Publishing 2001. Any parish wishing to make use of the provision needs to have studied this booklet.

Authorisation for the use of Extended Communion is dependent on prior teaching, training and preparation in the parish. It is not therefore designed to meet a short term emergency. It may be used in a benefice through a transitional period, for instance a vacancy or a period that will come to an end with the ordination to the priesthood of a deacon or someone now in training for ordination or during pastoral reorganisation. It could be used during clergy holidays, providing the teaching, training and preparation has been put in place.

It is important that Extended Communion never becomes the normal setting in which people receive the consecrated elements. Therefore, in a multi parish benefice, for example, the use of Communion by extension must be fairly rotated so that no single congregation is deprived of a regular service of Holy Communion.

## **Procedure**

The procedure to be followed in introducing Extended Communion is as follows:

1. The Bishop's permission for its introduction is sought by the Incumbent who will outline the particular pastoral circumstances that have led to the request.
2. The PCC discusses Extended Communion, agrees to its use (PCC resolution) and approves the names of those to be trained and authorised to lead services.
3. Careful training is given, involving study of the House of Bishops' Notes and Guidelines, and the texts for Orders of Service (The School of Formation already has training material available for parishes that request it)
4. Teaching is given in the parish in sermons and articles.
5. Sufficient copies of the authorised forms of service to be provided for the congregation, locally produced and adapted if appropriate.
6. The Bishop receives confirmation that all the necessary preparation has been completed and is asked to approve both the names of

those to exercise this ministry and also the pattern of services of which Extended Communion is to be a part.

7. The Bishop issues the necessary authorisation that Extended Communion becomes part of the worship provision in the parish/benefice.
8. Permission will normally be given for a period of three years, after which the Incumbent and the PCC will need to re-apply, having first reviewed the practice and reflected on how it has been received by parishioners, and the effect it has had on the life of the church.
9. If it is important to begin this process during a vacancy, the Rural Dean acts in place of the Incumbent

*Note: It is difficult to envisage this process being completed in less than about three months, so clergy and parishes are encouraged to look ahead so that ample time is given to preparing for Extended Communion.*

## **Forms of Service**

‘Public Worship with Communion by Extension’ is published by Church House Publishing and contains orders of service appropriate to this provision. It is envisaged that the Eucharistic elements and ministers will be ‘sent out’ from an earlier service of Holy Communion, held on the same day in another church within the benefice so that the service in the ‘receiving church’ is truly by extension.

*+Peter Bath & Wells*

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**The House of Bishops Guidelines** are available at :

[www.cofe.anglican.org/worship/liturgy/commonworship/texts/other/extension/extensionend.html](http://www.cofe.anglican.org/worship/liturgy/commonworship/texts/other/extension/extensionend.html)

**The orders of service** can be bought from Church House publishing or downloaded at: <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/worship/texts/extension.aspx>