

# **Eucharist in schools**

## **Suggestions and thoughts for Anglican Schools**

### **Ash Wednesday @ The Taunton Academy**

It was Ash Wednesday and at lunch a few of us gathered around the altar in the Chaplaincy to break bread and hear again those words 'Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return. Turn away from sin and be faithful to Christ.'

The Chaplaincy is usually full of students at lunch, a merry bustle of chatter, games, iPads and music. I had warned our regulars that Ash Wednesday would be different. There would be a Communion and everyone would be welcome to worship or to sit silently and observe; most chose the latter option. At the end of the Eucharist, the students gave us a round of applause; not perhaps what I would have expected on Ash Wednesday, or after any service, but every bit as much of a sign of respect as the silence the students had maintained during our worship. It had been 'awesome' one of them said.

### **Introduction**

The National Society\* is soon to publish guidance on celebrating the Eucharist in schools, the opportunities and the challenges; and how these can be addressed in accordance with Canon Law. This guidance is attached, in draft form, as Appendix 1. To complement this guidance, every School Chaplain that I have ever met has enormous liturgical creativity. In such a context, to attempt to provide additional material on the liturgy feels superfluous. Each setting will be different and require a slightly different liturgy.

So, this paper aims to look at a series of pastoral questions beyond the reach of Canon Law and indeed indeed the most appropriate service order. The aim is to help explore how the Eucharist can be explored and celebrated within schools and how policy and practice can be developed.

### **WHY CELEBRATE THE EUCHARIST?**

The Eucharist and the sacraments are central to Christian worship and discipleship. Church schools feature significantly in the landscape of our communities; and in our mission and ministry. A colleague has spoken of her parish having two spiritual centres, the school and the church. Given the centrality of the Eucharist and the importance of our Church schools it is right to include the Eucharist within schools, not just to teach it but also to live it, to celebrate it. It should never exclude other acts of worship, ranging from Collective Worship to the Daily Offices in their various forms; but it is important that it is a part of the worshipping life of the school. How this can most appropriately be done is the focus of this paper.

### **CURRENT PRACTICE**

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\* The National Society (the National Society for Promoting Religious Education) promotes and resources 4,664 Church of England and 172 Church in Wales schools.

The Eucharist is celebrated in a variety of schools in a variety of ways. A few of the models are detailed here.

- Schools, both independent and maintained, primary and secondary, who have voluntary Eucharists either before the school day or at lunch, especially at significant Christian festivals.
- A teaching Eucharist celebrated by a priest, as part of the teaching about the Eucharist within RE. Students and staff who usually receive communion are welcome to do so, but this is not assumed.
- An independent boarding school with a strong and embedded Christian tradition which has a weekly whole school Eucharist in their chapel at which up to approximately 60% of the staff and students receive Communion and a further 20% come forward for a blessing.
- An independent boarding school with a voluntary evening Eucharist which up to 100 students and staff attend.
- Schools, both independent and maintained, primary and secondary, who have whole-school, or whole-year Eucharists, at which only a tiny minority of staff and students (sometimes in single figures) receive Communion.
- **Agape** is also an important element of worship within a church school and is explored below.

### **SOME SUGGESTED MODELS FOR EUCHARIST IN SCHOOL**

A Eucharist is a gathering of the body of Christ. It is there to draw folk in, not to exclude. Therefore this paper doesn't recommend the model of a whole-school or whole-year Eucharist in which only a tiny minority of staff and students receive Communion.

Ways in which the Eucharist can unite the body of Christ in schools include some of the examples listed above and detailed below.

- Whole-school Eucharists with significant involvement in planning and leadership from students and staff and significant majorities of staff and students receiving Communion.
- Voluntary Eucharists for staff and students at any appropriate time of the school day. Again significant involvement in planning and leadership from students and staff is recommended. This can include planning and leading the music, the readings and the prayers, setting up the chapel or worship space and serving and helping to assist with Communion.
- Teaching Eucharists, where a class of students can take a similar role in learning about and then planning and leading the service, even if only a small minority of people receive Communion.

### **A SPACE FOR WORSHIP**

A school may have a chapel or a chaplaincy or hall with a permanent altar. Many church schools will not have these and in such a context it is worth investing time and effort and even some money in creating a space for worship. It doesn't have to be permanent, indeed it probably won't be. Yet a space formed, for instance, by artwork, candles, hangings and appropriately positioned seats, benches or cushions can do much to enable both the awe and the intimacy of worship. Students love being involved in such a project.

### **AGAPE**

If a whole-school service is appropriate, for instance during Holy Week, but there are not many who receive Communion an Agape could be considered.

The difference between an Agape and a Eucharist is a fine one, and has to be trodden carefully. There is no sense that God is asked to bless the food given out (which need not be bread). The food is a sign of fellowship and is consumed in an atmosphere of intercession. Agape can work well within both Primary and Secondary schools, with year groups or whole schools. Once again it is important to involve students and staff in planning and leading the

service, through drama, readings, music and prayers. Students can also prepare or even cook the food that is to be shared. An order for a Primary School Agape is included as Appendix 2.

## **RECEIVING COMMUNION**

Many schools, like many churches, will have an open table and will welcome Christians of all denominations who normally receive Communion to do so at school. Some will go further and invite students who are still exploring their faith and the sacraments to receive and to learn through experiencing. This becomes part of a road to faith and to Confirmation. There are other schools that will only give Communion to those who have been Confirmed.

Whether Canon law is interpreted in its tightest or its most flexible form, or someone in between, it is important to hold together the two constants that the Eucharist is there to gather together the Body of Christ to share that same body, as Christ called us to do; and that it should be taken seriously with appropriate teaching and preparation for everyone who is to receive Communion. These two elements will need to be considered by the school Chaplain and the Celebrant.

## **CONCLUSION**

Whether a very few gather occasionally around a 'coffee table altar' before the start of a school day or hundreds come regularly to a great school chapel, the Eucharist is a gathering of the Body of Christ to remember and celebrate the love and mercy of God. Those who celebrate and receive do so with and for the whole school community; their sacramental ministry is far bigger than they are. Such ministry, such worship, such brokenness and healing should be nurtured, valued and celebrated within schools, every bit as much as within parishes.

## APPENDIX 1 Draft Guidelines for School Eucharists from THE NATIONAL SOCIETY

*'Do this in memory of me,'* Luke 22:19

### Introduction

The purpose of this document is to offer guidance for Diocesan Directors of Education and Diocesan officers working with schools. These guidelines are set in the context of two documents which will shortly be available: the website resource for supporting worship in schools called 'Resourcing School Worship' which will enable schools to plan worship and the Liturgical Commission's 'Guidance notes for the planning of a Eucharist at which a significant number of children is present' which are written to accompany the Eucharistic prayers for use with children in churches. There is, therefore, no outline nor a resource for planning a liturgy included in the document.

The term Eucharist (meaning 'thanksgiving') is used, as it is widely accepted by Christians of many different traditions. For other terminology see Appendix 1 'What's in a name?'

### 1. Why celebrate a Eucharist in a Church School community?

"Christ calls the Church to work towards every child and young person having a life-enhancing encounter with the Christian faith and the person of Jesus Christ". [www.going4growth.co.uk](http://www.going4growth.co.uk)

At the last supper Jesus gave thanks to his heavenly Father, broke the bread and commanded his disciples to *'do this in memory of me'* Luke 22:19. Since this time followers of Christ, have gathered together to celebrate the Eucharist in every generation and every circumstance *"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer"*, Acts 2:46. The Dearing Report (1998) and the General Synod (1998) emphasized the importance of the church's mission to work with schools in the Anglican tradition.

The Eucharist is a part of the sacramental ministry of the Church, instituted by Jesus and therefore it is something that every Christian community should value and explore as a distinctive mark of the worshipping church since its beginnings. Many schools are beginning to recognize the importance of familiarity with the Eucharist which serves as a bridge into the life of the worshipping community.

*"There is one body and one spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all,"* Ephesians 4:4-5. Celebrating the Eucharist will enrich the school's programme of collective worship and so contribute to the spiritual development of pupils in the school.

Within a Church School community celebrating the Eucharist offers:

- a space and place to encounter God
- a powerful sign that Christians are part of a local and global world-wide community of faith for whom the Eucharist provides a central focus for worship.
- an opportunity for the school to maintain the distinctiveness of a Church of England school and fully engage in the mission process of the wider church.
- a time of celebration within the life of the school which can involve those families and members of the local neighbourhood who might otherwise be untouched by the life and work of the church.
- the experience of being part of the congregation at a Eucharist
- an opportunity to reflect the meaning of Christian sacraments signs and symbols.
- an opportunity to encounter the sacred and a place of discovery.
- a time to reflect on personal faith and values, while respecting the Christian faith and values

<p>On school Eucharist: "It makes you feel proud - you can do this for the rest of your life." Year 6 Church Langton Church of England Primary School</p>
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## 2. Who?

### 2.1 Who presides?

In the Church of England, only priests (ordained by a Bishop), have permission to preside at Eucharist.

Canon C8 .2

*A minister duly ordained priest or deacon, and, where it is required under paragraph 5 of this Canon, holding a licence or permission from the archbishop of the province, may officiate in any place only after he has received authority to do so from the bishop of the diocese or other the Ordinary of the place'.*

The local incumbent/priest/vicar celebrates and presides over the school Eucharist since the school is in his/her parish. Permission will need to be given by the Bishop for others outside the parish boundary to preside. If there is a vacancy in the parish, then permission to celebrate a Eucharist is also needed from the Bishop. Where there is any query concerning who is eligible to celebrate the Eucharist, then the archdeacon and local bishop should be contacted.

#### **Scenario**

An ordained headteacher wishes to celebrate Holy Communion in her school during a Vacancy. The parish has passed Resolution A or B.

**The Archdeacon must be consulted and then permission sought from the Bishop.**

### 2.2 Who is licensed to distribute?

In churches, the Parochial Church Council (PCC), nominate those who may assist with the distribution of the wine at Eucharist and permission is sought from the Bishop.

Canon B12.3

*No person shall distribute the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper to the people unless he shall have been ordained in accordance with the provisions of Canon C1, or is otherwise authorized by Canon or unless he has been specifically authorized to do so by the bishop acting under such regulations as the General Synod may make from time to time.*

It must be recognised that the school is not an independent entity from the church and it is the Bishop's role to license people to distribute the bread and wine. As is the case with churches, if the school wishes teachers or children to help distribute the sacrament, then permission is needed for those individuals from the Bishop.

#### **Scenario**

The incumbent wishes the headteacher/lay chaplain to assist with distributing the cup and wishes to develop it further with children holding the cup.

**The bishop's permission must be sought for each individual to distribute the cup**

### 2.3 Who attends?

As with all school acts of collective worship, the number of pupils attending any service is determined by the space available. It can be in year groups or as a whole school. Staff employed in a church school should actively model and uphold the ethos of the church school, setting an example for pupils to follow during collective worship. The parents, the school community, governors and sometimes the church community can attend. It is a service open to all.

#### Case study

A local priest decided to hold his mid-week Eucharist in school with the school family. The whole school attended the Eucharist. The older people enjoyed the presence of the children and the children saw how important communion was to another generation.

About the school Eucharist: "You feel special because you feel that you belong to something." Year 6 Church Langton Church of England School

### 2.4 Who can receive?

Baptism is considered to be the point of entry into the Christian community and confirmation marks full membership. In 2006, the General Synod agreed to the admission of baptised children to Holy Communion.

Canon B 15A (June 15<sup>th</sup> 2006)

*Before granting any permission, "the bishop must first satisfy himself (a) that the parish concerned has made adequate provision for preparation and continuing nurture in the Christian life and will encourage any child admitted to Holy Communion under these Regulations to be confirmed at the appropriate time and (b) where the parish concerned is within the area of a local ecumenical project established under Canon B 44, that the other participating Churches have been consulted."*

The president must ensure that children have been well prepared through a series of classes before receiving communion: since this is not part of the curriculum it will not be during lessons. Children who have been prepared and are used to receiving communion in their own church may receive whilst others may receive a blessing and others may choose to stay in their seats. Consultation with parents, staff, clergy and governors (who can then monitor the impact on inclusion), is essential. Careful consideration needs to be given to the process of distribution in order to ensure inclusivity and avoid division. Any confusion over who can receive the Eucharist and what constitutes a Eucharistic meal e.g. where other food such as grapes are given to children, should also be referred to the local Bishop.

**Case study**

One Primary school gives the children grapes to eat whilst the adults receive holy communion.

**This is appropriate if the children understand that they are sharing in a meal but not receiving Holy Communion.**

On the school Eucharist: "Once you have done it, it makes you feel excited about going to church to receive the bread and the wine."

Year 6 boy Church Langton Church of England School

## 2.5 Who can receive wine?

In the Church of England, wine is always used during the Eucharist.

Canon B17. 2

*The bread, whether leavened or unleavened, shall be of the best and purest wheat flour that conveniently may be gotten, and the wine the fermented juice of the grape, good and wholesome'*

The giving of wine to children may cause problems for some parents and governors even though it does not fall into the legal categories of giving children under 5 alcohol nor the purchase of alcohol for children. Permission from parents (written or otherwise), needs to be given to the school for a child to receive wine. If governors object to wine being used then Holy Communion may be given in one kind to all the children (that is, the bread only).

## 3. Where can school Eucharist take place?

Due to the holy nature of the Eucharist, the place where it is celebrated needs to be licensed by the Bishop.

Canon B41.2

*The bishop of a diocese within which any college, school, hospital, or public or charitable institution is situated, whether or not it possesses a chapel, may under Extra-Parochial Ministry Measure 1967 license a minister to perform such offices and services to the Church of England as may be specified in the licence on any premises forming part of or belonging to the institution in question but, except as provided by section 2(1A) of that measure, no such licence shall extend to the solemnization of marriage.*

School Eucharists usually take place with the Bishop's licence in the school or in an Anglican church (or church where Anglican services regularly take place). In order to provide familiarity, it is best to have the first Eucharist in familiar surroundings, usually the local church or the school. There should always be local consultation and agreement between schools and church representation as to where the Eucharist takes place. Due consideration must be given to the environment, furnishings and atmosphere in order that they are conducive for an act of worship and encourage a sense of the 'extra-ordinary'.

**Scenario**

Whilst away for a weekend residential, a school chaplain wished to hold a communion service in the outdoor centre.

The bishop's permission had to be sought to license the local incumbent

#### 4. How often should there be a school Eucharist in a church school?

Some schools have an annual Eucharist whilst others are more frequent. It is a decision for the incumbent and the headteacher to make. It can be available at all major Christian festivals such as Christmas, Easter and at times which meet a local need, for example, the start of a new term, leavers service, founders service, school saint day or prize giving. (Going4Growth: [www.going4growth/growth\\_through\\_year](http://www.going4growth/growth_through_year)). The Eucharist can be offered weekly if desired, on a voluntary basis.

##### 4.1 How long should it be?

School Eucharists should avoid being too lengthy, in line with the school policy on collective worship and preferably held within the school day.

#### 5. What is essential for the Eucharist?

Whether the service is in a church or a school, Canon B 1 limits Church of England ministers to using only authorised services. The Eucharist service has two main parts: the Liturgy of the Word, which focuses on the Bible, and the Liturgy of the Sacrament, which focuses on the bread and wine where the fourfold actions to remember Jesus of 'taking, giving thanks, breaking and sharing' take place.

In the table below, the authorised texts are indicated in the highlighted areas. Other elements of the service can be adapted and children involved creatively.

Shape of the Eucharist	Essential	Optional
Gathering	Greeting	Hymn/Song of Praise
		Collect for Purity
Preparation	Confession & Absolution	
		Gloria / Song of Praise
	Collect	
Liturgy of the Word		First Reading
		Psalm
		Second Reading
		Hymn / Song of praise
		Gospel acclamation
	Gospel reading(as authorised by the Church of England)	
		Sermon/Homily (a short talk)



		Creed / Affirmation of Faith (essential in Sundays and Holy Days)
	Prayers of Intercession	
	Peace	
Liturgy of the Sacrament	Preparation of the Table	
	Eucharistic Prayer	
	Breaking of the Bread	
		Agnus Dei
	Lord's Prayer	
		Prayer of Humble Access
	Administration of Communion	
	Post Communion Prayer	
Dismissal	Blessing	

As with all Acts of Collective Worship, schools need to consider resources for a Eucharist: “There is a need to resource Eucharistic worship in schools so that within an acceptable framework, it is creatively-planned, well conducted and appropriate to the school community”. (*Transforming Worship*, report by The National Liturgical Commission).

## 6. Diversity

### 6.1 Schools with diverse faith communities and joint faith schools

Schools with a diverse faith community need to reflect upon the way in which the presence of the other faith backgrounds should be acknowledged during a Eucharist. All Church of England schools should uphold the Christian ethos whilst recognising the legal right of parental withdrawal (DfES Circular 1/94) from Collective Worship.

### 6.2 Joint faith schools: RC/Anglican

The Anglo-Roman Catholic International Commission’s statement on Eucharist Doctrine (1971) achieved some agreement on Eucharist theology. There is an opportunity to realise the ‘real though imperfect communion’ (Second Vatican Council) when schools can offer both a Roman Catholic Mass and an Anglican Eucharist. Pupils may attend both services and receive the bread and wine if they are part of that tradition and if they so desire. After consultation with both Christian communities, it may be possible to have a joint Eucharist. The Canon of the Church of England still applies and all services should be in consultation with the local incumbent, priest and Bishop.

**Case study:** The school has recently become a joint Roman Catholic and Church of England school. Pupils are prepared for their first holy communion together in school by both the Catholic and Anglican priest. They attend their own churches for the first holy communion service.

Comment upon the school Mass:

'I like it when you get blessed and the priest puts his hand on your head.'

Year 6 girl Holy Spirit School, Joint Roman Catholic and Anglican School

## **Appendix 1**

**What's in a name?** Other names for Eucharist are:

<b>Breaking of Bread</b>	Draws upon practice in the early church (Acts 2.42)
<b>Lord's Supper</b>	This name emphasizes the link with the last supper of Jesus
<b>Holy Communion</b>	Makes use of receiving the bread and the wine as part of a worshipping community
<b>Eucharist</b>	The Greek word for thanksgiving and widely used across the Christian traditions
<b>Mass</b>	This draws on the Latin words at the end of the service which send God's people out into the world to proclaim the kingdom. This word is used most frequently by the Roman Catholic churches.
<b>The Liturgy</b>	Means work of the people: used most frequently in the Eastern Orthodox churches

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### **With thanks to:**

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## Appendix 2

### St Andrew's Day School Agape

#### Set up

Laptop/media centre + memory stick(s?) (PS/AP)  
Recording of Taizé chant (RL)  
Projector (PS)  
Projector stand (PS)  
Screen (PS)  
Tablecloth + bread (JE)  
Large candle + holder (RL) ... use Paschal Candle from church on stand  
Baskets (JE)  
Love heart cookies (JE)  
Props for speakers (RL)

#### **THEME: Fellowship/friendship**

#### Gathering

School arrive and sit quietly in a circle around the table. Adults sit on floor with children. Taizé, "Veni Sanctu Spiritus" playing...pictures of friends/companions on loop on PP.

Introduce theme of Fellowship as friendship within a community – like our friends at school. Ask a child to think of one of their friends and why they like them so much. Ask another to think of the school community and what they feel it gives us. Explain that being friends with Jesus means that we need to be part of his family – friends with his friends – and that God's family, like our own family & friends, is a place of loving acceptance and support. Sometimes we let our friends down because we are careless. Sometimes they let us down. So we need to say sorry to God for the times we have hurt others by our words or actions – and to ask for help to forgive those who hurt us. Close your eyes and think carefully about a time when you have let someone down... (*pause...*) ... someone you need to forgive... (*pause*) ...Say sorry silently to God.... (*pause...*) ... ask for his help to forgive others. Remember that God forgives you so readily that he even forgets what you have done, and he is always ready to help us when we do our best to live in peace and love.

Now we have been forgiven let us sing a song of praise to God: "God, you're good to me."

#### Word

A Y5 narrator tells the story in Acts 1,12-14 with others holding up name card that indicates their character.

We all enjoy friends. We all need to be part of a community. Jesus chose his disciples. They didn't choose each other but because they were all Jesus' friend they were able to be Jesus' friends too. Jesus had risen from the dead but needed to back to his Father in Heaven. He gathers the disciples together to say goodbye. After he has left they all have to go back to Jerusalem and wait for God's strength to build the new Christian Community (which we call the Church). They were still a bit frightened that they might be arrested like Jesus so they all stayed together. That meant they all had to learn to get on, as well as pray together! God calls us all together to be a part of this school community. Some people are easy to like. Some people less so. But we are all one family and we need to care for and support each other. Jesus is a friend to all of us and is pleased when we ask him for help to live well. Andrew had to learn all of this just like we do. We remember him all these hundreds of years later. He may seem a bit like a super-hero, but really he is just like us – a friend of Jesus who tried to be like him in all he did. We can do this too. Our school is named after him because in our community we try to be like Jesus in how we treat one another.

#### Response

Ask assembly to pray for their friends and thank God for them ... now pray for those they find it hard to like and ask God to help them ... now pray for the school community – for all of us – that together we

might all be like Jesus and live together in love, supporting one another, when things go badly as well as when things go well. ... Now pray for the person next you on one side...then on the other.

### **School Prayer**

*Dear Lord Jesus,*

*We ask that you help us today in all we do.*

*Be with our friends, families and the people around us,*

*Treating each other with the love and care that you have for us.*

*Amen.*

Now some children will pass around baskets containing bread. We each take a piece and eat it to remind us that Jesus calls us to be like St Andrew – to be friends with Jesus and friends with Jesus' friends. This is important as people who love each other always eat together. As we eat ask God to help us live and work together as part of a loving community.

Music & slides play, and food is shared.

### **Dismissal**

Conclude with Collect for St Andrew's Day...

*Almighty God,*

*who gave grace to your apostle Andrew*

*that he readily obeyed the call of your Son Jesus Christ*

*and brought his brother with him:*

*call us by your holy Word,*

*and give us grace to follow you without delay*

*and to tell the good news of your kingdom;*

*through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,*

*who is alive and reigns with you,*

*in the unity of the Holy Spirit,*

*one God, now and for ever.*

*Amen.*

Blessing

This term's Dismissal

Play "Be still for the presence of the Lord". Opening pictures repeat.

### **Notes**

- Use of SCHOOL Hall
- Not suitable for pre-school children > parent attendance discouraged
- ALL school adults invited as possible