

## Administration of Holy Communion Regulations 2015

Until recently, the process for authorising lay people to assist with the administration of Holy Communion has been very complicated. The regulations under Canon B12 required parish clergy to consult their churchwardens and then to write to the bishop seeking his or her permission for each and every individual case. This office has therefore kept records of those authorised in every parish, and the records have also had to be renewed every three years.

I am delighted to say that General Synod has now simplified the process and made it much more flexible. The new *Administration of Holy Communion Regulations 2015* may be read at <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/2284458/holy%20communion%20regulations%20-%20july%202015%20approved.pdf>. They permit diocesan bishops to continue with the current process if they are so minded, or to delegate their authority to suffragan bishops or archdeacons. But they also now allow bishops to delegate this authority to local parish clergy for the first time.

The decision about who should exercise this ministry is best taken locally in each parish. With that in mind, with effect from 1 January 2016 incumbents and priests-in-charge (or, during a vacancy, the area dean) in the Diocese of Gloucester will now have the authority, in cooperation with their PCCs, to authorise lay people to distribute Holy Communion in their own parishes. It will no longer be necessary to seek this permission from me.

Those people put forward by incumbents or priests-in-charge to assist with Holy Communion must be actual communicants themselves. They must be in good standing with their parishes and be individuals in whom their clergy and congregations will have confidence. They should be physically able to undertake this ministry. They will need to have received training from their clergy for the ministry they will exercise.

When names have been put forward by incumbents or priests-in-charge, PCCs will need to agree them by passing a resolution in the following form:

*This PCC, meeting on [date], resolved that [names], commended by [the incumbent or priest-in-charge] should be authorised for a period of [x] years to assist with the distribution of Holy Communion in accordance with the Administration of Holy Communion Regulations 2015.*

Parish offices should keep records of the names and addresses of those authorised in this way, including the date on which the PCC resolutions were passed and the date on which their authorisation expires. It would be good practice to publish the list of names on internal church noticeboards and websites. A list should always be kept visible in the vestry. The archdeacons will expect to see these records in the course of their visitations.

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One of the reasons why these changes have been made is so that children admitted to Holy Communion before confirmation may be authorised to assist with the administration. In addition, children admitted to communion may also, with their headteacher's permission, assist with the distribution at a service taking place in their church school.

Readers and Licensed Lay Workers are automatically authorised to exercise this ministry under the terms of their licences, so do not need to be authorised separately by the process outlined above.

It should be noted that none of this has any bearing on services of Holy Communion by Extension. This act of worship is governed by separate, more rigorous regulations which still require permission from me.

+ Rachel Gloucester: