

Guidelines for the Church in Wales on the Reception of Holy Communion and Gluten-Free Communicants at the Eucharist

A. THE RECEPTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

The Discipline of the Church in Wales

1. The Church in Wales admits to Holy Communion all those who have been baptised. To be a communicant is not only the response of a disciple of Jesus Christ to God's grace, but to enter into communion with the fellowship of the Church in Wales, and with the worldwide Communion of which the bishop is the local representative.

The Elements of Communion

2. As part of the Anglican Communion, the Church in Wales abides by the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1888. This states that 'the Supper of the Lord' is to be administered 'with unfailing use of Christ's words of institution and of the elements ordained by Him'. In addition, the rubrics of *The Book of Common Prayer for use in the Church in Wales* state that "The bread shall be wheat bread, whether leavened or unleavened, and the wine pure grape wine into which a little water may be added".
3. These rules mean that the use of other substances are not permitted. The implications of this for the provision of gluten free wafers is explored at greater length in the accompanying document. The use of rice wafers would fall outside these provisions.
4. Likewise, the only non-alcoholic wine that is permitted is either specially prepared de-alcoholised grape wine, or mustum, a pure grape juice that is either fresh or preserved by methods that suspend its fermentation, without altering its nature.

Eucharistic Hospitality

5. The Church in Wales offers Eucharistic hospitality to fellow Christians who visit our Churches and share in our worship. In terms of formal canon law, such hospitality is offered to all members of the Covenanting Churches of Wales, but by custom it now extends to a wider circle. The probable current rule of practice is that the Church in Wales offers Eucharistic hospitality to all baptised and communicant members of trinitarian churches in good standing, but that is not to everyone. We do not, for example, offer communion to the unbaptised.
6. Eucharistic hospitality is particularly important in a rural context where the Anglican Church may be the only Christian worshipping community. The Commission of the Covenanted Churches has drawn up a "Statement of Ecumenical Welcome" which Mission Area Conferences may adopt and use in such circumstances.
7. The rules of other denominations do not always offer the same latitude to their own members or others. We should be conscious of such rules and sympathetic to them, while acknowledging that it is not our business to apply the discipline of other Churches.

8. The most important thing is to apply our rules in a spirit of generosity, sensitivity and welcome. Clergy should not start to make enquiries about eligibility to receive communion at the moment when a worshipper stretches out their hands to receive communion at the altar. On the other hand, it is becoming increasingly clear that some occasional participants in our congregations, particularly at special services, do not appear to have any comprehension of what participation in communion might involve. This requires us to offer some guidance and advice at the beginning of our services, particularly when large numbers of visitors are present.
9. The nature of the Eucharistic welcome offered by the Church in Wales should therefore always be announced when large number of visitors are present, either in the course of regular worship, or by printed notice in service books and notice sheets.
10. The formal rule (cf paragraph 3 above) is probably not one which is straightforwardly understandable and therefore not easily communicated. A simpler version, which catches its spirit, may be more appropriate, such as, "All those used to receiving Communion in other Christian Churches are also welcome to receive communion at our service today" and this seems to fit the bill. Expressions such as "We welcome to Communion all those who know and love the Lord" are not suitable.
11. Where reception of Communion might not be appropriate, the clear alternative of a blessing should be offered. Again, the language in which this is done is important, and congregations should be given clear guidance. It is extremely useful if people are invited to give a clear signal when approaching the altar that they are seeking a blessing, perhaps by crossing their arms across their chest, or by carrying a service book.
12. Where a communicant has become a regular member of the congregation to the extent that they have effectively become a member of the Anglican congregation, it is appropriate to invite that worshipper to reflect on whether they wish formally to be received as a member of the Church in Wales.
13. For those in the Western tradition who have been episcopally confirmed (i.e. not by chrismation, but by the laying on of the hands by a bishop in the historic succession) this would be by a short ceremony of Reception into Communion. A short form of service, to be used in the context of the Eucharist, is available on the resources page of the Provincial website. This would normally be conducted by the bishop in the context of a Confirmation Service, but need not be exclusively so, where pastoral care suggests otherwise.
14. For those not so confirmed, such reception would be by Confirmation, either in a public or private context, as pastorally most appropriate.

Reception of Holy Communion

15. The most common and best practice is to receive the Eucharistic bread by forming a cradle with the hands, into which the communion wafer can be placed. There have been instances of people taking the host and saying, "Thank you very much". This is not to be encouraged. A simple outstretched hand and an "Amen" suffices.
16. Clergy should not permit worshippers to move away from the administration of communion without consuming the Eucharistic bread, nor to carry it back to the pew. This may require a pause in the administration of communion and the verbal request that a worshipper consumes the bread.

17. If a communicant requires a gluten free host, such can be brought to the altar in a separate pyx at the Offertory and kept separate from the other hosts to avoid contamination. The best signal that a communicant requires a gluten free bread is for them to approach the altar with their hands placed over each other, but with the palms facing downward. This ensures that the priest has a timely reminder to collect the gluten free wafer from the altar. Further detailed guidance concerning gluten free wafers is attached.
18. The practice of the Anglican Churches has been to give the chalice into the hands of a communicant. The nervousness of those administering the chalice is understandable, but it is the surest way of allowing the communicant to receive the wine and avoid those awkward experiences of not tipping the chalice sufficiently or too much.
19. **Intinction.** The practice of permitting communicants to intinct, i.e. to receive the Eucharistic bread, and then to carry it to the chalice, and to dip it themselves into the cup, is firmly discouraged. The health risks associated with germs carried on the fingers are at least as great as sharing in the one cup, if not greater, and the dipping of standard communion hosts contaminates the wine for those with gluten allergies.

If communicants do have real reservations about sharing in the one cup, then they should be reminded that while it has always been the understanding of the Anglican Churches that we receive both kinds in faithfulness to the instruction of Our Lord, the benefits of Communion are embraced by reception of the bread alone.

If there is certainty that there are no communicants requiring gluten free wafers, it can be permitted for the communicant to carry the host to the chalice administrator, and for the chalice administrator to take the host, dip it in the chalice, and administer Communion on the tongue of the communicant. This is the only form of intinction that should be permitted.

B. GLUTEN-FREE COMMUNICANTS AT THE EUCHARIST

Coeliac UK suggest that as many as 1/100 people in our society suffer with coeliac disease and there are still others with serious gluten intolerances, many of whom suffer serious health implications.

The Church in Wales' guidance on the Celebration of the Holy Eucharist states:

The Eucharist is not, and should not be seen as, exclusive. As the command of Christ to His followers, Holy Communion draws us together into his presence. Without losing a sense of mystery which remains at the heart of the sacrament, it is possible for all to feel included as we gather around the Lord's Table.¹

Only by making proper provision for those with gluten intolerances can such worshippers feel properly included as we gather around the Lord's Table for Holy Communion. The following guidelines are provided to make this possible for those with coeliac disease or gluten-intolerances in our congregations.

¹ <http://cinw.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Basic-Eucharist-Guidance-English.pdf>

1. The Bread

Gluten-free hosts meeting the Food Standards Agency gluten-free standard of less than 20 parts per million gluten, are available from a variety of ecclesiastical suppliers, including Vanpoules Ltd. and Charles Farris Ltd.

Care should be taken to ensure the communion hosts have been made with wheat flour from which the gluten has been removed, as this accords with the canons of the Church in Wales whereby the bread shall be wheat bread. Other forms of communion hosts that are available, such as those made from rice or potato flour, are not acceptable for use in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist.

While 'gluten-free' hosts meeting the FSA gluten-free standard are acceptable to many people with an allergy to gluten, some people have such a pronounced allergic reaction to gluten that they may not safely eat from any bread made from wheat flour. Even the extremely low residual amount of gluten in de-glutenised altar bread could be dangerous to them. In these circumstances, the communicant can receive Holy Communion under the form of wine alone and should be reassured that the sacramental grace thus received is whole and entire. It is essential in these circumstances that the wine is protected from any form of gluten contamination (see note 2 below).

The principle risk is of cross-contamination. For those communicants with gluten intolerances, even trace amounts of gluten may be harmful. It is vital therefore that every possible step is taken to ensure that gluten-free hosts are kept separate in storage, handling and distribution.

Some advised practical steps are:

- a. Administer the gluten-free host with a different hand than is used for other hosts or offer the gluten-intolerant communicant a pyx or other vessel containing the host using the appropriate words.
- b. Never allow gluten-free hosts to be placed in ciboria or on patens where there are other hosts. A designated pyx/ciborium should be used for the exclusive purpose of holding gluten-free hosts, and where Reservation takes place, the gluten-free hosts should be reserved separately in the aumbry or tabernacle.

2. The Chalice

- a. For a small number with gluten intolerance, it is not possible to safely receive from the chalice if others have drunk from it or there is 'comingling' of the bread and the wine.
- b. The practice of intinction is strongly discouraged whereby communicants dip the host in the wine. Not only does this pose general health and hygiene concerns but also introduces gluten fragments into the wine.
- c. Holy Communion in one kind is, of course, wholly valid. It is preferable however for churches to adopt practices which do not prevent the gluten intolerant from being fully included in the common meal by sharing in the common cup.
- d. If there are regular communicants with serious gluten-intolerances, the parish priest should discuss with them ways in which communion in two kinds might be possible, such as insuring they receive from the Chalice first or using a separate chalice for those with gluten intolerances.

3. Particular care should be taken during the fraction to ensure wheat particles do not contaminate the gluten-free bread or wine.
4. In some instances, it is appropriate for all the bread used at the Eucharist to be gluten-free, particularly in smaller congregations where there is somebody who is gluten-free.
5. There is a recognised gesture (presenting the hands crossed, but with palms facing downwards) which can be adopted by those requesting a gluten free host. Use of this gesture and an understanding of its meaning, should be more widely disseminated.
6. All churches should have information, either on display or in service booklets, encouraging people with gluten-intolerances or coeliac disease to make themselves known, to enable them to be fully included at the Lord's Table.
7. It is important that all who have the ministry of distributing Holy Communion are fully briefed about best practice.

The Bench of Bishops
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