Practical Considerations for Holy Eucharist During COVID-19

Below are some practical considerations for celebrating and distributing Holy Eucharist in the age of COVID-19 in Episcopal Church of Colorado. On behalf of our entire diocese, Bishop Kym Lucas thanks the Advisory Team on Liturgy and Music during COVID-19 for their input and assistance during these difficult times. The contributions of the Advisory Team assist us all as we wrestle with how we achieve communion and experience God’s grace during these times.

The Form of the Service

In an effort to decrease the time spent in any shared space that would be used for Holy Eucharist, the service should be shortened for in-person gatherings. Some options for this include:

- Sermon may be viewed online prior to or after the service.
- In-person sermons should be brief as possible.
- Eliminate music (reminder congregational singing is not permitted due to increased risk of transmitting COVID-19).
- The Creed may be omitted on days other than Sunday.
- Any readings except the Gospel may be omitted.
- Prayers of the People may be shortened.

Considerations for the Celebrant

- The frequency of the Celebration of Holy Eucharist does not have to be weekly and the frequency can be determined by the clergy as best suits the context.
- To maintain adherence to our Episcopal Eucharistic theology, all the elements for Holy Eucharist need to be in the physical presence of the priest is consecrating it.
- The Celebrant should wear a mask. Celebrants may also choose to wear a face shield in addition to wearing a mask, but face shields do not replace a mask.
- The Celebrant must maintain at least six feet from all other people while consecrating the elements.
- Both bread and wine should be concreted and only the consecrated Bread should be distributed. The consecrated Wine should be consumed by one person or poured into a piscina.
- Communion vessels should be washed and sanitized after every service.
- Distribution of consecrated Bread needs to be contactless and the Celebrant will need to maintain six feet of physical distance. For instance, consecrated Bread could be placed on sanitized altar rail, vessels, paper cups, or in plastic bags to be picked up.
- Every household needs to maintain at least six feet of distance while receiving the consecrated Bread. Please consider how people will enter and exit safely.
- Any plan should consider exercising good stewardship and caring for God’s creation by creating as little waste as possible.
- Vestments should be handled by just the priest wearing them and then put outside for at least 72 hours in direct sunlight.

In-Person Distribution by Eucharistic Ministers or Eucharistic Visitors and Lay Pastoral Leaders

- During these unique times, trained Eucharistic Ministers can distribute Holy Eucharist after the liturgy.
- Eucharistic Ministers can be trained by their local priest and Safe Church training is not necessary if Eucharistic Ministers are simply distributing the consecrated element (no pastoral visits).
• Extended pastoral visits by Eucharistic Visitors, that are not outdoors, are discouraged at this time.
• Eucharistic Ministers/Visitors can leave elements on the doorsteps of homes and call parishioners to consume elements and share in short prayer or liturgy. All must be done while maintaining at least six feet of physical distance.
• All Eucharistic Ministers/Visitors and Lay Pastoral Leaders must wear a mask and gloves at when distributing Communion. Gloves should be changed between each visit or services.
• Following a service, Eucharistic Ministers/Visitors may choose to distribute Communion to groups of people in strategic outdoor or well-ventilated locations near parishioners’ homes.

It is Bishop Kym’s hope that priests and leaders will take these considerations into account while adapting them to their specific contexts. Please contact The Rev. Canon Alex Dyer, Canon to the Ordinary, and Rev. Canon Carl Andrews, the Disaster Director for the Episcopal Church in Colorado, if additional advice or input is needed.

For Those Who Still Cannot or Choose Not to Receive at This Time
We recognize there may be people in our congregations that are particularly vulnerable and receiving Communion may not be an option. The Book of Common Prayer reminds us that if anyone is unable to actually consume the consecrated bread and wine due to extreme sickness or disability, the desire is enough for God to grant all the benefits of communion (Book of Common Prayer, p. 457). When being present at a celebration of the Eucharist is not possible, this act of prayer and meditation can provide the means by which you can associate yourself with the Eucharistic Action and open yourself to God’s grace and blessing. We commend the following prayers adapted from Forward Movement.

**Act of Reception**
In union, blessed Jesus, with the faithful gathered at every altar of your Church where your blessed Body and Blood are offered this day, *(and remembering particularly my own parish and those worshiping there)* I long to offer you praise and thanksgiving, for creation and all the blessings of this life, for the redemption won for us by your life, death, and resurrection, for the means of grace and the hope of glory. And particularly for the blessings given me.... I believe that you are truly present in the Holy Sacrament, and, since I cannot at this time receive communion, I pray you to come into my heart. I unite myself with you and embrace you with all my heart, my soul, and my mind. Let nothing separate me from you; let me serve you in this life until, by your grace, I come to your glorious kingdom and unending peace. Amen.

**Lord’s Prayer**
Come Lord Jesus, and dwell in my heart in the fullness of your strength; be my wisdom and guide me in right pathways; conform my life and actions to the image of your holiness; and, in the power of your gracious might, rule over every hostile power that threatens or disturbs the growth of your kingdom, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.

And may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep my heart and mind in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ my Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with me now and always. Amen.