

Customary for Lay Eucharistic Visitors

A Eucharistic Visitor is a layperson authorized to take the Consecrated Elements in a timely manner following a Celebration of Holy Eucharist to members of the congregation who, for reason of illness or infirmity, were unable to be present at the Celebration. A Eucharistic Visitor acts under the direction of the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith.

A Eucharistic Visitor is both sacramental and pastoral. It is a sacramental visit because we bear the sacraments of the bread and wine on behalf of the community at large as part of our ministry. At the same time we must be prepared to act pastorally to those we visit.

Eucharistic Visits may take place in a home, hospital, rehab center or nursing home. A Eucharistic Visit will include prayer, the gospel reading of the day, comments about the sermon of the day, a confession of sin, the Lord's Prayer, the sharing of Holy Communion and a closing prayer. An approved order of worship is included in the basket with elements for the Eucharist.

There are several practical ways to communicate God's loving care to those you visit. Words alone do not communicate adequately God's love for the people we are visiting: our actions and attitudes speak volumes about the comfort and hope offered in the Gospel and the Blessed Sacrament. Some of the ways in which we communicate our Faith are very practical. For example:

- **Get on their "eye level"**. If the person you are visiting is bed-bound or sitting in a low chair, don't stay standing: sit. Standing over someone "communicates" that you want to leave soon, or that you are, in a sense, superior to him or her.
- **"Be there" with the person.** Listen and wait. Give them time to express themselves, or be silent. Your presence with them is very comforting and meaningful to them. Theologians speak in terms of the "sacrament" of being there with persons. By our attention and loving ministry to the people we visit, they are reminded of how much God loves them and continues to be present in their lives through the Holy Spirit. Our words, our actions and our prayers should all communicate God's loving Presence in their time of weakness and need.
- **Enough Time should be allocated** to conduct the Communion Service and to listen to the person's immediate concerns. Eucharistic Visits will vary in length, but should neither be rushed nor overly protracted.
- **Remind them of their ministry:** to pray for the needs of others, to uphold the clergy, vestry and other ministries of the Church. Ask them to pray for you and the ministries of the Church; tell them of other specific needs so that they may intercede for family, neighbors and friends. This is not merely "talk," or "giving them something to do": it is a powerful ministry in the Church.

- **Communicate.** Your parish's clergy need to know if there is a particular need or issue that you encounter: an expressed desire for Confession and Absolution; signs of depression and sense of hopelessness; something observed that appears to require nursing care or medical attention; a family issue that is problematic or potentially so. As a Eucharistic Visitor it is not appropriate to engage in counseling or become involved in medical issues.

Please try to contact those on the current Lay Eucharistic Visitor List prior to receiving the Elements at the service.

After everyone has received communion in church, stand near the back of the Sanctuary. The priest will signal you when it is time to approach the altar. Proceed to the altar, standing inside the altar rail in front of the altar. The "Holy Communion Sending Prayer for Eucharistic Visitors" will be led by the priest. After commissioning, you may return to your seat or proceed to your first visit.

Be sure to check the basket (Communion Kit) to ensure that you have the following items before leaving the church campus.

- Several copies of the Sunday Bulletin
- Several copies of the Administration of Communion Under Special Circumstances Booklet.
- Sufficient Consecrated Bread, Wine and Water.
- Linens (corporal, purificator)
- Chalice and Paten

Upon arrival at your visit location, introduce yourself to those with the statement, "I'm here to bring you Communion from the Eucharist at St. Philip's Church." This sets the tone for the visit and designates this Communion as an expression of the Christian Community's one Eucharistic action.

Setting up may be an appropriate time to talk with the person (or family and loved ones, as appropriate) about any special needs or concerns they may have, to be included in the Prayers and Intercessions. Inquire if there are any physical limitations, swallowing difficulties or needs.

Setting up may involve clearing a space for the corporal, chalice and paten. It is important to create a space which is clean and uncluttered so that the Communion Bread and Wine can be given proper reverence and dignity.

Conduct the service following the “Administration of Communion Under Special Circumstances Booklet”. Do not stand or sit with your back to the Blessed Sacrament.

Others present may be invited to join in the service. All baptized Christians are welcome to receive. Hosts may be broken to accommodate more than the planned number of communicants.

If the person being visited can swallow, but with difficulty, it is acceptable to place a small piece of Host directly on their tongue; or to place the Host on a spoon (with a little Wine added to soften the Host), and place the spoon in their mouth. In a case where a person is unable to swallow, the following rubric from the Book of Common Prayer (p 457) should be read or communicated in simple words.

If a person desires to receive the Sacrament, but, for reason of extreme sickness or physical disability, is unable to eat and drink the Bread and Wine, the Deacon is to assure that person all the benefits of Communion are received, even though the Sacrament is not received with the mouth.

As Episcopalians we believe that Eucharist is completed with either element. Therefore, if you receive bread or wine or both you have “received communion”.

It is important that you take your time so that you can be fully present to God and the other person.

After everyone has received the Body and Blood of the Lord, any remaining Sacrament should be consumed by the Eucharistic Visitor in a reverent manner. The Patten should be wiped clean with the purificator, brushing any crumbs of the Host into the Chalice. A small amount of water should then be poured into the Chalice, and the water consumed by the Eucharistic Visitor, also in a reverent manner.

After the last Communion, consume the remaining Bread and Wine.

Be sure to complete a “report form” and return it to the office at your earliest convenience to assist with accurate record keeping. You may use the Lay Eucharistic Visitor List for this purpose. Please indicate the number of Communions delivered at each location (include yourself in this count).