

An excerpt from Bishop Peter's October 2015 Ad Clerum

Permission to Assist with the Distribution of Holy Communion

New Regulations governing this have come into force on 1st October.

Under these Regulations, I have decided to give general permission to incumbents and priests-in-charge in this Diocese to authorise people in their parishes for this ministry.

The Regulations are available on the Church of England web-site. Please follow these carefully, and in particular note that only regular communicants can be authorised for this ministry, and that the specific consent of the PCC is required for each person so authorised.

There are additional requirements for the consent of the Head Teacher, in the case of children who might be so authorised for celebrations of the Holy Communion in Church Schools.

In order that a proper review is carried out at appropriate intervals, I suggest that authorisation should be for an initial period of 3 or 5 years, although the Regulations themselves do not require this.

In moving to this simplified and more local process of authorisation I would express the hope that it will lead to a greater concentration upon the meaning of the sacrament of the Holy Communion. One of my concerns as I travel around the Diocese is when I encounter rather casual attitudes to worship in general, and to the divinely instituted sacraments in particular. This typifies an age which finds it hard to appreciate that our source of life, moment by moment, is God's creative and redeeming will. The sacraments are given to help us to understand this in a distinctive, down-to-earth way.

Centuries of dispute over the nature of our Lord's presence in the Holy Communion have been apt to divert attention from the promise and fact of his presence. Whatever school of theological interpretation you prefer, we should be able to agree that once the bread and wine have been consecrated, they belong to God and not us. Our arrangements for distributing God's sacramental gifts to the Church need to reflect this, with holiness and great care.