



The Episcopal Diocese of Newark

Diocesan Communion Under Special Circumstances

March 26, 2021

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q: What is Diocesan Communion Under Special Circumstances? I've never heard of it.

A: Bishop Hughes is intending that as long as the Pandemic continues that every baptized member of the Diocese of Newark should have the opportunity to receive Holy Communion at least three times in the course of the year, in as safe a way as possible, even if they cannot come to church. This extraordinary undertaking is adapting provisions in our *Book of Common Prayer* and the *Book of Occasional Services* and will require our whole Diocese to join together to make it happen!

Q. How does this connect to our theology of Eucharist?

A. St. Paul noted in I Corinthians 10:17, “We who are many are one body, for we all share in the one bread,” a concept that goes back to the very early church. We have in the sacrament of Holy Eucharist a powerful sign of our unity in Christ. We gather at the table of Jesus to be fed, to encounter the risen Christ, and to grow together in love, as one body. Holy Communion distributed after the service recognizes that there are more people who belong to the community of that table than those who are physically present. When we receive the bread of Communion distributed after the service, we are joining in that one meal, the one bread, the one community in Christ.

Q: When will this happen?

A: The first opportunity was November 8, 2020. The Bishop has asked congregations to provide this ministry on a monthly basis, as of March 26, 2021.

Q: Why are we doing this now?

A: Bishop Hughes has explained that we need to move from acting in response to the immediate emergency of the COVID Pandemic into living with COVID, since the impact of this is continuing well into 2021. This means people need to be able to receive communion at least from time to time and receive it safely. Doing it across the Diocese is important because it is a symbol of our unity in Christ and reminds us that we are in this together, offering support and solidarity for each other.

Q: How will this work since most churches aren't currently gathering for in-person worship?

A: As of this writing, it's true that churches are asked to plan according to risk levels for their county on <http://covidactnow.org> and all counties in our diocese are currently in active outbreak (“Red”). That means that most churches are limiting themselves to a maximum of 10 people necessary for live streaming or recording worship – or less. In these cases, a priest and congregation could decide to celebrate Holy Eucharist on a monthly basis within these limits, with only the celebrant receiving during the service, but then administering communion to others in the congregation afterwards, either by a communion station or through at-home delivery. Alternatively, if Holy Eucharist is not going to be celebrated, a congregation can partner with a nearby church to have wafers consecrated.

Q: Based on the Bishop's March 26 update, some churches may move to in-person worship. How will this work for them?

A: Churches that are looking at gathering for in-person would need to decide whether to celebrate Holy Eucharist on these Sundays. If so, the celebrant will need to consecrate additional wafers, to be distributed to those in their congregation who are not able to attend in-person. Alternatively, if Holy Eucharist is not going to be celebrated, a congregation can partner with a nearby church to have wafers consecrated.

Q: My church may soon be doing Holy Eucharist in-person. Couldn't I just go to church that day?

A: Yes, subject to the attendance limits at your church, of course. However, there are many others in your congregation and in other congregations who cannot go to a public gathering, even when risk levels are safer, but still desire to receive Communion. Your church would consecrate additional wafers for your members who cannot come, but also could offer to do so for a nearby church that isn't able to have a service of Holy Eucharist.

Q: My church may not be ready to do Holy Eucharist during pandemic anytime soon, whether we gather in-person or not. What do we do?

A: The priest and lay leadership would need to decide what to do. They could continue with non-Eucharistic worship and partner with a nearby church that is celebrating Eucharist – or they could decide to do Eucharist on that day, if they are prepared to do so, following Journey Forward guidelines and the Bishop's updated guidance of March 26, 2021.

Q: We do not have a priest at my church. How will this work?

A: Your wardens and other lay leaders will need to make preparations to offer this ministry and they will wish to connect with a nearby church that can provide the Sacrament.

Q: How do we get paired up with another congregation, if we can't celebrate Holy Eucharist?

A: If you are aware of a nearby church that would be able to provide consecrated wafers, you can make that connection directly. If you are not sure who is doing so, the Bishop's Office may be able to help.

Q: How does it work if we are connecting to a church that is celebrating Eucharist?

A: Your congregation would still gather information on who needs/wants to have communion distributed to them from your church and you would prepare appropriate number of wafers for distribution to them. Representatives of your congregation would attend the service at the host church doing the service of Holy Eucharist, bringing your church's wafers with you to be consecrated. After the service, you would take them back to your church to be distributed (both at the church and by delivery to people's homes)

Q: How will the church know that someone needs to receive Communion?

A: Each church will need to gather that information from its members. They will need to know if someone is coming to a Communion Station at the church or if they require delivery at home. That information can be gathered by an online sign-up or by email or phone contact. Be sure to include how many plan to receive in each household, delivery address, and phone number.

Q: Can people receive at the church after the service at a Communion Station, without gathering with the in-person congregation?

A: Yes, the first option to consider is for people to go their own church campus at a designated time after the service to receive Communion outside the building, if there is safe space available. For churches that are consecrating wafers, this would be directly following the service. For churches that are not celebrating Eucharist, this would be at a designated time at your church that day.

Q: Who may distribute wafers on-site after the service at a Communion Station?

A: Priests or Deacons, if available, as well as Eucharistic Ministers who are able to do so.

Q: I don't think it's safe or I'm not able to leave my home for in-person worship or distribution after the service. Will someone bring me Communion?

A: Yes, if you sign up with your church in advance so that they know that you need delivery. You will receive a small bag with a sufficient number of wafers and some prayers to say as you and your household receive Communion. You are strongly encouraged to watch a church service celebrating Eucharist in the morning, as a way of connecting to what you will receive later that day.

Q: I'm on the Altar Guild. How can I help?

A: Your clergy (or Wardens where there is no regular clergy) will give you any specific instructions, but you may be involved with helping to prepare the individual/household packets for home delivery. You also may need to help take care of remaining wafers at the end of this event.

Q: What is the preparation needed?

A: Each household will need 1 or more wafers (according to their sign-up numbers) and a prayer page in a sealable bag. The household name can be written on the prayer sheet. Care will need to be taken to keep your hands sanitized while you make these preparations. These wafers will be gathered at the Altar at your (or a nearby) church to be consecrated already in the individual bags.

Q: What is on these prayer pages?

A: It includes a passage from Scripture, the Lord's Prayer, some words to administer Communion, and a Prayer of Thanksgiving for after Communion

Q: Who provides the prayer pages?

A: There will be a printable electronic version distributed from the diocesan office on the website; each congregation will need to print their own prayer page and make as many copies as needed.

Q: Who may take these wafers out to households?

A: Eucharistic Visitors who are able to do so should certainly be asked to help. Additionally, any baptized member who desires to help with this and is able to do so may be given temporary permission to do so. Bishop Hughes is permitting parish clergy to determine these additional volunteers for these days of Special Communion, without need for additional licensing.

Q: What does delivery look like?

A: The volunteer making the delivery calls the recipient to let them know that they are coming on behalf of the church and that their house is next on their list, to ensure that someone is home to receive. Upon arrival, the volunteer lets the recipient know that they have arrived and can either carefully hand it to them (masked, no contact) or leave it at the door, as the recipient desires. ***Communion should not be left at the door without verifying that someone is at home and able immediately to bring it in.*** The volunteer, whether on the phone just before delivery or in person at the door, is encouraged to quote the phrase "We who are many are one body, for we all share in the one bread." as part of this delivery. If someone is not reachable, the wafers should be returned to your own church.

Q: What if we have additional questions? What if we run into a problem?

A: A more detailed guide to this ministry is on the diocesan website. You are also welcome to contact Canon Andrew Wright at awright@dioceseofnewark.org.