



The Episcopal Diocese of Newark

Diocesan Communion under Special Circumstances – Revised March 26, 2021

This form is adapted for use during pandemic for those who cannot be present at a public celebration of the Eucharist and for those congregations who are unable to celebrate the Eucharist at present.

In keeping with the provisions of *The Book of Common Prayer* (1979) and *The Book of Occasional Services* (2018), this form provides for members to be communicated from a service of Holy Eucharist, celebrated either at their own church or a nearby church, as necessary.

This form is authorized by Bishop Carlye Hughes for use in the Episcopal Diocese of Newark. It is Bishop Hughes' desire to make this form, or one similar to it, available for initial use on November 8, 2020 and then on a monthly basis in congregations beginning in March 2021.

Theology

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 took root quickly even in 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.

The Book of Common Prayer affirms the place of the Holy Eucharist as “the principal act of Christian worship on the Lord’s Day and other major Feasts,” and thus the foundation of the corporate prayer of the Church. As an act of the whole community of faith, the Eucharist is a summons to all the baptized to share in the table of the Lord. This form for the diocesan distribution of Holy Communion under Special Circumstances is intended to foster a corporate sense of the Eucharist among those who, by reason of pandemic, illness, or infirmity, are unable to be present in person in their church’s assembly on Sunday or some other principal feast and for those congregations who are not currently able to celebrate the Eucharist in person at all, by reason of pandemic and public health.

Preparation

Regional Coordination

Congregations are encouraged to coordinate within their Region to provide support and connection for churches who are not currently able to hold a service of Holy Eucharist. Please email Randy Johnson (rjohnson@dioceseofnewark.org) if you need assistance identifying who is in your region or to find a neighboring congregation to partner with you to provide Holy Communion. Regional coordination will help connect churches who are not able to hold a service of Holy Eucharist with those who are doing so, to ensure everyone has access to Communion, as needed.

Communicants

Each congregation is asked to determine what Sundays (1 per month) it intends to make Communion available and to communicate that information clearly throughout the congregation. For each Communion Sunday, each congregation will need to determine who among its members desire to receive Holy Communion, but cannot attend the Eucharist in person. That list can be determined by online sign-up, email, or phone. The information gathered should at least include the following:

- 1) Do they wish to receive Communion on the designated Sunday?
- 2) If there is not an option to attend a service in-person, can they come to the church (or other designated site) to a Communion Station to receive communion outdoors after that Sunday service? Let them know the hours it will be available. If so, their information should be taken down for contact tracing and the total number receiving Communion in the household will need to be recorded.
- 3) If they cannot come to the church property to receive Communion, it can be delivered to their home without contact. Please confirm phone, address, and number receiving communion in the household that day.

Communion Ministers

Each congregation will need to determine who will fulfill these roles:

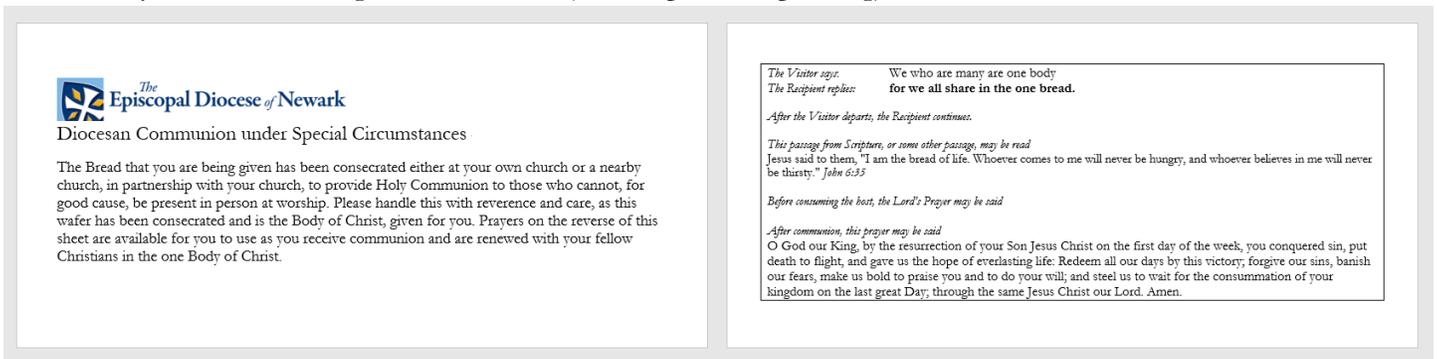
- 1) **Communion Coordinators** – one or two people who will oversee this system, determined by the clergy-in-charge or by the wardens if there is no one in that role. If the church is not celebrating Holy Eucharist, but instead connecting to a partner church for their wafers to be consecrated, these coordinators (or their designees) are responsible for ensuring that their wafers for their congregation are consecrated and transported back to their own church for distribution.
- 2) **Communion Station Ministers** – A few church members (2 or 3 for most churches) will need to be present outdoors at the church property (or other designated place) after the service on Sunday to administer Communion to communicants on site. Communion is to be distributed outdoors, masked, maintaining 6' distance as much as possible. Hand sanitizer should be nearby, in case contact is made with the minister's hand. Any remaining consecrated wafers should be returned to the sacristy or reverently consumed by the ministers.
- 3) **Communion Visitors** – a larger number of church members may be needed to deliver Holy Communion to those who remain at home, but desire to receive Communion. They will be responsible for taking the containers of consecrated wafers for their designated households, contacting each household prior to delivery (to ensure the recipients are home), and getting the container to the recipient in a contact-free fashion. **Visitors cannot leave a communion container at a residence without direct communication with the recipient**, to confirm that they will be present. Visitors are also responsible for returning any undelivered consecrated wafers back to their church, to be reverently consumed. *Note: These do not need to be formal Eucharistic Visitors who have more extended visits with homebound parishioners in non-pandemic times. Anyone who is a baptized member approved by the clergy-in-charge may undertake this work, under these guidelines.*

Materials

Each congregation will need to prepare the wafers to be consecrated for distribution on the designated Sundays. No wine will need to be prepared, since only the Celebrant consumes wine at present in our celebrations of the Eucharist. All preparation will be done with careful attention to safety and health protocols, including working masked (if others are present) and ensuring that gloves are used properly or hands are carefully and routinely sanitized.

- 1) **Communion Station Preparation** – Determine the total number of people who intend to come to the church (or other designated site) after the service on the designated Sunday. Add a margin of hospitality to that total (perhaps 10%), to ensure that there are enough wafers consecrated, in case you have additional communicants attend. Select a breadbox large enough to hold these wafers together. This can be something formal, such as might be used at the Altar on Sunday or can be something practical and durable. Any clean vessel with a lid that closes will be sufficient. Place the vessel out to be consecrated on Sunday. These wafers should be kept separate from the household distribution and any wafers set out for an in-person service, if applicable. The Communion Coordinators will take this vessel to the partner church celebrating Eucharist, when that is necessary, and return it to their own church, for Communion Station distribution outside.
- 2) **Household Distribution Preparation** – Take the list of those who have been contacted and scheduled for this delivery and place sufficient wafers in separate containers (can be small “baggies” or envelopes or some other simple, sealable container) for each household. Place one printed out prayer sheet, cut or folded to fit. Label the container with the household name. This can be done by labeling the exterior or, if in a clear bag, writing the name on the margin of the prayer sheet. A sample of the prayer sheet follows and a template for easy printing and cutting is available online. These containers should be placed to be consecrated on Sunday. These wafers should be kept separate from the Communion Station breadbox and any wafers set out for an in-person service, if applicable. The Communion Coordinators will take these containers, along with the Communion Station breadbox to the partner church celebrating Eucharist, when that is necessary, and return them to their own church, for household distribution.

Prayer sheet, showing front and back (see template for printing):



The Liturgy

For Host Churches

A host church is a congregation that is able to celebrate Holy Eucharist (whether following the strict 10-person limit or in an in-person worship service) and is willing to serve as a partner for one or more congregations that are not yet able to do so.

- 1) **The Rite** – Host churches should use whatever form (Rite I, Rite II, EOW) that they customarily would use.
- 2) **Guests and Wafers** – Host churches may have one or two representatives of your partner church present, from a church that is not celebrating Holy Eucharist that day. In any case, host churches will want to identify who their partner churches are for those participating online and welcome them. Partner churches will provide a breadbox and a number of household communion containers with them that will need to be

consecrated during the service, along with whatever hosts you are consecrating for your own congregation members who cannot be present.

- 3) **Sending Rite** – After the Postcommunion Prayer, before the Blessing and Dismissal, the following form is strongly encouraged to be used and printed in the service bulletin:

The consecrated gifts that are to be distributed remain on the altar. This rite follows the Postcommunion Prayer.

Celebrant In the name of God and on behalf of the Diocese of Newark, we send forth these holy gifts. May the people of [*Names of the particular congregations served by the celebration, including the host congregation*] share with us in the communion of Christ's Body and Blood.

People **We who are many are one body, because we all share one bread, one cup.**

For Partner Churches

A partner church is a congregation that is not able to celebrate the Holy Eucharist on a designated Sunday and connects with another congregation so that their members can receive Holy Communion by distribution that day.

Where possible, partner churches are encouraged, but not required, to participate via live stream with the host church that they are joining with in ministry that day. Churches may wish to still conduct their own worship in place of or in addition to viewing the host church. There is an added value of participating in the service from which a person will be receiving Communion, though, so it is encouraged to participate online with the host congregation.

Other Churches

Some congregations will be celebrating Holy Eucharist (whether limited for streaming recording or in-person), but not serving as a host church. They will nonetheless be consecrating additional wafers for their own communicants who are unable to attend in-person, to be distributed at Communion Stations outdoors after the service or delivered to households in the congregation.

- 1) **The Rite** – These churches should use whatever form (Rite I, Rite II, EOW) that they customarily would use.
- 2) **Additional Wafers** – Additional wafers will have been prepared for non-present communicants, some in a breadbox for Communion Stations after church and some in individual household containers. Please be sure they are placed properly to be consecrated during the service, along with whatever hosts you are consecrating for those immediately present.
- 3) **Sending Rite** – After the Postcommunion Prayer, before the Blessing and Dismissal, the following form is strongly encouraged to be used and printed in the service bulletin at non-host churches:

The consecrated gifts that are to be distributed remain on the altar. This rite follows the Postcommunion Prayer Communion.

Celebrant In the name of God and on behalf of this congregation, I send you forth bearing these holy gifts, that those to whom you go may share with us in the communion of Christ's body and blood.

People **We who are many are one body, because we all share one bread, one cup.**

Follow up

Unused Wafers

Each congregation will need to properly take care of any consecrated wafers that are not distributed. In many congregations this will involve the Altar Guild. Make a ***plan for reverently consuming any remaining wafers*** at a later date, but within the week. Communion is not currently to be reserved, typically, under the Journey Forward guidelines.

Pastoral Contact

Clergy, or the Vestry in churches where there is no regular clergy, should continue coordinating pastoral outreach to those who cannot easily participate in the congregation. In pandemic, outreach by phone, correspondence, or other non-contact means, especially to those who are isolated in their homes, is vitally important. Consider a schedule of routine contact by some members of the congregation for those who are unable to participate regularly in worship, so that they may experience their relationship to the community and also join their personal faith and witness to that of their community. This may include ongoing onboarding training for members in using tools such as zoom or conference calls.

Many thanks to the team that worked on the initial development of these guidelines for this extraordinary ministry - Dr. Jill Burnett Comings, George Dredde, the Rev. Anne Kitch, Dr. Laura E. Moore, the Rev. Jon Richardson, the Rev. Deacon Sun-Hwan Spriggs, Jewels Quelly, Vanessa Wigfall, the Rev. Canon Dr. Andrew R. Wright.

Questions or concerns can be directed to the Canon to the Ordinary at awright@dioceseofnewark.org.