

The Episcopal Diocese of Upper South Carolina

Guidelines for Training and Continuing Education of Eucharistic Ministers

I. Holy Scripture

- a. This diocese trusts that its Licensed Ministers are spiritually mature, active in the life of the congregation and faithful attendees at worship.
- b. This assumes also knowledge of the structure and content of Holy Scripture.
- c. All Eucharistic Ministers, and all Licensed Ministers, should understand the scriptural origins and theology of the Eucharist.

II. Overview of the Prayer Book

- a. Eucharistic Ministers should be well acquainted with the contents and organization of the prayer book, especially all parts relevant to the celebration of Holy Eucharist.

III. Theology (Episcopal) of the Holy Eucharist

- a. Eucharistic Ministers should be taught the Episcopal understanding of the “real presence” of Christ at the Holy Eucharist as part of their training. They should understand that the Episcopal Church views communion as a means of divine grace and not as merely a memorial service. Thus, the consecrated elements are always to be treated with due reverence, keeping in mind that reverence need not, nor should not, denigrate into superstitious understandings and practices.
- b. Eucharistic Ministers need to have a clear understanding of the reserved sacrament and its use. They should also be taught the proper way to reverently dispose of consecrated elements and the proper cleaning of Eucharistic vessels.
- c. Eucharistic Ministers should clearly understand that it is by our Baptism that we are made full members of the Body of Christ and therefore welcome at our Lord’s Table.
- d. Holiness-We gather for liturgy in order to participate in a holy event. The word “holy” means set apart, or set apart for God. This means that we set ourselves apart, or God sets us apart, for the worship of the day. There is to be something special about the time we spend in liturgy. Therefore, our own conversation should be reverent and careful. Please bear in mind that the entire service is prayer, from the opening acclamation to the dismissal.

IV. Setting the Table

- a. Eucharistic Ministers, even though they may not serve on the altar guild, should be instructed in how to set the altar and how to clean up after the service.
- b. Eucharistic Ministers should be instructed in the names and proper uses of all vessels and linens.

V. Mechanics

At the altar:

- a. The rubrics specify that those who are to administer the sacrament to the people shall first have received it themselves (BCP p. 365)
- b. It is not necessary for the priest to hand vessels to additional ministers of communion. Indeed, in the case of chalices, it is safer if they pick them up themselves.
- c. Pay attention to the service. Be interested and involved.
- d. Do not place Prayer Books or hymnals on the altar.
- e. If the consecrated wine or wafers are all used before every has been communicated, the priest must be asked to consecrate more.
- f. be careful not to fill the chalice too full. Not only is there a greater chance of spillage, but a too-full chalice will slow down the Eucharistic Minister considerably.

Handling the chalice:

- a. Keep a firm grip on the chalice but not a rigid one.
- b. Make a quarter turn of the chalice after each communicant, and wipe the chalice before serving the next person.
- c. Wipe the entire lip of the chalice after each row of communicants.

- d. At least one additional purificator should be readily available for each chalice bearer and should be used as needed (in case of a spill that needs to be wiped up or if the original purificator becomes too soiled with lipstick, etc.)
- e. While avoiding spillage, the skill of being a Eucharistic Minister also involves delivering the chalice from person to person as quickly as possible. The old Latin adage applies here: "Make haste slowly."

Words to Use

- a. The words to use are found on page 338 in The Book of Common Prayer (Rite 1) and pages 365 (Rite II).
- b. Unless otherwise directed by the celebrant, the Eucharistic Minister should use the words that match those of the person administering the paten.

VI. Etiquette

- a. Manners- Good manners tend to include people, not exclude them. Also, it is when our behavior is regular and consistent that others begin to understand why we are doing things and how to join.
Good manners also mean that we treat everyone consistently and similarly.
- b. Use the regular words of administration only. Do not add other words or movements to the delivery of the chalice. The role of Eucharistic Minister is to administer the Blood of Christ, not to deliver other blessings, especially spoken blessings. There is usually no need to say the words of administration over someone who is not receiving the chalice. Please do not reach over the rail to hug someone.
- c. This is not an appropriate time for conversation or passing messages.
- d. If someone is not receiving they will usually have their hands crossed over their chest. You should go past them.
- e. When administering the chalice to young children, you may have to ask the child to stand, or you may have to kneel or stoop down to their level. If a young child seems unsure about receiving the wine, the Eucharistic Minister should ask the parent if the child is to receive the wine.
- f. The purificator needs to be cupped in one hand away from where the communicant drinks from the cup.
- g. Watch out for lipstick stains in particular, and try to keep those as hidden from view as possible.
- h. In case a wafer should accidentally fall into the cup, a clean utensil should be readily available to retrieve it. A spoon for communicating infants can be used for this purpose. The retrieved wafer should then be consumed as discreetly as possible.
- i. If you spill wine on someone, give them your purificator to wipe it off. If you spill wine on the altar rail or floor, stop and clean it up immediately. Get a clean purificator and continue administering.
- j. The right of the communicants to say "Amen" before receiving the sacramental species is an ancient one, and is frequently referred to in the writings of the church fathers. It is important, therefore, that ministers of the chalice complete the words of administration before raising the cup to the communicant's lips. Persons carrying vessels containing the consecrated sacrament do not reverence the altar or the cross-or anything else.
- k. When communion is administered at "Stations," whether before the altar or at the chancel steps or elsewhere in the church and loaf bread is being used, it is important to remember that the people need time to chew and swallow the bread before approaching to drink from the cup. The most practical way of giving them this time-and simultaneously avoiding slowing down the distribution-is to station the ministers with the cups at some distance (twelve feet is not too far) from those who administer the bread. Even when unleavened wafer bread is used, it is helpful if the ministers do not stand close together.
- l. In some eastern liturgies it is customary for the minister to speak the communicants' names when delivering the sacrament to them, and the practice is sometimes imitated by Episcopalians. While there can be no reasonable objection to it at small intimate celebrations, where everyone knows everyone else, its use at public services presents two difficulties: (a) if the communicant is not expecting it, it can be perceived as intrusive and therefore distracting, and (b) if it is not done to everyone a sense of favoritism is created, those known to the minister being singled out for special attention. The practice is not recommended.

VII. **Intinction**

- a. It is the long-standing policy in this diocese that the Eucharistic Minister intincts the wafer and places it in the mouth of the communicant. This needs to be made known and encouraged by the clergy in each parish and mission. We must remember, however, that different dioceses have different policies regarding Intinction. Thus, certain visitors may well desire to intinct the wafer themselves. Eucharistic Visitors should handle these cases with tact, respect, discretion and common sense.

VIII. **Training Young Adults To Be Eucharistic Ministers**

- a. The training of young adults who are deemed well suited by their clergy is strongly encouraged by the diocese.

IX. **Local Customs**

- a. Each parish and mission will have its own local customs. It is the responsibility of the clergy to make sure their Eucharistic Ministers are well acquainted and trained with these also.

For Further Study:

- ❖ Principles of Liturgy by The Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler, Dean of Trinity Cathedral in Columbia, SC – 1995.
- ❖ A Lay Minister's Guide to The Book of Common Prayer by Clifford W. Atkinson, 1977, Morehouse Barlow Co., Inc.
- ❖ The New altar guild Book by Barbara Gent and Betty Sturges, 1996, Morehouse Publishing.
- ❖ A User's Guide to The Holy Eucharist Rites I & II by Christopher L. Webber, 1997, Morehouse Publishing.
- ❖ The Sanctuary-Preparing the Church for Worship by Virginia Gosling Mainprize, 1996, Anglican Book Centre.
- ❖ The Ceremonies of the Eucharist-A Guide to Celebration by Howard E. Galley, 1980, Cowley Publications.

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1 Principles of Liturgy by the Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler, Dean of Trinity Cathedral, Columbia, SC 1995

2 The Ceremonies of the Eucharist-A Guide to Celebration by Howard E. Galley, 1989, Cowley Publications