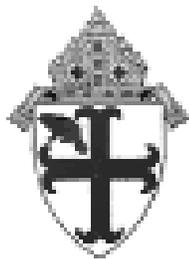


**Handbook
for
Eucharistic Ministers
and
Eucharistic Visitors**



Episcopal Diocese
of Albany, New York

Table of Contents

Forward by The Rt. Rev'd Daniel W. Herzog [p.2]

Part I: Being Called & Equipped [p. 3]

Part II: Introduction to Lay Ministries [pp. 4-6]

- A. Lay Ministries in the Church: A Brief Overview
- B. Lay Ministries in Canon Law
- C. Our Part in Ministering To Others

Part III: Eucharistic Visitors [pp. 7-14]

- A. Biblical Reflections and Background
 - 1. The Call to Minister
 - 2. The Eucharistic Visit: An Expression of the Communion of the Saints
 - 3. Understanding Others and Ourselves
 - 4. Practical Ways of Communicating God's Loving Care
- B. The Nuts & Bolts of Eucharistic Ministry
 - 1. Equipment and Materials
 - 2. First Things First
 - 3. Getting Ready
 - 4. The Rite
 - 5. Setting Up
 - 6. Record Keeping
 - 7. Afterwards
- C. Frequently Asked Questions

Part IV: Eucharistic Ministers [pp. 15-18]

- A. Introduction
- B. The Nuts & Bolts of Being a Eucharistic Minister
 - 1. Before the Sunday Service
 - 2. At Church on the Lord's Day
 - 3. During the Liturgy
- C. Frequently Asked Questions

Part V: Getting Started In Your Parish [pp. 19-22]

- A. Education and Preparation of the Parish
 - 1. Eucharistic Visitors
 - 2. Eucharistic Ministers
- B. Selection and Training
 - 1. Selection
 - 2. Suggested Training Activities for Eucharistic Ministers
 - 3. Suggested Training Activities for Eucharistic Visitors
- C. Supervision and Evaluation

Part VI: Text: Communion for the Sick & Shut-Ins [pp. 23-25]

Part VII: Appendices [pp. 26-29]

- A. Title III, Canons 1 & 4 of the Episcopal Church U.S.A.
- B. Canon XI of the Diocese of Albany, NY
- C. Form: Record of Communions

Forward by
The Rt. Revered Daniel W. Herzog

This *Handbook for Eucharistic Ministers and Visitors* has been prayerfully written and developed in response to the need in the Albany Diocese for a resource for both lay persons who engage in this pastoral ministry and clergy who are responsible for the training and equipping them.

In addition to providing a unified and common curriculum for Eucharistic Ministers and Eucharistic Visitors in our diocese, this *Handbook* provides a standard liturgical form for the use of all Eucharistic Visitors in the Diocese. All the materials in this *Handbook* reflect the changes in the National Canons 2003 regarding lay ministries.

An important feature of this *Handbook* is its Biblical and spiritual focus: its emphasis throughout on being a committed disciple of Jesus Christ in order to be an effective minister. Our belief that the Eucharist is the true Body and Blood of Jesus compels this focus.

This *Handbook* – written by Deacon Richard Lehmann, Archdeacon Harvey Huth and Deacon Ludwig Wallner – was first introduced at a Workshop at the 2006 Diocesan Convention. This updated edition incorporates the valuable suggestions from that Workshop.

Part I Being Called & Equipped

This handbook is intended as a resource both for those who are being trained to be Eucharistic Visitors or Ministers and for those who are training them.

Whether you are a neophyte or seasoned Eucharistic Minister or Visitor, there are always opportunities to learn more, develop or improve skills and become more proficient in how we serve God and His Church. It is hoped that what is written here will be useful and instructive for you at various stages along the way in your life of service as a disciple of Christ Jesus the Lord.

The ways in which each of us becomes involved in the Church's ministry as a Eucharistic Minister or Visitor vary. For some of us, there was an inner sense that "this is what I ought to do" – and we asked our Deacon or Rector about becoming involved in this ministry. Others were asked by their Priest, Deacon or Warden to fill a need in the parish.

Beyond the circumstance of how we begin our involvement in lay ministry is the reality that we have been called by God to do so. Jesus' words to His first disciples apply to us as well: "*You did not choose Me but I chose you.*" [John 15:16] By our obedience to that call, and by our active involvement in the ministry to which He has called us, we are sharing in the ministry of the Body of Christ, the Church.

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

– Hebrews 13:20-21

Part II

Introduction to Lay Ministries

As each has received a gift, employ it for one another,
as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks,
as one who utters oracles of God; whoever renders service,
as one who renders it by the strength which God supplies;
in order that in everything God may be glorified through
Jesus Christ.

– *1 Peter 4:10-11*

A. Lay Ministries in the Church: A Brief Overview ¹

Lay Ministries in the Church have witnessed tremendous growth following the liturgical renewal of Vatican II in the Roman Catholic Church [1962-65] and the revision of our own Book of Common Prayer [1979]. What was once a new and innovative paradigm shift in the way the Church thinks about and does ministry has now become accepted and even commonplace in most American parishes and churches.

Yet the theology behind the raising up of lay ministers in the Church is actually nothing new because it is thoroughly Biblical and is rooted in our Christian Tradition. St. Paul's teaching concerning the Body of Christ [Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12-14; Ephesians 4:1-16] clearly outlines that all Baptized Christians are called to specific and mutually complementary ministries within the Church. In the Church there were to be no "spectators." We are all called to serve.

This is reflected in the teaching of the Prayer Book. The Catechism in the BCP [p.855] states: "The ministers of the Church are lay persons, bishops, priests, and deacons." It then outlines the scope and focus of lay ministry:

The ministry of lay persons is to represent Christ and his Church; to bear witness to him wherever they may be; and, according to the gifts given them, to carry on Christ's work of reconciliation in the world; and to take their place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church.

From a Biblical and theological perspective, each and every Baptized Christian being called and empowered for active ministry should be normative for the

¹ For a fuller overview of the history of "Eucharistic ministers," a good resource is Beth Wickenberg Ely's *A Manual for Lay Eucharistic Ministers*, 3rd printing (1993) pp. 1-8.

Church. “Lay ministry” is simply an expression of the Church’s overall ministry as the Body of Christ. As such, the ministries to which we are called are not “ours” but more properly Christ’s Own ministry in His Church through us.

B. Lay Ministries in Canon Law

The ministry of lay persons in the celebration and administration of the Holy Eucharist has certainly expanded in recent years. In the American *Book of Common Prayer (1928)*, a lay person was allowed to read the Epistle [New Testament Lesson] and nothing else.

Prior to the current lay ministry canons, specially licensed lay readers administered the chalice at the Eucharist and were known as "chalice bearers." No provision was made for the administration of the host by lay persons under any other circumstances.

Nothing in the 1979 prayer book permitted lay persons to carry elements to persons unable to be present at the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. The rubrics in the “Service of Communion Under Special Circumstances” indicate that communion will be brought to the sick only by a bishop, priest, or deacon.

In the 2003 revision of the National Canons, the former canon which permitted the special licensing of those already licensed as lay readers to administer the chalice has been replaced by a comprehensive canon [Title III, Canon 4] dealing with the licensing of lay persons to perform a variety of ministries.

Title III, Canon 4, Section 6 & 7 clearly distinguishes Licensed ministers who “administer the Consecrated Elements at a Celebration of Holy Eucharist” [called Eucharistic Ministers] from those who “take the Consecrated Elements in a timely manner following a Celebration of Holy Eucharist to members of the congregation who, by reason of illness or infirmity, were unable to be present at the Celebration” [called Eucharistic Visitors]. Eucharistic Ministers are similar to the former Chalice Bearer.

Both Eucharistic Ministers [administering the Chalice at the Eucharist] and Eucharistic Visitors² [bringing the Sacrament to shut-ins] are “extraordinary ministries,” that is, they are not to take the place of the ministry of priests and deacons at Eucharist [*Diocesan Canon XI.7.B*].

²The designation “lay” has been dropped from the official title for these ministries since the 2003 revision of the National Canons.

According to the National Canons both Eucharistic Ministers and Eucharistic Visitors are licensed by the Diocesan Bishop to engage in their ministries locally under the supervision of their parish's Deacon or Priest (if there is no Deacon). In the Diocese of Albany this licensing process takes place on the parochial rather than the diocesan level; the Diocesan office does not issue licenses for Eucharistic Ministers and Eucharistic Visitors.

The Canons also state that Diocesan bishops establish the qualifications, guidelines and requirements for the selection and training of these persons, who may be licensed to perform either or both of the functions permitted by the canon. In our diocese the selection and training of Eucharistic Ministers and Eucharistic Visitors also takes place on the parish level. Guidelines for training, qualifications and requirements, as established by Bishop Herzog, are outlined in this *Handbook*.

C. Our Part in Ministering to Others

As a Eucharistic Ministers and Visitors, ones first and primary ministry is to the Lord Himself. The desire to serve others must grow out of an even deeper desire to serve Him and grow in our relationship to Him “in grace and in knowledge.” [2 Peter 3:18] Our devotion to our Lord opens us up to the suffering, pain and acute needs of others. Our ministry to others is an expression of Christ's ministry to them; it is, in fact, one of the ways God touches others – through us.

The most important preparation for your ministry as a Eucharistic Minister or Visitor is faithfulness to your own relationship with God through prayer, Bible Study, the Sacraments, and fellowship with other Christians. To neglect your own spiritual life and relationship with the Lord for the sake of the ministries with which He has entrusted us is neither necessary nor helpful; it is, in fact, dangerous for ourselves and those whom we seek to serve. Worship of God must always precede work for Him: if we keep this priority straight we will safeguard this all-too-common pitfall.

On the other hand, we can become overly focused upon our own weakness and unworthiness to engage in Christian ministry. We all serve in our weakness and we do our work of ministry imperfectly. But in Christ Jesus, the Father has “made us worthy to stand before [Him],”³ and in His love we live and serve Him and others in His Name. No Christian is worthy to serve and minister in the Name of the All Holy Lord, but *He* is worthy to be worshiped and served.

³ *Book of Common Prayer*, Eucharistic Prayer B, p.368

Part III

Eucharistic Visitors

Look with mercy, O God our Father,
on all whose increasing years
bring them weakness, distress, or isolation.
Provide for them homes of dignity and peace;
give them understanding helpers,
and the willingness to accept help;
and, as their strength diminishes,
increase their faith and their assurance of your love.
This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
The Book of Common Prayer, p.830

A. Biblical Reflections & Background

1. The Call to Minister

The Church has a vocation to minister to those most in need in our society. In doing so we are following Jesus' Own example as He forgave and welcomed into fellowship "the tax collectors and the harlots" – those marginalized and outcast in our society.

One of the most remarkable and enlightening passages in the Gospels concerns Jesus' teaching about ministering to the poor, the sick and the needy:

I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me... as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to Me.
Matthew 25:35 - 36

2. The Eucharistic Visit: An Expression of the Communion of the Saints

As a Eucharistic Visitor you have the exciting opportunity for worship, prayer and fellowship; and the incomparable privilege of bringing the Blessed Sacrament to those "who for reasonable cause cannot be present at a public celebration of the Eucharist" [BCP p.396] because they are ill, home-bound, in a hospital or nursing home.

You will already have been nurtured and renewed through **your participation at the Eucharist**, and will be sent **forth by the Church** with the Blessed Sacrament. God will be using you as a “Christ-bearer” to connect those whom you are visiting with the larger corporate Body of Christ, not only in your church, but in the whole Communion of Saints, past, present, and future.

When we meet with a home-bound parishioner, we often think that we are “visiting **from** the Church” – and of course the sick person being visited is very aware of being “away from” and not part of the parish for Sunday Eucharist. But, from a theological standpoint, it is more correct to say that when you, as a Eucharistic Visitor meet with a home-bound parishioner, you [*pl.*] *are* the Church. Jesus told His disciples that “when two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them.” [Matthew 18:19]

The Eucharist Visit is, therefore, an expression of the Church, an occasion in which the Risen Lord Jesus is present among His people. Although the act of bringing the Consecrated Bread to a shut in is not a Eucharist, it is a time of prayer and worship and of receiving Christ in the Sacrament. Whatever is done and said during that visit will be “Church” for that person: you have **the** privilege of being one of the links that keep that shut-in connected to the larger parish family. Each Eucharist Visit is an **expression** of the reality of the “Communion of the Saints.”

3. Understanding Ourselves and Others

As a person providing pastoral care, it is important to take time to examine your own attitudes and feelings about those you are visiting prior to the meeting. Persons may be ill, disabled or facing death. We are all growing older and closer to our own death. However, at times we are reluctant to visit hospitals or nursing homes because of fears about confronting our own limitations and mortality. By being conscious of our own fear or anxiety, we can offer it to God and find strength for the work we are given to do. Bear in mind that a person who has a disability is a person just like everyone else. We each have our own disabilities; in some of us they are more readily visible than in others. But God knows and accepts all our disabilities and loves each of us.

Many of those unable to come to the regular church service may be under stress due to health matters. They may be in pain, feeling anxiety about their future and in need of personal support. As a Eucharistic Visitor you must try to understand what it is like to suffer as the other does, while at the same time maintaining the abiding faith that Jesus Christ is already and always at work in that person’s life. This does not mean trying to convince the other person or

“cheer them up” so much as faithfully maintaining one’s own attitude of faith and hope in God as we listen and empathize.

4. Practical Ways of Communicating God’s Loving Care

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 them selves, 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. Our attention and loving ministry to the people we visit that 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 mere “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.

B. The Nuts & Bolts of the Eucharistic Ministry

1. Equipment and Materials

Each Eucharistic Visitor should have available:

- A **pyx** with sufficient consecrated Hosts
- Sufficient copies of the service entitled “*Communion for the Sick & Shut-Ins: Form to be used by Eucharistic Visitors*” so that everyone present can have one. You may also leave a copy for someone if they ask to keep it.
- Lectionary readings for the day

Your supervising Deacon or Priest will be able to assist you in obtaining any equipment and material needed.

2. First Things First

During the Eucharist, uphold the person(s) in prayer to whom you will be privileged to bear the Body and Blood of the Lord. Pray that you may be an able and compassionate Eucharistic Visitor.

3. Getting Ready

Your supervising Deacon or Priest will give you the names of one or more persons to whom you will carry the Holy Communion after the Eucharist. If visiting an individual for the first time, be certain to obtain appropriate background information which will help meet the pastoral needs of the individual and make your visit more effective. You should be aware of other family members in the home, if the individual can answer the telephone or not, special interests or past involvement with the church, any special needs for assistance, or other advice or comments your supervising deacon or priest may provide.

[At the Eucharist just before the dismissal you may go to the altar to be commissioned by the clergy to take the Communion to a specific person immediately after dismissal.]

In addition to your **pyx**, you will need to take [a Bible or lectionary and] sufficient copies of the Rite and current church bulletins, so that one of each may be left at each person's home or bedside.

An *Individual Record of Communion* form appears in Appendix C.

4. The Rite

When taking communion to an ill or shut in person, remember that you are not performing a “mini- Mass.” Rather, you are bringing the Sacrament to be shared with a fellow disciple as members of the Body of Christ.

The only service authorized to be used is the “*Communion for the Sick & Shut-Ins: Form to be used by Eucharistic Visitors.*” It is important to carefully follow the rubrics. It provides for the Eucharistic Visitors to use the Propers of the day: the Collect and the Gospel of the day.

After the Gospel, the Eucharistic Visitor should tell the person(s) being visited about the sermon which was preached during Eucharist.

Prayers may be offered briefly for the Church, the World, and the concerns of those present.

After the Confession of Sin, a special form of absolution is to be said by a lay person [see Part VI: “*Communion for the Sick & Shut-Ins: Form to be used by Eucharistic Visitors,*” below].

Remember that you are a guest of the person you are visiting, whether in the home or the hospital. You are representing the Church, clergy and congregation and your actions (as well as apparel) should reflect the dignity of the ministry to which you have been called.

5. Setting Up

Upon arrival, introductions should be made to the home bound or hospitalized person and others present including the statement, “I’m here to bring you Communion from the Eucharist at _____ church.” This sets the tone for the visit and already designates this Communion as an expression of the Christian Community’s one Eucharistic action.

Inquire about any physical limitations, swallowing difficulties or needs. [See *Frequently Asked Question (4)* below.]

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.

Conduct the service in a reverent manner. Do not stand or sit with your back to the Blessed Sacrament.

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

6. Record Keeping

Accurate record keeping will be an important tool in assessing, developing, and evaluating this ministry. *A sample form* for this purpose is included in the appendix, which may be helpful in maintaining accurate parish records and for preparing the annual report of this **parish** ministry to the Bishop. **Please note that this form is for the parish's use, and is *not* to be handed in to the Diocesan office.**

7. Afterwards

After the last Communion, consume the remaining Hosts.

You may want to pause to reflect a few moments on what you have just done, on how God is using you, and to give thanks for this opportunity to serve Christ in your brothers and sisters.

Report back to your supervising deacon or rector on your Eucharistic visits and make special note of any needs or pastoral concerns that came to your attention during these visits. Although you visit as a representative of the congregation bearing Christ's Body and Blood, you are also your Deacon or Rector's eyes and ears. Sharing your pastoral conversations and observations during your visit with the clergy is very important to their ministries as well. Do not discuss the person's health with others.

Any forms should be filled out and left in an agreed upon location. If there a special need or concern which should be taken care of, the clergy should be made aware of this as soon as possible. The visit is considered "complete" only when this communication is made.

C. Frequently Asked Questions

Experienced Eucharistic Visitors can recount any number of unexpected and sometimes very unique circumstances that they have encountered during their ministry. The following questions and answers may help you be prepared for some of these situations:

1. What if no one is at home?

This problem can be avoided by calling ahead and setting up a time that you will be visiting. This will depend when the Eucharist is ended and on the schedule of the family being visited.

2. Do I leave for my visit immediately after the Eucharist has ended, or can I attend Christian Education and/or the coffee hour before I leave Church?

Taking communion from the Church's Eucharist means bringing the person who is "shut in" into the corporate body of Christ and the parish by your actions, and as such should be as close to the end of the service as possible. Discuss this with your supervising deacon or priest.

3. Upon arriving at the home, hospital or nursing home, I do not have enough hosts for the people present. What is the correct way to handle this situation?

First, ask if everyone would like to take part in receiving communion. Next, if there are more people than hosts it is acceptable to break the hosts in half. Be careful not to crumble them into small pieces.

4. If the person I am visiting has difficulty in swallowing, how is Communion administered?

It depends upon the severity of the swallowing difficulty. Even a small piece of host can cause **choking**, blockage on the airway or aspiration pneumonia for someone with a swallowing difficulty (*dysphagia*). In a home setting, a family member should be consulted. In an institutional setting, the Nurse-in-Charge or Medication Nurse should be asked regarding any swallowing restrictions.

If the person being visited is able to swallow, it is acceptable to place just a small piece of the Host 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 other simple words:

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

5. Several times when I have visited people in the hospital, staff persons have come in to take blood pressure or some other procedure. How is this handled?

In many cases the medical staff will give you the time needed to complete whatever you are doing. Just tell them you will only be a little while longer. You might wish to ask the medical staff if they would like to join you in prayer or communion. Many times we forget this part of our ministry. If an emergency situation occurs during your visit, get out of the way and pray for the person and the medical team ministering to the person. Notify the clergy.

Part IV

Eucharistic Ministers

A. Introduction

Eucharistic Ministers serve at the Altar during Holy Eucharist by administering the Chalice “in the absence of sufficient deacons and priests.” [BCP p.408] They may also read the Old Testament and/or New Testament Lessons and/or led the Prayers of the People. In the absence of an acolyte, they may also hold the Gospel Book when the Deacon or Priest proclaims the Gospel and assist the Deacon or Priest in preparing the Table for the Eucharist. The specifics vary according to the needs and traditions of your parish.

Normally, Eucharistic Ministers serve under the direction of the Deacon of the parish; or in the absence of a Deacon, the Rector or Vicar.

Training and instruction should be provided by the Deacon or designee for new Eucharistic Ministers prior to the first time they serve. Any questions or concerns should be addressed prior to the actual Liturgy in which you are serving. Know what is expected of you and you can be confident as you begin this new and exciting ministry.

B. The Nuts & Bolts of Being a Eucharistic Minister

1. Before the Sunday Service

Check the Church *rota* for Eucharistic Ministers regularly to make sure then you are scheduled to serve at the Altar. Your parish will have its own procedure for finding a substitute if you are unable to serve as scheduled. Make sure you contact the appropriate person as soon as possible.

If you are scheduled to serve, prepare yourself by reviewing any materials (e.g. Prayers of the People) for which you may be responsible. Prepare spiritually by praying and meditatively reading the Propers (Scripture Readings for the Eucharist). Pray for the clergy and people with whom you will be serving at the Eucharist. Pray for all the people to whom you will be administering the Chalice. Go to bed early enough the night before so you will be at your best for the service of God and His Church.

2. At Church on the Lord's Day

Arrive early: half an hour before the Liturgy begins is best. This allows time for you to get vested, give/receive communications and to take some time to **meditate** and pray.

Check: text for Prayers of the People, Lectionary opened to the propers for the day, etc. Be sure your hands (and nails) are not soiled. Be ready to assist as needed for other needs that may arise.

Pray. Nothing is more deadening to true worship than doing the mechanics of the Liturgy without our hearts and minds engaged in what we are doing. Enter into God's Presence as you meditate and pray, and ask God to assist you by His grace to be an effective and eager minister at the Eucharist.

3. During the Liturgy

Follow the directions and actions of the Celebrant. When the Procession arrives before the Altar, bow or genuflect with the Celebrant.

If you make a mistake (and you will – everyone does) do not draw attention to it: merely begin to do it correctly. In speaking, do not say “excuse me”; simply repeat the text correctly.

Whatever you do as a Eucharistic Minister, offer it to God in prayer as your “spiritual worship” [Romans 12:1].

C. Frequently Asked Questions

The following are some questions which will occur to you as you begin your service as a Eucharistic Minister. One of the most important things to remember as you consider this ministry is that the Priest is in charge and your function is to assist. When in doubt ask the celebrant about any questions or concerns you may have *before* the service.

1. How do I hold the purificator (small hand towel)?

The easiest way is to drape it over your index (or index and middle finger), so that the purificator covers the palm of your hand. You can either let it hang free or put the hanging end between your ring finger and pinky finger. This allows you to control the purificator and have a “groove” between your index and middle finger to place on the lip of the chalice as you wipe it after a person has received. Wipe both outside and *inside* the rim.

Wipe the lip of the chalice gently (remember you are not polishing the silver). Normally, the chalice is turned (either clockwise or counter-clockwise) after someone receives, so that each person drinks from a spot on the rim *next to* the last rather than from the same spot.

You may want to adjust the purificator several times during Communion so that more than one single area of the purificator is utilized for wiping.

2. How do I know what to say while administering the Chalice (cup)?

The phrase used when administering the chalice up should “match” what is said by the Celebrant, viz., who is distributing the Bread. If the Bread is given with the words “The Body of Christ, the Bread of Heaven,” you should say “The Blood of Christ, the Cup of Salvation” when offering the Cup. When in doubt it is best to check with the celebrant beforehand about their preference. The default phrase best used is “The Blood of Christ.”

3. What do I wear when serving at the Altar?

Parish “traditions” may vary, but generally speaking, a white alb and cincture is worn. **This** is fitting since, although it is often associated with ordained clergy at the Eucharist, the alb is really the vestment of Baptism. Some churches will have Eucharistic Ministers vested in cassock and surplice, or just plain street clothing. The Rector’s directive or the usual practice rather than your own preference determines what is worn.

4. What happens if the Wine is spilled?

If it is spilled on the altar rail, wipe it up with the purificator immediately. At the end of the service clean the area with a purificator and water. If the Wine gets on the floor or carpet in front of the person receiving, blot up what you can with the purificator and return after the service to finish the clean up with water. Some clergy may ask you to place the purificator over the spilled Wine spot, get a clean purificator and continue to serve, cleaning up at the end of the service. This is a situation to ask about during your training. Note: It is always smart to have an extra purificator at the credence table for such situations.

5. How do I hold the chalice?

The stem of the chalice usually has a “knob” on it: this should be grasped firmly, and your wrist should function as a “hinge” with which to bring the chalice to the lips of the communicant. This allows you to be in control of the chalice while being flexible in your movements. *Do not* relax your grip on the stem/knob of the chalice (but don’t cut off your circulation with a “death grip” either).

6. How do I know if a person does not wish to receive the Wine?

Generally a person will cross their chest with both arms indicating that they do not want Wine. Other people will sometimes just give you a little “wave off.” Be alert people’s wishes.

7. Do some people receive the Chalice (cup) rather than drinking from it?

The most common way of receiving is by taking a sip from the Chalice. Another method – called *intinction* - is for the communicant to hold the Host for you to take. Dip the edge (not the entire host) into the Wine and place it on the tongue of the person. Although some people prefer to dip the Host themselves, it is best for the Eucharistic Minister to dip the Host in the Wine so that folks don’t immerse their fingers in the Chalice.

Part V

Getting Started in Your Parish

It is likely that lay persons in your parish are already engaged as either Eucharistic Ministers at the Altar or Eucharistic Visitors to the shut-ins in community or both. However, it may be that these areas of ministry need more organization or a new focus. By assessing your parish's specific needs in this area ministry, your Rector (or **Priest-in Charge**, or Deacon-Vicar) will be able to utilize this Handbook to train and educate disciples within the parish.

A. Education and Preparation of the Parish

1. Eucharistic Visitors

If Eucharistic Visitation is a new lay ministry at a parish, parishioners being visited may have questions about lay persons bringing them Holy Communion. Success in implementing such a ministry will depend heavily upon the thorough education and preparation of all concerned, and sensitivity to those who will be receiving Communion at home or in the hospital.

Education must be initiated before the first lay visit and then continues weekly as the congregation witnesses the commissioning of lay ministers to go forth **to specific parishioners**. This education should be done in a number of different ways, including articles in a monthly newsletter, notes in the weekly bulletin, sermons, or Christian education classes focused on the Holy Eucharist. It may be helpful to discuss the practice of the early Church of the faithful carrying the Lord's Body and Blood to their Christian relatives and friends who were sick or imprisoned for the Faith.

It is important for everyone in the parish all to understand that the intention of this ministry (that those who are unable to attend regularly and participate directly in the worship of the Church as a Eucharistic Community may nevertheless be sustained by the Blessed Sacrament and experience their ongoing relationships as a member of the Body of Christ), so that they can uphold both the Eucharistic Visitors and those being visited in their prayers.

Once the parish becomes accustomed to seeing Eucharistic Visitors being commissioned to go forth at the conclusion of each Eucharist, the ministry will take on a special significance as an expression of the Communion of the Saints as a living and vital reality.

Usually the Priest or Deacon has been bringing Holy Communion to the sick. The easiest way to begin is for the Eucharistic Minister to accompany them on a visit. Your Deacon or Priest may introduce the Eucharistic Visitors during their first visit and explain this new ministry to those at home, in the hospital or nursing home.

As stated above [II.B] Eucharistic Visitors engage in their ministries under the supervision of their parish's Deacon (or Priest if there is no Deacon).

2. Eucharistic Ministers

The same principles and procedures apply to the ministry of Eucharistic Ministers serving at the Altar during the Liturgy. Education and preparation of the parish will be vital for this to be a viable and dynamic ministry of the Christian Community.

Presentation of any new ministry in the parish requires the authority and backing of the Rector (or **Priest-in Charge**, or Deacon-Vicar). As one who is called to “equip the saint for the work of ministry,” [Ephesians 4:12] he or she will play a major role in the preparation and education needed for any new ministries within the parish to succeed.

Some parishioners find any changes in the way things are done in Church difficult, and can even be resistive to those changes. Even good changes can meet with opposition at times. The acceptance of lay persons administering the Chalice during Communion in a parish may take time. Pastoral sensitivity is needed in dealing with these adjustment issues.

B. Selection and Training

1. Selection

Eucharistic Visitors and Eucharistic Ministers need to be selected with special care so that they will be accepted by the congregation. They should be people who are:

- Faithful in their personal life, prayer, and worship
- Attend Church every Sunday
- Committed to serve in this ministry
- Have some formal training in pastoral care or be willing to take diocesan or parish-sponsored training to include listening skills, empathy, and sensitivity

- Be able to respect confidentiality
- Be able and willing to attend scheduled trainings
- Personal life is a model of holiness and godly living

2. Suggested Training Activities for Eucharistic Ministers

People have different learning styles and many of us need some “hands on” experience to really make it sink in. The following activities are suggested to do just that. They may seem a little “over the top,” especially to an experienced Eucharistic Minister or Visitor; but for the neophyte these learning activities will do much to build confidence and ensure a successful start to their new ministry.

Once preliminary conceptual training is completed, allow significant time for “hands on” practice at the altar rail (in vestments) with a purificator and chalice, to get a sense of the “choreography” along with other ministers in that particular space. (You can use water instead of wine for this practice.)

Consider including in this “role play” some of the following:

- Where to stand and when to receive
- Holding the purificator and chalice
- Recognizing those who do not wish to receive
- Communicating those who do not touch the chalice.
- Intinction of the Bread in the Wine for (or by) the communicant.
- How to assist children or guests who do not know the traditional movements and behaviors when receiving the sacraments.
- Refilling the chalice from a flagon or cruet in large services.
- How to clean up a spill (without actually spilling water).
This may seem a little overboard but it eliminates the “panic” feeling when and if this actually occurs.

3. Suggested Training Activities for Eucharistic Visitors

Once again, because people have different learning styles, training should include both conceptual materials and “role play” of a hospital visit and a home visit with at least two other partners. Include in this practice:

- Greeting the individual and any other family or visitors
- Creating a sacred space/removing clutter and eliminating distractions
- Inquiring about special concerns or needs they may have which might be included in prayers during the service.

- Conducting the service
- Conversation after the service, sharing parish news, inquiring about pastoral needs and offering to relay a message.
- Concluding the visit

Practice completing any records for which the Eucharistic Visitor is responsible by using photocopies of the service register and other record-keeping forms.

4. Further Training

The diocese will periodically sponsor special workshops to increase lay ministers' understanding of the Eucharist, to enhance their self-understanding as ministers of the church, and to deal with the practicalities of administering the Sacrament with due reverence and dignity.

C. Supervision and Evaluation

Supervision and periodic evaluation of Eucharistic Ministers and Visitors will be carried out by a Deacon or Priest of the parish.

For Eucharistic Visitors, the clergy supervisor should monitor the frequency and the effectiveness of the visits made. Periodic meetings with clergy supervisor should be focused on providing support and guidance for the Eucharistic Visitor's own spiritual growth.

Eucharistic Ministers should also meet with clergy supervisors for the purpose of dealing with any issues or questions that arise in the performance of their duties at the Altar. Clergy may also schedule group meetings with the Eucharistic Ministers of the parish for the purpose of reviewing and improving various parts of the ceremonial aspects of the Liturgy, questions and answers, and developing a rota for the coming months.

Clergy supervisors are responsible for:

- Making assignments
- Scheduling and planning regular continuing education/support meetings
- Receiving reports of pastoral needs and concerns
- Overseeing accurate record-keeping
- Evaluating Eucharistic ministry, pastoral care, and the spiritual growth of Eucharistic Visitors
- Reporting to the Diocesan Bishop annually

Part VI

Liturgy for Communion for the Sick & Shut-Ins

Below is the text of the liturgy to be used by Eucharistic Visitors when bringing and administering the Sacraments to parishioners in their homes, the hospital or nursing homes. It follows the “Communion Under Special Circumstances” liturgy in *The Book of Common Prayer* pages 396-399 with modifications so that it is suitable for use by a lay person. This is the only text authorized to be used by Eucharistic Visitors in the Diocese of Albany.

The version included in this Handbook follows the Book of Common Prayer’s Rite II language of the text. As some people who are being brought the Blessed Sacrament may be more familiar or comfortable with Rite I language, electronic versions of this liturgy will be available for parishes in both Rite I and Rite II versions.

Communion for the Sick & Shut-Ins

Form to be used by Eucharistic Visitors

This form is intended for use with those who for reasonable cause cannot be present at a public celebration of the Eucharist.

It is desirable that fellow parishioners, relatives, and friends be present, when possible, to communicate with them.

The Eucharistic Visitor reads one passage of Scripture (usually the Gospel) from the Lectionary Readings that Sunday (“Proper”) or else one of the following::

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life. *John 3:16*

Jesus said, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.” *John 6:35*

Jesus said, “I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.” *John 6:51, 55-56*

Jesus said, “Abide in me, as I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love.” *John 15:4-5a, 8-9*

After the Reading, the Eucharistic Visitor may comment on it briefly.

Suitable prayers may be offered, concluding with the Collect of the Day or the following:

Almighty Father, whose dear Son, on the night before He suffered, instituted the Sacrament of his Body and Blood: Mercifully grant that we may receive it thankfully in remembrance of Jesus Christ our Lord, Who in these holy mysteries gives us a pledge of eternal life; and Who lives and reigns for ever and ever. *Amen.*

A Confession of Sin follows.

Most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against You
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved You with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of Your Son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in Your will,
and walk in Your ways,
to the glory of Your Name. *Amen.*

The Eucharistic Visitor alone says

Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen us in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life. *Amen.*

The Peace is then exchanged.

The Lord's Prayer is said, the Eucharistic Visitor first saying

Let us pray in the words our Savior Christ has taught us.

Our Father, Who art in heaven,
hallowed by Thy Name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. *Amen.*

The Eucharistic Visitor says the following Invitation

The Gifts of God for the People of God

and may add Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on Him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

The Sacrament is administered with either of the following words:

The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ keep you in everlasting life. [*Amen.*]

The Body of Christ: the Bread of Heaven. [*Amen.*]

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

One of the following Postcommunion Prayers is then said.

Eternal God, heavenly Father,
You have graciously accepted us as living members
of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ,
and You have fed us with spiritual food
in the Sacrament of His Body and Blood.
Send us now into the world in peace,
and grant us strength and courage
to love and serve You
with gladness and singleness of heart;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Almighty and everliving God,
we thank You for feeding us with the spiritual food
of the most precious Body and Blood
of Your Son our Savior Jesus Christ;
and for assuring us in these holy mysteries
that we are living members of the Body of Your Son,
and heirs of Your eternal kingdom.
And now, Father, send us out
to do the work You have given us to do,
to love and serve You
as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord.
To Him, to You, and to the Holy Spirit,
be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

Gracious Father, we give You praise and thanks for this Holy Communion of the Body and Blood of Your beloved Son Jesus Christ, the pledge of our redemption; and we pray that it may bring us forgiveness of our sins, strength in our weakness, and everlasting salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Part VII Appendices

Appendix A

Title III, Canons 1 & 4 of the Episcopal Church of the U.S.A.

Canon 1: Of the Ministry of All Baptized Persons

Sec. 1. Each Diocese shall make provision for the affirmation and development of the ministry of all baptized persons, including:

- (a) Assistance in understanding that all baptized persons are called to minister in Christ's name, to identify their gifts with the help of the Church and to serve Christ's mission at all times and in all places.
- (b) Assistance in understanding that all baptized persons are called to sustain their ministries through commitment to life-long Christian formation.

Sec. 2. No person shall be denied access to the discernment process for any ministry, lay or ordained, in this Church because of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, disabilities or age, except as otherwise provided by these Canons. No right to licensing, ordination, or election is hereby established.

CANON 4: Of Licensed Ministries

Sec. 1.

- (a) A confirmed communicant in good standing or, in extraordinary circumstances, subject to guidelines established by the Bishop, a communicant in good standing, may be licensed by the Ecclesiastical Authority to serve as Pastoral Leader, Worship Leader, Preacher, Eucharistic Minister, Eucharistic Visitor or Catechist. Requirements and guidelines for the selection, training, continuing education, and deployment of such persons and the duration of licenses shall be established by the Bishop in consultation with the Commission on Ministry.
- (b) The Presiding Bishop or the Bishop Suffragan for the Armed Forces may authorize a member of the Armed Forces to exercise one or more of these ministries in the Armed Forces in accordance with the provisions of this Canon. Requirements and guidelines for the selection, training, continuing education, and deployment of such persons shall be established by the Bishop granting the license.

Sec. 2.

- (a) The Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith may request the Ecclesiastical Authority with jurisdiction to license persons within that congregation or other community of faith to exercise such ministries. The license shall be issued for a period of time to be determined under Canon III.4.1(a) and may be renewed. The license may be revoked by the Ecclesiastical Authority upon request of or upon notice to the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith.

(b) In renewing the license, the Ecclesiastical Authority shall consider the performance of the ministry by the person licensed, continuing education in the licensed area, and the endorsement of the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith in which the person is serving.

(c) A person licensed in any Diocese under the provisions of this Canon may serve in another congregation or other community of faith in the same or another Diocese only at the invitation of the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight, and with the consent of the Ecclesiastical Authority in whose jurisdiction the service will occur.

Sec. 3. A Pastoral Leader is a lay person authorized to exercise pastoral or administrative responsibility in a congregation under special circumstances, as defined by the Bishop.

Sec. 4. A Worship Leader is a lay person who regularly leads public worship under the direction of the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith.

Sec. 5. A Preacher is a lay person authorized to preach. Persons so authorized shall only preach in congregations under the direction of the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith.

Sec. 6. A Eucharistic Minister is a lay person authorized to administer the Consecrated Elements at a Celebration of Holy Eucharist. A Eucharistic Minister act under the direction of a Deacon, if any, or otherwise, the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith.

Sec. 7. A Eucharistic Visitor is a lay person authorized to take the Consecrated Elements in a timely manner following a Celebration of Holy Eucharist to members of the congregation who, by reason of illness or infirmity, were unable to be present at the Celebration. A Eucharistic Visitor should normally act under the direction of a Deacon, if any, or otherwise, the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith.

Sec. 8. A Catechist is a lay person authorized to prepare persons for Baptism, Confirmation, Reception, and the Reaffirmation of Baptismal Vows, and shall function under the direction of the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith.

Appendix B

Canon XI of the Diocese of Albany

Licensed Persons

11.5 - Licensed Lay Persons

A person shall not be licensed as a Lay Reader or Chalice Bearer unless such person has been selected and trained in conformity with guidelines established by the Bishop.

11.6.A - Lay Reader

A confirmed adult communicant in good standing may be licensed as a Lay Reader by the Bishop. Such license shall be granted only at the request of the Rector or Priest in Charge of the Congregation in which the Lay Reader will serve.

11.6.B

In all matters relating to the conduct of services a Lay Reader shall conform to the directions of the Rector or Priest in Charge of the Congregation in which the person is serving, and, in all cases, to the directions of the Bishop. The Lay Reader shall act in accordance with the rubrics and other directions of the Book of Common Prayer in every respect.

11.6.C

The license of a Lay Reader shall be issued for a period not to exceed three years and shall be revocable at any time. Renewal of the license shall be determined on the basis of acceptable performance of the ministry and upon the endorsement of the Rector or Priest in Charge of the Congregation in which the Lay Reader is serving.

11.7.A - Lay Eucharistic Ministers

A confirmed adult communicant in good standing may be specially licensed as a Lay Eucharistic Minister by the Bishop. Such special license shall be granted only at the request of the Rector or Priest in Charge of the Congregation in which this ministry will be exercised and with the concurrence of the Vestry.

11.7.B

This extraordinary ministry shall not take the place of the ministry of Priests and Deacons in the exercise of their office and shall be performed in accordance with the Rubrics and Directions of the Book of Common Prayer and the Canons of General Convention. Such ministry shall be restricted to the Congregation in which the Lay Eucharistic Minister is licensed and under the direction of the Priest at whose request the license was granted.

11.7.C

The license of a Lay Eucharistic Minister shall be issued for a period not to exceed three years and shall be revocable by the Bishop at any time. Such license shall terminate when the Rector or Priest in Charge, at whose request the license was granted, is no longer in charge of the Congregation. The license may be renewed upon the request of the Rector or Priest in Charge of the Congregation in which the Lay Eucharistic Minister is serving, with the concurrence of the Vestry.

Appendix C

Sample Record of Communions

Communicant _____

Permanent address _____

Phone _____

Current Address _____
(if different)

Phone _____

Directions (if needed) _____

Relevant background information: (e.g., restrictions, physical limitations, family contact, special needs/interests, other clergy advice or instructions)

EV observations/comments (e.g., change in condition, pastoral needs or concerns, message for clergy, other observations of which clergy should be made aware)

Date of Communions

Communicants

EV
