



Written by
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Taking Communion to individuals in their own home

- Check what permissions are required to lead a home Communion service
- Make a firm appointment for the visit
- Prepare with the individual person in mind
- Create a 'holy' space for the service
- Use familiar liturgy
- Stay for a chat

Background

For church members no longer able to attend a church service, for whatever reason, the opportunity to receive Communion is really important. This meal, remembering Jesus, is a vital part of being a Christian for many people and a home Communion service is a special time of personal worship and fellowship that can connect a person to their church family.

1 Check what permissions are required to lead a home Communion service

When taking a home Communion service, the person leading it is representing the church or vicar/pastor. Each denomination will have policies, rules or guidance about who is authorised to lead such a service. For example, a Lay Eucharistic Licence may be needed in an Anglican setting and training may be given, both theory and practice; in the Methodist Church, authorisation from the circuit superintendent for dispensation of Communion is required. In both these denominations, wine and bread is consecrated by clergy and put aside for this purpose prior to visiting anyone's home. In a free/independent church, affirmation by the church leaders and recognition for this role may be sufficient. It is always good practice to have some training and to accompany others who are experienced in taking home Communion to individuals before taking on this responsibility alone.

2 Make a firm appointment for the visit

Making an agreed date and time will allow the person to be ready and prepared for Communion both physically and mentally. This might be scheduled around mealtimes, care times and times of rest. It will help carers (when needed) to get the person prepared in time. A firm time also gives the person opportunity to invite others to join them – whether carers, friends or family members – so that they can share Communion together. If possible, take another church member along; Communion is intended to be a shared meal.

3 Prepare with the individual in mind

Consider the person with whom the Communion is being shared, and what would help them most in their worship. Think about whether a service sheet of some kind is needed or not. Some may know a familiar liturgy. Some who are living with dementia, or those with poor eyesight, might find a sheet or something to hold difficult to follow or read. Would the person like to sing a hymn as part of the service? Can the person eat bread and take wine independently? Ask the person if there are particular prayers or prayer requests they would like included. Feel free to ask the person what they would most like and include this where possible. If the person struggles to swallow and is unable to take the bread or wafer offered, it might be necessary to collect it unobtrusively in a tissue and dispose of appropriately.

4 Create a 'holy' space for the service

Think about where to set up the Communion table in the person's home/room. Adapt what is in the person's home if needed, e.g. use a bedside table. Make sure that the person can see it. Take time to prepare the table and do this reverently and quietly. Use a white tablecloth and place the symbols that would be used in church on the table, e.g. an open Bible, a cross and a candle (battery operated is safest). Play music or hymns quietly as you prepare if appropriate.

5 Use familiar liturgy

The form of service will depend on the denomination represented and the tradition that is most familiar to the person. Most denominations have a published set liturgy for home Communion that is a shortened version of the one used in church. All will use a form of the words found in 1 Corinthians 11:23–26. There are also resources that give an outline of a home Communion service (see below). Don't rush the service. It is by nature short, but it is good to make quiet spaces around the time of taking the Communion and the prayer time. Always conclude with a form of the blessing.

6 Stay for a chat

If able, make time to stay for a chat. This might be the only time of fellowship the person will have for a while. Catch up with their news and share news of those in the church family. Do everything possible to help the person feel included and loved as a member of the church family. If there is a newsletter or magazine that can be left with the person, that is usually appreciated.

Further resources:

churchinwales.contentfiles.net/media/documents/Home_Communion_Card.pdf

methodist.org.uk/for-churches/resources/leading-worship/methodist-liturgies/holy-communion-services

Sue Pickering, *Creative Ideas for Ministry with the Aged* (Canterbury Press, 2014)

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