

Friday, 20 September 2024

Dear Sisters and Brothers

Returning to the Common Cup

The COVID-19 Pandemic changed our world in so many ways. One such way was the suspension of the Common Cup at public worship in churches around the world, including in the Diocese of Grafton. I wrote to you in October 2022 allowing the reintroduction of the Common Cup. You will recall that at that time I left it up to incumbents to decide when to reintroduce the cup in their ministry unit, having first sought the *opinion* of the Wardens and Parish Council. Those who chose not to return to the Common Cup were invited to continue with individual cups for the time being.

Since that time most ministry units in the diocese have returned to the Common Cup.

I write to ask those ministry units that have not yet returned to the Common Cup to do so by the end of October 2024. The sharing of the Cup of the Lord is rich in meaning and value for the communicant. It was the early church's practice and is the traditional Anglican way of receiving the Blood of Christ, as enshrined in the formularies of the Book of Common Prayer.

Communion should therefore be offered in both kinds, Bread and Common Cup, with the wine being distributed in one or more of the following ways:

- By sipping from a shared chalice, served by properly trained Eucharistic ministers using the best practices of turning and wiping the chalice after each person.
- By intinction by the priest or a properly trained Eucharistic minister who can safely assist communicants to receive the bread by dipping it into the wine for the communicant, without their fingers having contact with the wine. This is sometimes done from a special chalice set aside for the purpose of intinction. As per my previous advice, under no circumstances should communicants intinct their own wafer.
- Members of our worshiping communities should be reminded that receiving communion in one form only is always an option, so they may individually refrain from sharing the wine of communion until they are ready.

In those ministry units where the Common Cup has been reintroduced it has been a welcome option. In other communities, where the chalice has not been offered since early 2020, people may be more nervous about receiving from it and so will need encouragement and reassurance from their clergy and lay leaders. These points might be useful:

- Even if the Common Cup is being offered, receiving or refraining from receiving the cup of our Lord is the choice of each individual.
- No documented transmission of any infectious disease has ever been traced to the use of the common communion cup, even during the Pandemic. Additionally, between the alcohol content in fortified wine, the antimicrobial properties of silver, and proper technique in turning and wiping the chalice, there is very little probable threat of passing on infectious disease via the chalice.

- The Church has always taught that the fullness of the Sacrament is received in just one element.
- Here is a link to a sermon on this topic from a Parish in the Church of England. It addresses many of the theological, pastoral and practical issues:
<https://www.charlburychurch.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/The-Common-Cup-2023.pdf>

If you are seeking to continue to use individual cups beyond the end of October this year, *incumbents* (including locums) are asked to please write to me by 11 October outlining their reasons. They should also describe their plans for the eventual reintroduction of the Common Cup.

If you are offering individual cups *as an option* (alongside the Common Cup) I ask that you withdraw this option, or to write to me as above if you seek an extension.

A small number of parishes were already using individual cups prior to the pandemic. I ask that the incumbents of these parishes write to me as well to update me on how Holy Communion is being offered in those ministry units.

The long period during which the common cup had to be withdrawn only served to remind us of how precious a thing it is. It is a symbol of our unity in Christ through the sacrament of the Eucharist. I pray that the full restoration of the Common Cup will see us joyfully living into that unity more and more.

Yours faithfully,



Dr Murray Harvey
Bishop of Grafton

