

Guidance for Holy Communion

The Right Revd. Bishop Sophie Jelley

March 2026

In view of the wide diversity of practice regarding the administration of Holy Communion, I have asked that the common cup be reintroduced by Easter day 2026. I have deliberately given this time frame so that the necessary conversations can happen carefully and to allow for appropriate preparation where this means a change from current practice.

However, I do understand that there are some very specific circumstances in which this is especially difficult for certain individual communicants.

For clarity I set out here the expectations around such cases:

1. That the common cup is expected to be the norm.
2. Receiving in one kind (whether bread or wine) is a full receiving of Holy Communion. As Common Worship puts it, 'Communion should normally be received in both kinds separately, but where necessary may be received in one kind, whether of bread or, where the communicant cannot receive solid food, wine.'

Note: this covers a number of possibilities:

- a) declining, for a good reason e.g. health, to consume from a common cup;
 - b) the inability to consume solids (e.g. in communion of the sick)
 - c) an allergy or intolerance to gluten and/or alcohol, where low gluten/dealcoholised alternatives are not available
3. Receiving by 'simultaneous administration'/intinction by the person administering Holy Communion. The bread should not be intincted by individual communicants. Intinction should not be the normal means of administering Holy Communion in a parish. Note that intinction into a single chalice will increase the risk of contamination not only by means of fingers, but also for anyone with a gluten allergy or intolerance.

On the matter of individual cups used at Holy Communion, the guidance of the Legal Advisory Commission states:

'... it is contrary to law for individual cups to be used for each communicant, or for an individual communicant... Even if a shared cup cannot be used for medical reasons, the use of individual cups remains contrary to law and there is no legal basis for a minister to make alternative provision of his or her own that is itself contrary to law. In such cases reception should be in one kind only.'

To be clear, both the Book of Common Prayer and Common Worship teach that that for whatever reason, 'Believers who cannot physically receive the sacrament are to be assured that they are partakers by faith of the body and blood of Christ and of the benefits he conveys to us by them.' in other words, 'Spiritual Communion' is a perfectly valid way to participate in the Eucharist.

I hope that this serves to clarify. Moving forward, we will refine our guidance around Holy Communion and other matters of liturgical practice and make it available on our website. For now, I would be grateful if all those with responsibility for liturgical practice in parishes use this guidance as the basis of the conversations taking place.