

Eucharistic Visitor Training Video Script

Once, when I was visiting a man in his home, I began to set up a spot on the coffee table between us in order for us to share communion. I spread a white cloth and placed the chalice and paten on it. As he watched me do so, he suddenly gasped, and tears washed down his cheek. "I remember this. The last time someone brought me communion when I was not in church, it was on the hood of an army jeep in Korea."

Sharing communion is an event that can transcend time and space and evoke deep memories. And being the minister who shares the gift of communion is one that will nourish and feed you as much as it will those you serve. So first and foremost, thank you for seeking to serve in this particular ministry of taking Communion to those who cannot make it to church.

Because serving as a Eucharistic visitor is one that is canonically authorized by the bishop, this video outlines my basic expectations for those who seek to participate in this life-giving ministry in our diocese. This video is not meant to be exhaustive or exclusive, but to be used in conjunction with the formation given to you by your local clergy. Time together with your clergy in order to know local customs and procedures is essential. If you are serving at a church without a priest, then this video will provide the necessary information in order for my office to license you to serve as a Eucharistic Visitor in your congregation. And just in case, if your church is not currently served by a priest, you will need consent from your vestry along with your request for licensure.

Why would the canons of our church license this particular ministry? Quite simply, because the extension of the Holy Eucharist that is shared in church to those who are unable to get to there is vital to our mission and it is a ministry that can be traced back to the earliest days of the Christian church.

There are two videos. The first includes background information about the ministry and then describes the details of a visit. The second is an unnarrated "role play" of what a eucharistic visit can look like. Along with the videos are links to two documents for your use. One is a sample liturgy that can be used; the other is the transcript of this video. So, let's get started. Let us pray.

Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated to you; and then use us, we pray, as you will, and always to your glory and the welfare of your people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN. (BCP 832)

Just now I said that this ministry is vital to our mission. Let me say a word or two about that. The Church is called 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 his fellowship the outcast, the lost and the

last. One of the most remarkable passages in the Gospels concerns Jesus' teaching about ministering to the least among us:

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

As a Eucharistic Visitor you have the unique privilege of extending communion to those "who for reasonable cause cannot be present at a public celebration of the Eucharist" [BCP p.396]

When you go, you will already have been nurtured and renewed through your own participation at the Eucharist, and you will be sent forth by the gathered body to extend that experience to those unable to be present in the church building. You are a "Christ-bearer" connecting those whom you are visiting with the corporate Body of Christ. Your 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 and wine is not a Eucharist, it is a time of prayer and worship and of receiving the real presence of Christ in the sacrament of your visit as well as the administration of communion. Whatever is done and said during that visit will be "church" for those you visit: you have the privilege of being a link that keeps those you serve connected to their larger parish family.

In our expression of Christian worship, we believe that words alone do not communicate 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 sacrament. Your visit should be understood as one that rests in what you share as much as the spoken word.

Thus, it is important to understand that your visit is not a social one, nor is it a time for extended conversation. This is a visit to extend the sacramental gift of communion. Your visit should be scheduled and introduced as one that will not take an excessive amount of time. By all means, once you arrive a brief "holy conversation" is appropriate.

Your visit shall always be scheduled in conversation with your church's clergy. Most frequently, you will be visiting someone in their home. In cases that you go to the hospital or a nursing home, it is imperative that you abide by the policies and procedures of where you visit. Be attentive to the nurses and staff. I have often found that they will gladly make time and room for your visit. On a few occasions, some have even joined in.

Your visit always begins before you arrive with prayer and taking the time to ponder the sanctity of your ministry. Here is one idea for a prayer.

Make me in instrument of your peace. Open my mind, O Lord, to the influence of your blessed wisdom. Open my heart to the guidance of your Holy spirit. Teach me what you would have me know about suffering. Let knowledge chase away my preconceptions and misconceptions; let love animate the understanding I gain. This I ask in the name of your Son, Jesus. Amen

When you go, you should take with you the following: A Communion Kit that contains [point] a small cruet of wine and a pyx with enough consecrated wafers, a corporal, a purificator, a chalice and paten. How this is prepared for you varies, and usually should involve the altar guild and clergy.

In many cases this kit will be placed on the altar at your church building prior to the time it will be consecrated during a public service. Many churches connect this ministry to the worship at church by sending forth their Eucharistic visitors from worship with a commendation prayer near the end of the service.

Before you go, make sure you have sufficient copies of the service you will use so that everyone present can have one. You may also leave a copy for someone if they ask to keep it. It is helpful for the font size of the service to be large enough for people to read it.

Lectionary Readings for the day.

A copy of the Sunday bulletin is a welcome gift and a tangible way to express the connection to the worship service.

It is also helpful to wear a nametag designating your name, church and ministry.

It can also be helpful to confirm the visit on the day you plan to go. Quite often, due to their life situation, the visit may need to be rescheduled. This brings me to an essential guiding principle: Respecting the dignity of the person you are visiting. Give them the option to accept, postpone or refuse a visit. You are the guest. And as a pastoral visitor keep in mind the following:

- +Observe healthy personal boundaries
- +Avoid visits at mealtimes
- +Make thoughtful conversation but remember the power of silence.
- +While not of the same level as the confidentiality that clergy hold, this is still a confidential visit and is not the fodder for conversation with family and friends.
- +And because of the pandemic, be prepared, if necessary, to wear a mask.

When you arrive fellowship and conversation can and should precede the service. But once the service begins, it should not be interrupted by informal conversation. And leaving soon after the

service concludes will honor the sanctity of the time shared in worship. Once your initial conversation ebbs, it is fitting to ask "Would you now like to share communion?"

With permission given, set the area for communion. Doing so in silence begins to set the tone for worship. If they want to talk, honor that, but keep focused on making the transition to worship.

Setting up may involve clearing a space for the elements. Be mindful of the context---whether they are in a bed or sitting in a chair. Move the furniture as needed. It is important to create a space which is uncluttered so that the bread and wine can be given proper reverence and visibility. Clear a small area on a table or surface by relocating any items. Try to remember how everything is situated so that you can return the area to the way you found it. Again, this is a way to respect their dignity. Per the rubrics in our prayer book, the paten and chalice should be set on a small white linen that should be included in the communion kit. No other appointments are required. You do not need candles or crosses.

Offer your host the service bulletin. It can be useful to take a few minutes to review the service pointing out portions when they will be invited to join in. If using a lectionary insert, show them the lesson you will read. Only one is recommended. Such attention to the length of the service is a matter of respect in a time when they may be in diminished capacity. In all you do, be mindful and attentive to weakened hearing or eyesight.

Your church may have its own liturgy for you to use. If not, with this video is one suggested for your use entitled "Communion for the Sick & Homebound: Form to be used by Eucharistic Visitors," Remember, you are not performing a "mini- Mass." Rather, you are bringing a sacrament already consecrated to be shared with a fellow disciple.

Once the table is set and you have reviewed the service to be used, you might invite a brief time of silence before you begin. Sitting with someone is more pastoral than 'lording' over them. Thus, it is suggested to remain seated rather than standing when leading this service. Staying at the same eye level encourages intimacy and assists in hearing the words.

As an aside, others present should always be invited to join in the service.

When you begin, speak slowly, carefully and loudly. After the scripture reading, you may tell the person being visited about the sermon which was preached during Eucharist. The Nicene Creed can follow, and then prayers should be offered. But again, be mindful of time and capacity.

A word about prayers. You can use a prepared version, or you might pause and ask for the intent and focus for a prayer. And then pray extemporaneously repeating and expanding on what was said. If you try this, do not worry about eloquence or theology. Be you. The Laying on of hands and anointing

of oil is appropriate as a form of prayer and is available to the ministry of the laity. That ritual is beyond the focus of this training. If you want to know more about anointing and prayer, talk to your clergy.

And regarding prayers, remember too the resource of the Book of Common Prayer. Be familiar with the portion of the book titled Ministry of the Sick, especially the collects in the section Prayers for the Sick on pages 458 to 461.

If the Confession of Sin is said together, a special form of absolution is said by using the first-person pronoun of "us" versus "you."

At the time of the administration of communion, it is recommended that you also participate. You are sharing this gift with them, not just giving it to them.

A few practical matters about the actual administration of communion.

Assess any physical needs regarding receiving the bread or wine. Due to diminished capacity, it may be that you will need to dip the bread into the wine for them, and then place it in their mouth. Due to diet restrictions, it might be that they cannot receive wine. If so, emphasize that we believe that communion is still fully received in one kind.

Because the cup is small, if they choose to sip from the cup, invite them to take it from you in order to do so.

If necessary, bread may be broken to accommodate more than the planned number of communicants. Normally you will serve everyone else first, and then yourself thereby enabling you to consume any remaining bread and wine.

After everyone has received communion, any remaining sacrament should be consumed in a reverent manner. The paten should be wiped clean. The chalice should be rinsed and dried before returning it to the case. Do not worry about the custom of consecrated wine being returned directly to the earth. Go to a sink, and quietly rinse and dry the chalice. Return the area cleared for communion as you found it. Be thankful to your host and leave as soon as possible after the conclusion of the service. Again, this honors the sanctity of worship.

Return the communion kit to the church as soon as you can. When you do, record the visit in the parish worship register. Record keeping is an important part of ministry. Coordinate how to do this with your clergy. And too, it is very important to communicate to your clergy any pastoral issues concerns or questions that arose in the visit.

Finally, take some time to reflect on your visit; examine your own attitudes and feelings; consider what went well and what could be improved and pray.

A few final dos and don'ts. While the focus of your visit is to extend communion, it is a pastoral visit. As such remember the following as advice for anyone involved with the ministry of pastoral care:

Do:

- Listen more than you talk. Allow for silence.
- Pay attention to facial expressions and body language
- Practice hospitality, be sensitive to time, space, and conversation

Do not:

- Overstay your visit
- Sit on their bed if they are in it
- Stare at medical equipment
- look at your watch
- Text or use your phone [do make sure your ringer is off]
- Interrupt or finish their sentences for them
- Talk too much about your experiences

You have been invited into a very intimate ministry that happens during the most vulnerable times in a person's life. Your presence is far more important than getting it "right"

Ministry is always about the gift of grace. And because it is about grace, God will make more of it than we can ever ask or imagine. Trust yourself. Trust God. And go in peace to love and serve the Lord.