

From the Chaplain...

When the first Covid lockdown began almost exactly three years ago, few of us could imagine what difficult days lay ahead. Over the course of the pandemic, both the UK and the world at large endured great loss and upheaval. Of course, Covid is still with us, but we have gradually come to terms with its presence in our lives. At the Chaplaincy Council meeting on 7 March, therefore, I proposed that two Chapel practices should be revised, both of which originated during the pandemic. The first was the introduction of one-use service booklets on Sunday mornings in place of reusable service booklets and hymnals, in order to minimise the spread of Covid through objects being handled by multiple people. The second was the introduction of Holy Communion through intinction by the priest, that is, Communion offered in the form of a host (wafer) dipped in the chalice and then offered to communicants standing up. During the pandemic, this practice was recommended by the Diocese as a means of offering the Sacrament in both kinds while minimising possible infection through use of the common cup.

Although Covid remains a reality about which we must never be complacent, I believe that in both cases it is appropriate to resume our pre-Covid practices. As such, and with the Chaplaincy Council's agreement, I will reintroduce the use of reusable service booklets and hymnals at Sunday services after Easter. We will continue to have a service sheet, too, but this will contain only the readings and other information that changes from week to week. We will still print one-use booklets for special occasions, such as Carols, Christmas, and Easter. Although there have been advantages to producing one-use booklets every week, the environmental and economic impact of doing so makes this practice increasingly problematic.

The Chaplaincy Council has also broadly endorsed my proposal to resume the distribution of Holy Communion in both kinds at the altar rail. This return to former practice will take effect from Easter Sunday. In making this change, I am mindful that there will be some who remain uncomfortable or anxious about sharing the common cup. It is therefore important to emphasise that receiving in one kind only (the host) remains a legitimate alternative and constitutes full Holy Communion. Those who wish to receive in one kind only should feel fully supported in doing so. What the experience of Covid has taught us, however, is that individual intinction (dipping one's own host in the chalice) is the least hygienic practice of all, and as such, this will not be an option available at the Chapel.

I appreciate that these changes will require a period of adjustment, and I am always available to discuss them with anyone who wishes to. While the worst of the pandemic may be over, we must not forget the critical lessons about public health that we learned in the process. If circumstances require us to think again about these changes, we will certainly do so. Meanwhile, I invite you to join me in approaching this time of transition in a spirit of hope and mutual care.

Yours faithfully,
Robert

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