

Basic Guidance concerning the Celebration of the Holy Eucharist

Introduction

Since earliest Christian times the word Eucharist, which comes from the Greek word for 'thanksgiving', has been used to describe the sacrament that Jesus Christ instituted at the last supper. In faithfulness to our Lord's instruction to 'do this in remembrance of me' the Eucharist was accordingly regarded as an essential part of worship in the early church and today it remains the central liturgical activity of the baptised.

The Eucharist is not, and should not be seen as, exclusive. As the command of Christ to His followers, Holy Communion draws us together into his presence. Without losing a sense of mystery which remains at the heart of the sacrament, it is possible for all to feel included as we gather around the Lord's Table. Resources for all-age celebrations of the Eucharist and guidelines for children and communion are available on the Church in Wales' website.

Today, the celebration of the Eucharist as our principal act of worship is the public face of the Church, its shop window, so to speak, and as such we should endeavour to make the Eucharist an occasion worthy of our calling. The notes and pointers in this document are intended to encourage this. Nothing that follows should be a great revelation; but will hopefully act as a helpful reminder, whether we be ordained or lay.

General Guidelines

1. The fundamental rule is that worship (the offering of our praise – or worth-ship - to God) is intended to give glory to God and to draw the faithful into a grace filled, life-giving relationship with God. All things that contribute to this goal are positive; all things that distract are negative. Whatever your church tradition, the plainest and simplest worship may be life giving; self-consciously fussy and showy worship of any kind will detract. It is fundamentally about *encounter not performance*.
2. The central focus of the liturgy is not the priest, but Christ himself. Any worship which directs the attention of the faithful towards the priest distracts rather than enhances that central relationship.
3. All things should be done with appropriate reverence and dignity. All liturgy should be well prepared, and in its execution the primary goals should be integrity and grace marked by a sense of celebration. Even if there is a mistake, everything should be done to minimise the impact of the error and maintain the forward motion of the liturgy.
4. Worship in its fullest sense is about engaging the whole person: heart, mind and action. The fullest use of the all the senses can be encouraged appropriately with the drama of the liturgy enriched through sight, sound, smell, taste and touch. Examples include liturgical colour, iconography, hymns, incense, communion, and sharing the peace.

Music

5. The primary focus of the worship is God, and the music needs to serve, rather than govern, the liturgy. *Encounter not performance* is perhaps most essentially applied here. The music must never be allowed to detract from the liturgy, which is the work of the whole people of God. Music should enhance and serve, and should never interfere with the progress of the liturgy.

Posture

6. We are physical beings: the way in which we deport ourselves can add to or detract from the worship. Clergy should be familiar with all the main gestures of prayer (orans, bowing, genuflection, making the sign of the cross, the blessing) whatever their tradition, so that they may execute them, if required, with dignity and grace. It is important to walk with dignity, in a purposeful but unhurried manner, with hands still, possibly clasped together in front, so as not to intrude upon worship.
7. Actions and gestures at an eastward-facing altar will be different in style to a westward facing position. The size of the building will also be another factor in determining the style of action and gesture. In whatever environment, however, all actions should be simple, clearly seen and understood by all. *[See Appendix, note 1, for guidance on eastward / westward facing celebrations.]*
8. Good liturgy is not about the imposition of spectacle (or ego) but serving the worship of God and the needs of the congregation. Where practical, for example, the seating arrangements of the altar party should seek to make the role of the president clear.

Vesture

9. The Anglican tradition permits a wide range of vesture. Whilst it is important to note that the Church in Wales does not attach any particular doctrinal significance to any particular vestment, the use of robes for Eucharistic worship is part of the tradition of worship that Anglicans have inherited. Whatever vestments it may be the tradition of a church to use, vesture should always be clean, in good repair, and fit the person wearing them. All clergy should be familiar with the full range of liturgical habit, and understand their history and use. Likewise the sequence of liturgical colours should be known, taught and understood. *[See Appendix for notes on the liturgical year.]*
10. The tradition of worship is not a plaything given to any priest or minister for them to abandon or indulge. We should be ever aware that the treasury of the past is available to enhance the present. It would be good to think that basic rules are well known, but copes have been observed being worn over chasubles, stoles over hoods, scarves with albs. *[For guidance, see Appendix, note 2.]*

Dressing the Altar

11. Again, a wide variety of practice is observed, but a basic rule should be elegance. However their altar is dressed, clergy should ensure that they and their congregation are familiar with the reasons why. The fair linen cloth should be clean and ironed. The sanctuary and its environs should be particularly clean and uncluttered as befits a focal point for devotion. The altar should be reserved exclusively for its liturgical purpose.

The Celebration of the Liturgy

12. The practice of a single presiding celebrant throughout the liturgy is to be commended and encouraged. This, however, does not mean that all parts of the liturgy belong to the priest alone. Those organising celebrations of the Eucharist should know and be able to apply the parts which normally belong to the priest, to the deacon, and to the laity. *[See Appendix, note 3.]*
13. The use of silence is something to be encouraged. An atmosphere of welcome and of quiet, prayerful, preparation and anticipation should enhance the time before the Eucharist and at appropriate times in the liturgy itself. Silence needs to be judged and purposeful and the worshipping community helped to appreciate its value. *[See Appendix, note 4, for ways to build the use of silence.]*
14. The liturgy should proceed at a pace neither too slow nor too fast. Words should be clearly articulated to bring out their meaning, without being over-dramatised.
15. The use of “you” in the absolution should not be understood as setting the celebrant apart from the congregation and from his or her own need for God’s forgiveness; it exercises the priestly duty to pronounce God’s absolution to the people seeking God’s forgiveness, and is integral to the authority taught in scripture and conferred at priestly ordination.
16. The lectern is rightly to be viewed as the appropriate focal point for the Ministry of the Word and the altar for the Ministry of the Sacrament. The Gospel book may be placed on the altar on its own at the start of the Eucharist but should not be replaced on the altar after the proclamation of the Gospel.
17. The Gospel is normally proclaimed by a deacon, where available. It is fitting for the congregation to stand to greet the proclamation of the Gospel and to face the lector. In line with the tradition of a church, a Gospel procession into the body of the nave is commended, as is any other liturgical action that will emphasise the honour given to the Gospel and which will provide due dignity to its proclamation. As the Gospel is itself the focus of any Gospel procession, it is inappropriate for a processional cross to be used here. The Gospeller may introduce the Gospel reading with the greeting ‘The Lord be with you’ to which the people respond ‘And also with you’.

18. The practice of naming the bishop in the intercessions was originally intended to be a reminder of our communion with the diocesan. While it is appropriate on occasion to also pray for the leadership of the worldwide or local church, these petitions should not be conflated with prayer for the diocesan bishop.
19. Where more than one cleric is available in the leading of the Eucharist, it is not necessary for the celebrant to do all the preparation and clearing of the altar. Assisting clergy can assist by freeing the celebrant for prayer. Where available, it is the function of a deacon to prepare and clear the altar.
20. When a Eucharist is concelebrated the president and concelebrants should ensure careful preparation so that their liturgical actions at the Eucharistic prayer express the unity of the priesthood that this form of celebration seeks to express. Concelebrants should take part quietly to allow the principal concelebrant to be heard.
21. All clergy should be familiar with correct use of altar linen for communion. *[See Appendix, note 5.]*
22. It is part of the Lambeth Quadrilateral that in celebrating (Baptism and) the Eucharist, they be “ministered with unfailing use of Christ’s words of institution and of the elements ordained by him”. In no circumstances should these be varied. Clergy in the Church in Wales are also required to use the authorised forms of Eucharistic prayer, ensuring uniformity of liturgy and doctrine.
23. Where the distribution at a celebration of the Eucharist includes elements from the reserved sacrament these should only be brought to the altar after the end of the Eucharistic prayer. For communion by extension, see guidelines on the Church in Wales website. *[See Appendix, note 6.]*

Receiving Holy Communion

24. Celebrants should always receive communion at their celebrations, after the invitation to communion and before communicating the people.
25. People should be well instructed in the appropriate way to receive communion, and visitors should be acquainted with the Eucharistic discipline of the Church in Wales.
26. The Church in Wales offers Eucharistic hospitality to fellow Christians who visit our Churches and share in our worship. In terms of formal canon law, such hospitality is offered to all members of the Covenanting Churches of Wales, but by custom it now extends to a wider circle to all baptised and communicant members of Trinitarian Churches in good standing, but that is not to everyone. We do not, for example, offer communion to the unbaptised. Appropriate guidance should be offered or available in printed format to assist visitors, especially at special services such as Confirmations. “All those used to receiving Communion in other Christian Churches are also welcome to receive communion at our service today” would be an appropriate invitation to issue.

27. Careful consideration needs to be made about whether to permit communicants to intinct, i.e. to receive the Eucharistic bread, and then to carry it to the chalice, and to dip it themselves into the cup. The health risks associated with germs carried on the fingers are greater than sharing in the one cup. Self-intinction should not be permitted. When intinction is necessary, it should be administered by the Eucharistic minister.
28. The Order for the Holy Eucharist provides the form for consecrating additional bread and wine should this be required at the distribution. According to ancient practice it is permissible to add unconsecrated wine to any remaining consecrated wine in a chalice, should this be necessary for instant distribution. However, the consecration of additional elements is best avoided, with care taken to ensure adequate supplies of bread and wine are provided at the Offertory.
29. Where reception of Communion might not be appropriate, the alternative of a blessing should be offered and clear guidance given. It is extremely useful if people are invited to give a clear signal when approaching the altar that they are seeking a blessing, perhaps by crossing their arms across their chest, or by carrying a service book.

Lay involvement in the liturgy

30. As the Eucharist is the work of all the people of God, the laity should be as widely used in the celebration of the liturgy as possible.
31. Those reading the Bible in church services should be familiar with basic rules concerning reading in public worship:
 - To ensure consistency in the announcement of the lessons, the correct names of the books of the Bible and the form of announcing them should be rehearsed and well known beforehand. *[See Appendix, note 7.]*
 - To ensure accuracy and dignity, readings should be read from a Bible or a lectionary, rather than from a printed sheet.
 - Readings should be read with clarity and sensitivity, neither too hasty nor too slow, and passages should have been checked beforehand, so that readers can seek advice for awkward words and pronunciations before the service begins.
 - The opening of readings should be checked so that they start in an intelligible way, e.g. not “and he said,” but, “Jesus said”, or as appropriate.
32. Similarly, the intercessions need to be prepared very carefully, and delivered in a clear and deliberate voice, keeping petitions short and simple, and rooted in the needs of the church, world and community. Intercessions are petitions or biddings followed by silence, to allow those praying to make their own related silent petitions, so the use of silence is particularly important.
33. The congregation should be encouraged to participate with the responses with confidence and enthusiasm. A spirit of celebration is particularly to be encouraged at the ‘Great Amen’ at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer in order to provide a resounding conclusion to this prayer.

34. Care should be taken to instruct sidespersons and churchwardens in the effective ushering of people forward for communion so that communicants move smoothly up to and away from the point of distribution without any unnecessary hiatus or confusion.
35. In all matters relating to the celebration of the Eucharist, participating laity should conform to the directions of the celebrant and act in accordance with the rubrics of the particular parochial setting.
36. All participating laity should consider arriving a good while, perhaps twenty minutes, before the start of the celebration of the Eucharist to allow adequate time for preparation.
37. If a mistake is made, DO NOT PANIC; correct the error as unobtrusively as possible, and move on with reverence.
38. For any necessary movement around the church during the service, follow the directions and actions of the celebrant. For example, when the procession arrives before the altar, all members of the altar party should bow and / or genuflect with the celebrant. Wherever possible, processions should move through the body of the church.

The Liturgical Year

39. There is much scope for the liturgical seasons of the year to be emphasised in the Eucharist in a sensitive and imaginative way, interwoven in the liturgy through word and action and symbol.
40. Separate seasonal booklets for the congregation, with the appropriate responses, kyries, introductions to the peace, prefaces, blessings, etc. for the season, may be produced, to avoid confusion. Alternatively a bespoke weekly booklet, or an all season book with gaps to allow for seasonal inserts may be appropriate.
41. Processions to mark the liturgical year should be conducted with appropriate reverence and their meaning fully explained.
42. Appropriate seasonal resources are provided by the Church in Wales. *[See Appendix, note 8.]*

Advent

43. The liturgical colour for Advent is violet, except for the third Sunday of Advent (Gaudete Sunday) when Rose may be used.
44. It is the custom of the Church not to decorate the building with flowers during Advent and Lent, although greenery in Advent may sometimes be appropriate as a sign of the coming Incarnation.
45. Resources are available through the internet on the use of Advent wreaths and Jesse Trees in Advent.
46. Traditionally, the Gloria is omitted in Advent.

47. The 'O' Antiphons may be appropriate for use between the 17th and 23rd December.
48. Advent Carol services are most suitable on the first Sunday of Advent, but may take place later on in the season, if necessary.

Christmas and Epiphany

49. Christmas Carol services frequently anticipate the season of Christmas. It is good pastoral practice to allow these services to take place during Advent for community groups such as schools, whilst ensuring that the Sunday liturgy retains the sense of anticipation. [See Appendix, note 9]
50. The Christmas crib may be blessed during a crib service on Christmas Eve or at the first Eucharist of Christmas. The wise men are introduced at the Feast of the Epiphany.
51. The liturgical colour for Christmas and Epiphany is white or gold.
52. The Christmas Crib should remain in place until the Presentation of Christ, when the Christmas season is brought to an end.

Lent

53. The 'Gloria in Excelsis' is omitted during Lent, except on feast days and on Maundy Thursday.
54. 'Alleluia' is omitted during Lent, until the Easter Vigil when the resurrection is proclaimed.
55. The imposition of ashes is recommended for use on Ash Wednesday.
56. The Liturgical colour for Lent is violet (or Lent Array), except for the fourth Sunday of Lent (Laetare Sunday) when Rose may be used. During Passiontide red is an alternative to violet.

Holy Week

57. On Palm Sunday, the Liturgy of the Palms can be used, followed by the reading of the Passion.
58. Congregations should be encouraged to participate as fully as possible in the liturgy during Holy Week, as an aid to greater faith and devotion at Easter.
59. The foot washing ceremony on Maundy Thursday is recommended as part of the Liturgy.
60. The Eucharist of the Last Supper on Maundy Thursday should not be confused with the celebration of a Jewish-style Seder meal. Care should be taken to avoid combining the two, since this respects neither the Jewish nor the Christian tradition.
61. The correct liturgical colour for Maundy Thursday is white.

62. Unless the sacrament is to be reserved for the Eucharist on Good Friday, it should be consumed at the Maundy Thursday Eucharist.

Easter

63. The ancient ceremonies of the Easter Vigil are to be recommended for use late on Easter Eve or early on Easter morning, as an integral part of the Easter celebrations of the Church. These should not be confused with early morning 'sunrise services', as the imagery of the liturgy is likely to be lost.
64. The Paschal Candle should be placed prominently near to the altar during the Easter Season and then moved to the font at the end of Pentecost Sunday. It is then lit for baptisms and may be placed at the head of the coffin at funerals.
65. The Liturgical colour for Easter is gold or white. The Alleluia acclamations (and Easter Anthems, where appropriate) should be used during the Easter season.

Pentecost

66. The liturgical colour for Pentecost is Red.

Ordinary Time

67. The liturgical colour for Ordinary Time is green. The liturgical colour for Saints and for Trinity Sunday is white, or red for martyrs. The liturgical colour for the Kingdom season (with the exception of All Saints Day, which is white) is more correctly red although green may be used.

Appendix Notes

1. A different style for eastward and westward facing celebrations of the Eucharist is necessary to bring out the meaning of the liturgy. The eastward celebration emphasises a hierarchical model of priesthood: the priest leading prayer on behalf of the people. The westward celebration is focussed on a more collegiate model: the priest celebrating together with the people. It is appropriate, therefore, at an eastward facing celebration, for the priest to turn to face the people when addressing the people (e.g. at the *Sursum Corda*) and to face the altar when addressing God. To avoid the rather fussy practice of 'moving the book,' the Gospel book should remain on the Gospel side (the north side) of the altar and be removed after the Gospel is read to an adjoining table where it remains visible, retaining the sense of unity between word and sacrament.
2. The correct use of vestments enhances worship through the use of colour and imagery, and provides an element of Anglican liturgical uniformity, enabling the worshipper to recognise the focus of the service wherever it takes place. Incorrect use of vestments can detract from the worship.
 - a. Eucharist. A priest should wear an alb or surplice and a stole of the correct liturgical colour. A chasuble of the correct liturgical colour may be worn over an alb and stole, but not over a surplice. A deacon should wear an alb and stole in the correct colour (worn over the left shoulder). A dalmatic may be worn over the alb and stole. When licensed Readers are assisting at the Eucharist they should be either robed in cassock, surplice and blue scarf, or in an alb; but not in an alb and blue scarf.
 - b. Morning and Evening Prayer. Choir dress for clergy: cassock and surplice with black scarf, and hood, if desired (the scarf worn over the hood). If preferred, a cotta may be worn with a cassock. Readers should wear a cassock and surplice with a blue scarf.
3. Role of bishop, priest, deacon and laity at the Eucharist: The Church in Wales Eucharist 2004 has the following notes: "When the bishop is present, it is normal for him to preside over celebrations of the Eucharist and to preach. Even when he does not preside, he pronounces the Absolution and the Blessing. As far as possible, the bishop or priest should be seen to preside over the whole of the Eucharist in order to emphasise the unity of the service. When circumstances require it, a deacon or reader may lead the service to the end of the Intercession, amending the Absolution by substituting "us/our" for "you/your." It is the duty of the deacon to proclaim the Gospel, to prepare the elements of bread and wine, to administer Holy Communion, and to dismiss the people. In addition the deacon may carry in the Book of the Gospels at the beginning of the service, preach the Sermon when licensed to do so and lead the Intercession. The Eucharist is the action of the whole people of God. The ministry of the members of the congregation is expressed by means of their active participation throughout the liturgy, and by some of them reading the scripture passages in the Proclamation of the Word and leading the Intercession. A licensed reader may preach and licensed eucharistic assistants may assist in the administration of the Communion."

4. Guidelines on encouraging the use of silence: Silence is commended following the readings and during the intercessions to enable people to bring their own thoughts and prayers before God. Silence is to be encouraged where indicated in the liturgy, including as part of the penitential rite. Silence is also commended in the preparation for worship. The prospect of silence may be daunting for some and often this is best introduced as stillness, a calming of the mind in order to focus on God. Short prayers, such as the 'Jesus prayer' ('Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me, a sinner,' gradually shortened until only the word 'Jesus' remains) could be recommended as helpful.
5. Guidelines for the correct use of altar linen. The following article from Project Canterbury is dated, but still accurate and comprehensive:
<http://anglicanhistory.org/england/misc/richards1932/>
6. Communion by extension: the following guidance notes are issued in the Church in Wales 'Holy Communion outside the Eucharist.' This Order is intended for use only in exceptional circumstances. It should therefore be used only with the knowledge and permission on each occasion of the bishop. The minister is either a deacon or a lay person who has been duly licensed for this purpose by the bishop. Whenever possible, the consecrated bread and wine should be brought directly, in vessels manufactured for this purpose, from the celebration of the Holy Eucharist to the Church where they are to be administered. The minister should conduct the service from either the reading desk or a lectern, approaching the Holy Table immediately before the administration of the sacrament and leaving it immediately afterwards.
7. Guidelines on the correct form of announcing lessons: An Old Testament or New Testament Reading may either be introduced by simply announcing the Book, together with the Chapter and verse where the reading begins (e.g. 'The Book of the Prophet Isaiah, chapter 6, verse 8'), or with the words 'A reading from...' Where the reading begins at the start of a chapter the verse number is omitted. For the correct titles of books of the Bible, consult the contents pages of the Bible. The Gospel is announced according to the rubric in the Church in Wales Holy Eucharist 1984 (e.g. 'Hear the holy Gospel according to St. Luke') or 2004 (Listen to the Gospel of Christ according to St. John)
8. Seasonal resource references may be found in Church in Wales Holy Eucharist 2004 and the Church in Wales *Times and Seasons* material which is due for publication in 2016.
9. There are various anomalies encountered when using carols before Christmas Day, for example, the use of the verse 'Yea, Lord, we greet thee...' at the end of 'O Come all ye faithful' should be confined to Christmas Day (or the first Eucharist of Christmas). Prior to that date the verse might be changed to 'born that happy morning', but consideration should be given to omitting it altogether.