Guidelines for



EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS
OF HOLY COMMUNION

St. John
Henry Newman
Parish

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Introduction

First of all, many thanks for agreeing to undertake
this important Ministry within our parish,
either at Mass itself and/or by taking the Blessed Sacrament
to parishioners in their homes.

You might wish to add an extra prayer to your daily prayers,
asking God to guide you as you exercise this ministry
and pray for those who you minister to.

You are holding Jesus Himself just as
Our Blessed Lady held Him in her arms.

The Aim of these guidelines is to help you reflect
on this ministry you are undertaking and
to give you some practical guidance as well.

It is not exhaustive so please do ask questions!

Like any ministry in the Parish, you are appointed by the Parish Priest.

I pray that you will feel blessed also as you bring Jesus
to members of our faith family.

God bless,

Father Craig

Role Description for E.M.H.C

Appointed by and Responsible to: The Parish Priest

Report to: Parish Priest / NOW Group

Function: To assist with the distribution of Holy Communion.

This could be within the context of the Mass or taking Holy Communion to the sick.

Main Responsibilities:

To administer Holy Communion not only within the Mass but also (when agreed) to those in the community who are housebound due to health, age or disability or for whatever reason are unable to attend the local church.

To follow the instructions given by the Diocese for the reverent conveying of the Blessed Sacrament and to follow the appropriate format for administration of Holy Communion.

To respect the boundaries and regulations of the organisation when visiting people either in hospital or a residential home, particularly by notifying someone in a supervisory position of your presence there.

To be respectful of the homes of people in the community.

To be willing to administer Holy Communion prayerfully.

To have a willingness to talk with the people to whom the Sacrament is being brought recognising them as part of the Body of Christ.

To ensure that this ministry is conducted in accordance with the safeguarding policies and procedures of the Catholic Church in England and Wales as administered by the Archdiocese of Birmingham.

A duty to promote safe practices, minimise risks of abuse and take action to report concerns and allegations in line with national guidelines.

Person Specification:

Be a person of faith and prayer, aware of the call to service and ministry of the Church.

To have reverence for the Eucharist.

To have full acceptance of the Church's teaching on the Eucharist.

To be available to bring the Eucharist on a regular basis to those in need (as agreed).

To recognise that Jesus is present in the Eucharist and in the people to whom it is being given.

To have the ability to show courtesy and respect within the homes of other people.

Be over 18 years of age and attend Mass each weekend.

Be willing to undergo the pre-recruitment checks and training required by the Church and to adhere to safeguarding guidance.

Being nourished in faith

At Mass the faithful are nourished by the Ministry of the Word and of the Eucharist. These two realities, Word and Eucharist, are closely related. The Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood is a Sacrament of faith and faith has its origin and sustenance in the Word.

The Church is nourished spiritually at the table of God's Word and at the table of the Eucharist: from the one it grows in wisdom and from the other in holiness.

In the Word of God the divine covenant is announced; in the Eucharist the new and everlasting covenant is renewed.

The spoken Word of God brings to mind the history of salvation; the Eucharist embodies it in the sacramental signs of the liturgy.

It can never be forgotten, therefore, that the divine Word read and proclaimed by the Church in the liturgy has as its one goal the Sacrifice of the New Covenant and the banquet of grace, that is, the Eucharist.

The celebration of Mass in which the Word is heard and the Eucharist is offered forms but one single act of divine worship. That act offers the sacrifice of praise to God and makes available to God's creatures the fullness of redemption.

The History of the E.M.H.C. Ministry

This ministry arose out of necessity. In the early Church ordained clergy were in short supply and the restrictions on who could distribute Holy Communion were more relaxed. It was usual for a sick person to ask a friend to bring Holy Communion to them. One of the early martyrs, St. Tarcisius was killed while bringing Holy Communion to the sick as an acolyte.

By the Middle Ages the pendulum had swung to the other extreme, and the Ministry was restricted to bishops and priests – even deacons were classed as extraordinary ministers.

This period was also marked by an infrequent reception of Holy Communion by the faithful who, although they might attend church every weekend, would only receive Holy Communion once a year, usually during Easter celebrations. This situation continued until the early years of the twentieth century when in 1905 Pope Pius X started promoting regular Holy Communion among the faithful.

Following the liturgical changes of the Second Vatican Council and the restoration of the chalice to the people the Ministry of distribution of Holy Communion was also opened up. Deacons, as ordained ministers of the Church, came into the fold of Ordinary Minsters of Holy Communion.

The Council and Pope Paul VI felt it opportune to permit bishops to appoint lay people to assist with the distribution of Holy Communion as Extraordinary Ministers – extraordinary in the sense that they were 'out of the ordinary'. The change was difficult for many older Catholics who had been brought up that only a priest would touch the consecrated host with his hands. The communicant would receive the body of Christ directly on their tongue – they would not even touch the sacred vessels.

The Nature of the E.M.H.C. Ministry.

The Ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion still remain the bishop, priest and deacon - however:

"The faithful who are special ministers of communion
must be persons whose good qualities of Christian life,
faith and morals recommend them.

Let them strive to be worthy of this great office,
foster their own devotion to the Eucharist,
and show an example to the rest of the faithful
by their own devotion and reverence
toward the most august sacrament of the altar.

No one is to be chosen whose appointment
the faithful might find disquieting".

Immensae caritatis.

The Eucharist is at the core of our faith. A minister is a person of faith, who believes in God, follows Christ and trusts in the Holy Spirit – and has a genuine love of the Eucharist so that they can share that love with their Catholic brothers and sisters. In carrying out their ministry they follow in the footsteps of the disciples obeying the Lord's command feed the faithful (Mark 6: 31-44).

What must I do before I begin this Ministry

First of all, complete the Safer Recruitment Process. This will be overseen by the Parish Safeguarding Rep who will guide you.

If you would like more information on the process then please click on this link to the Safer-Recruitment-Flowchart-DBS-Role.pdf for further information, but please don't worry, our Parish Safeguarding Representative will guide you through the whole process.

You will also need to complete the appropriate CSSA (Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency) training. You will not be permitted to begin the Ministry until this these two elements are complete.

In preparation for assuming this Ministry you will be asked to become familiar with the Church's teaching regarding the Eucharist and its distribution – you will be handling the Body of Jesus Christ, a duty not to be taken lightly.

Then before you take up this Ministry you will be officially commissioned during a Mass and asked to renew this commission annually at the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday. There is also a Lent Reflection Evening which all E.M.H.C.'s must attend.

Instructions for E.M.H.C at Mass

1) As the eyes of the congregation are on you in exercising this ministry, perhaps a quick check on what you are wearing, try to avoid clothing that has large logos etc that may distract people. Obviously clean hands, nails etc.

2) Please ensure that you arrive in good time for the Mass so that you can spiritually prepare for the Ministry you are to undertake. At SMW, SJD and HTB there is a rota. At SJW it will be mutual agreement.

   PLEASE NOTE:

   A Deacon or Concelebrating priest is the Ordinary Minister of the Sacrament so even if you are on the rota, if one of these is present they will take precedence

3) At SJW, if Deacon Max isn't there, 3 E.M.H.C's are needed; otherwise 2.
   At other churches 1 E.M.H.C. should suffice.

4) During the Peace approach the Altar. Line up with other E.M.H.C's if there is more than one, genuflect (or a deep bow if physically unable to genuflect) and go to the side of the altar. At SJW join the line of servers at the tabernacle end.

5) If you are able to kneel when everyone else does please do.

6) After the priest/ Deacon has received the Blessed Sacrament move to stand at the corner of the altar.

The priest/ deacon will communicate you, then offer you a ciborium.
You are free to either remain kneeling to receive or stand , to receive on the tongue or in the hands. Whatever is your normal practice.

Please hold the ciborium tight.

At SJW E.M.H.C.'s then communicate the Altar severs who will now have lined up behind the Altar

At SMW the Altar Servers will line up at the front of chancel.

At SJD please communicate Altar Servers in their place on your allotted side.

At HTB the priest will give you the ciborium after he has communicated the Altar Servers.

7) You need to be on your toes as to who is receiving the Blessed Sacrament, and if that is on the hand or tongue. A server may accompany you with the plate. This is to catch a host or any particles that may also fall.

8) The minister takes a host, raises it just a little and shows it to the communicant saying: The Body of Christ. They respond: Amen. Communion is then ministered.

The minister should not make the sign of the Cross with the host.

Those receiving the host are free to choose whether to receive in the hand or directly on the tongue,.

9) Sometimes children can look as if they are receiving and are not, and vice versa. ***If in doubt ask.***

10) If children appear at the rail or in your line who are not receiving they should be directed to the Priest (or Deacon) for a blessing. You cannot give a blessing and should refrain from any gesture that can be mistaken as one.

11) The administration of the Blessed Sacrament should not be rushed.

12) During distribution should a Host fall to the ground (or a recipient drop it) pick up immediately and consume.

13) It is vital that the Sacrament is consumed by the recipient there and then. They are not to carry the Sacrament away. If they do please stop distributing the Sacrament and ask them to consume. Any issue please let the priest know immediately before going to the next person.

14) You may be asked before the Mass, or during the time of Holy Communion to take the Sacrament to those who cannot get to the altar.

An Altar Server (where possible accompanied by an Acolyte) you will be guided to those people. As you walk raise the ciborium and bow the head slightly.

15) After Communion is complete, return the ciborium to the corporal (large white piece of linen) at the centre of the altar and genuflect/ bow.

16) There should be a bowl (lavabo) with water in it at the side of the altar on the credence table. Wash the fingers used to distribute the Blessed Sacrament and dry in the towel.

17) Please remain in the Sanctuary until the Blessed Sacrament has been returned to the Tabernacle. If you are able please kneel until this has happened. Then make the sign of the cross and go to the altar step, line up if more than one of you, genuflect/ bow and return to your seat. *Please do speak to Fr. Craig if you have any questions.*

Taking the Blessed Sacrament to the Sick at home.

Individual instruction will be given to those taking Holy Communion to the sick and housebound, as required, after completing the safer recruitment process and training.

A sample rite which can be used will also be provided in booklet form.

The Minister of Holy Communion will generally find him or herself part of a team of ministers.

The visitor can offer support to the sick and housebound in a number of ways as listed below:

1) Being a link to the parish community. Take the latest copy of the parish newsletter, so they can keep informed of the life of the wider Church and still feel part of it. A link also to the parish priest - letting him know for example if there is a request for other sacraments.

2) Being someone who will pray with them and for them.

3) Being someone they can share their worries and concerns with.

Important points for Minister to note:

1) Ministers should at all times respect the privacy and right to confidentiality of those to whom they minister.

2) Sometimes the person being ministered to is well able to take an active part in the rite. At other times the person will be less able. The minister should judge whether the rite should be adapted. Very often, the sick person will derive benefit from hearing the liturgy prayed, even if they are themselves unable to make responses or in any other obvious way participate in the prayer.

3) Ministers should be comfortable with spending times of silence with those to whom they minister.

4) Ministers should welcome family members and friends of the sick to join in the prayer. Those who are Catholic, and wish, may receive Holy Communion at this time, even if they have already that day received Holy Communion.

5) It is fitting for Holy Communion to be taken directly from Mass to the sick or those unable to leave their homes. We appreciate that given the times of Masses that this is not always possible nowadays. If you need to collect the Blessed Sacrament at a different time this must be by agreement with the Parish Priest who will give further instruction. The Blessed Sacrament should never be left unattended or taken home with you.

6) Each person will be given a Pyx to use. Before Mass place the Pyx on the top of the chalice on the credence table and place the number of hosts needed inside of it.

7) When entering the sick persons home, they will hopefully have a corporal or suitable cloth and lit candle ready for you to place the pyx upon. It's always wise to take a small appropriate cloth with you.

8) Try to keep talking to a minimum before administering the Sacrament. Though don't be overly strict if the person needs to tell you something first. They may want you to pray for something or someone during the rite.

9) If for any reason the person cannot consume the host then if untouched it should be consumed by yourself or returned to the tabernacle. If someone receives then is unable to swallow or spits out the Sacrament wrap it up in A clean cloth and let Fr. Craig know immediately.

10) Safeguarding the vulnerable is of paramount importance. Please see advice later on. If someone is in immediate danger please contact the Police on 999.

11) Please only ever undertake the Ministry for which you are authorised on a particular visit (e.g. personal care or shopping is not part of the role).

Guidelines for those undertaking Visits

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion:

As each person has their own identity and our differences make us unique and precious to God it is vital that we reflect this, as best we can, in our pastoral care.

Money matters

If you have any concerns about parishioner lacking mental capacity or suffering from a mental illness, do not accept any monies, including church donations.

It is Archdiocesan Guidance that those visiting the sick should not assist people with any financial issues or legal matters of any sort.

You should never use a person's bank card even if they ask you to use it for them. You are not permitted to assist an adult with the financial day-to-day running of their household.

There is no expectation to undertake duties such as shopping for this role. Should you decide to support this for the individual it is considered a person to person agreement. You would be advised only accept cash reimbursement. Please take a photo of the receipt and give the actual receipt to the person and also give them a receipt for the money you are reimbursed.

There may be times when someone you are visiting wishes to donate to 'church funds'. This is to be recorded in your visit log and then placed in a sealed envelope in one of the white boxes at the back of church, clearly stating the amount (if known) and the name of the donor and the date given. You should provide the donor with a receipt at the time the donation is made (These slips can be obtained from the Parish Office).

You should never receive personal monetary gifts. If a person insists on giving you any other kind of gift then it must be registered with the Parish Office. This is for your protection as well as the donors.

Confidentiality

Anyone receiving a visit, should expect that any information they share with you <u>will not</u> be passed to others unless one of the following conditions is fulfilled.

1) The person gives consent in advance for specific information to be shared. This, for example, might be a request for intercessions or spiritual guidance.

2) The information disclosed by the person indicates that they or another may be at risk of harm, or coercion into illegal/criminal activities.

   The parish volunteer has a responsibility to report any safeguarding concerns to the Diocesan Safeguarding Team immediately who will assess risk and make referrals as required to statuary agencies.

   Please also notify the Parish safeguarding Rep that this referral has been made. If the person is thought to be at immediate risk of harm or abuse, volunteer to phone Police via 999.

3) It should never be assumed that family members, friends, ministers, lay leaders or other parties are aware of a situation without confirming this first with the person receiving pastoral care.

Information should only be shared with the person's consent (unless one or more of the conditions above are met).

PLEASE NOTE: Those visited should be notified that a simple record of the visit will be passed onto the Parish Office for record keeping.

Confidentiality and Technology

As an E.M.H.C. you may be using technology to contact people, to follow up, to pass on information.

When using technology there are a number of key points to follow and take note of:

1) Email, text, WhatsApp and other social media messages: Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram etc. should be treated with the same level of care and security as written documents.

2) Personal details of individuals should not be discussed whilst using a mobile phone in a public place.

3) All sensitive information on computers and other digital storage should be password protected (e.g. if a safeguarding concern report is completed on home computer).

5) Documents stored should be converted into a secure format, such as a PDF, and password protected.

6) All sensitive data should be deleted when disposing of, or passing on electronic devices (e.g. mobile phones) or computers. ·

7) All paper documents containing personal or sensitive information should be shredded once they are no longer needed.

PLEASE NOTE: copies of any correspondence shared with or by volunteers via any means, phone, email, text, social media messages or WhatsApp and written records of visits etc can be requested for submission in any statutory investigation.

Conflicts of interest

As an E.M.H.C. you may find there is a conflict of interest when visiting certain church members. This could be due to a professional relationship, for example a provider of health or social care, or because of friendship.

There is a difference between social visiting as a friend and visiting on behalf of the church.

If you do visit a friend, you both need to be clear on the different expectations and the need for you, as an E.M.H.C. to share information with others if there is a serious concern.

A conflict of interest may also arise if you are the E.M.H.C. for more than one person in a family or other close group. It is helpful for family members to have different E.M.H.C.'s where this may be an issue. This is particularly the case in a situation of abuse within the family, where victim and perpetrator should not have the same pastoral supporter.

If at any time you feel there is a conflict of interest, you should discuss this with the Priest or Parish Safeguarding Rep.

Good practice in visiting

Before a visit, contact the person to arrange a convenient time, date and venue, being sensitive to what is an appropriate length of visit.

After the visit remember that anything talked about should not be shared with friends or family or mentioned in communal prayer without permission.

When visiting the housebound you must remember that you are there at their invitation. It is a special relationship that you have, one that includes a degree of trust on the part of the recipient.

Many housebound people may be elderly, living alone and frail. We must be aware of our physical presence and use it to give confidence to the person.

Relationships can develop and, particularly where there are no immediate or close family members. You may be trusted with confidential information (e.g. of the location of valuables). It is recommended that for your own protection, your parish priest be made aware of such instances.

Having got to know the people you visit, do only what you feel is right and proper for their wellbeing and, if in any doubt, consult with your parish priest or seek advice from the Diocesan Safeguarding Department.

Be aware that carers (social services, nurses) may call before or whilst Communion, or a visit is taking place and that medical care should take precedence.

If you are concerned that a person is at risk of immediate harm contact emergency services and advise the Parish Priest and Safeguarding Department of the action taken.

Visiting in hospitals and care settings.

When visiting in a hospital or care setting please always follow the organisations 'sign in' procedures and seek permission to visit.

This is important not least for your own protection in cases of fire and infection in a setting.

You should report concerns arising from the standard of care, to the Diocesan Safeguarding Team who will support with referrals where required.

They will then ensure that the issue is raised via the provider's reporting system, or to the local authority and/or Care Quality Commission, as appropriate.

Your Safety

When making arrangements for a visit, it is important to think about your own personal safety. Considerations may include:

The suitability of the location

Whether lone visiting is appropriate travel to and from the location at the time planned

Taking a list of useful phone numbers (e.g. the priest, Safeguarding Rep) and a charged mobile phone in case of emergency

The use of a calling card or other form of ID with contact details for the local church.

Ensuring someone (this could be a family member) knows about the location of the visit and the expected timeframe.

There are occasions when it is better for more than one E.M.H.C to visit, these situations should be discussed with the Priest.

Visiting in pairs

Circumstances where visiting in pairs should always take place:

1) If the person being visited and/or carers specifically request that 2 people attend.

2) The person being visited is new into the Parish and there is little available information about support needs, diversity needs or the individual circumstances of the Parishioner.

3) Once the relationship has become established and if there are no concerns then you can change the arrangement to suit.

4) Where there are known risks about the person being visited (these should be recorded within the Parish and shared with anybody who is carrying a home visit. A risk assessment would be carried out and a strategy put in place for ongoing visits.

5) If circumstances arise that a risk assessment would be required and a strategy implementing (if you observe anything of concern during the visit, please speak to the Parish Priest or Safeguarding Rep in order that this can be arranged if necessary.

Examples of concerns that you may encounter:

Whilst not an exhaustive list, here are some examples of concerns that you may encounter and must notify the Safeguarding Rep and Parish Priest about

Any direct disclosure of any kind of abuse should be reported back to the Safeguarding Rep. Whilst conversations will be required to be confidential and consent to share is best practice, where there is a known risk of harm, information can be shared without consent for the purposes of protection of the public, as previously noted.

1) *Signs of Self Neglect* and poor welfare conditions - you may notice rapid weight loss, changes in standards of hygiene, changes in the appearance within the house - all are signs that the person is having difficulties in managing their self care.

2) *Signs of financial abuse* from family members/others involved in the person's Care - there may not be any obvious signs of this, conversations from the person may indicate that this is happening. If a person is provided money for carrying out shopping and helping with meal preparation but there never seems to be enough food in the house. You may notice that personal possessions are diminishing and the person indicates they don't know where these items have gone or why they have gone.

3) *Signs of physical abuse* - you may notice certain patterns of bruising that could indicate physical assault. Whilst in many cases bruises can be explained, in some cases you may notice that there is reluctance around answering questions about the injury and that the explanation does not feel plausible.

4) Signs of Sexual Abuse – There may be very few physical signs of sexual abuse that you would be able to observe, and concerns may instead arise through conversations, changes in behaviour, or something the individual discloses.

   Possible indicators can include unexplained injuries, pain or discomfort, difficulty walking or sitting, torn or stained clothing, sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy, or sudden changes in personal hygiene.

   Behavioural signs may include becoming withdrawn, anxious, fearful or unusually distressed; avoiding a particular person or place; displaying age-inappropriate sexual knowledge or behaviour; experiencing sleep problems; or showing sudden changes in mood, relationships, attendance or performance.

   No single sign necessarily confirms abuse, but any concern or disclosure should be taken seriously, recorded accurately using the person's own words, and reported promptly in accordance with safeguarding procedures.

   Do not investigate or ask leading questions; listen calmly, offer reassurance, and seek appropriate safeguarding support via the Diocesan Safeguarding Teams.

   If someone is in immediate danger, please contact the Police on 999.

Keeping records.

E.M.H.C.'s should always make a note when they have contact with someone, especially if a visit has taken place.

This will always be reported back via the electronic 'Pastoral Visit Record Form'.

This is important for several reasons:

1) to help record who has been seen, including dates and times.

2) to demonstrate accountability and transparency.

3) to avoid misunderstandings and manage expectations.

4) to identify any follow-up actions.

5) in the rare case of a complaint being made, there is a record of what support has been offered and the times you were in someone's home.

6) to record consent given for sharing information or the reasons why consent wasn't requested.

7) to identify, over time, if someone is becoming vulnerable or needs additional support.

8) to record information passed to the Safeguarding Team and any details known on referrals when made to statutory agencies.

9) Recording protects both you and the person being visited.

10) It is important to note that anyone can request to see their records as part of a Data Subject Access Request.

The use of Identification Badges

We ask all those who undertake pastoral visits, including those taking the Blessed Sacrament to the sick and housebound, on behalf of our parish to wear an identification badge.

This helps those receiving a visit, as well as their families and carers, to feel confident and reassured that the person calling is genuinely representing the parish.

It also provides reassurance to those in positions of responsibility within care settings, including nursing homes and hospitals, by clearly identifying the visitor and confirming the capacity in which they are visiting.

The details provided on the badge may also be used by a care setting to contact the Parish Office should they wish to verify the person's identity and their role within the parish. Such checks should not be regarded as a sign of mistrust or as questioning the integrity of the individual minister; rather, they may form an important part of the safeguarding and security procedures which hospitals, nursing homes and other care settings have a responsibility to follow.

We fully support and respect these procedures, which help to protect those who may be vulnerable, as well as those who visit and care for them.

Each badge will include the minister's photograph and clearly identify who they are and the parish they represent. For simplicity and clarity, everyone carrying out this ministry will be described on the badge as a "Lay Minister", as we believe this is a more easily understood term, particularly for those who may not be familiar with Church language or different ministry titles.

The reverse of the badge will also include contact details for the Diocesan Safeguarding Department, should the minister, the person being visited, a family member, carer, or anyone within a care setting need safeguarding advice or support, or wish to raise a concern.

The badges are professionally produced and are supplied complete with an official parish lanyard.

Both the badge and lanyard are issued specifically to the named individual for the purpose of carrying out their assigned ministry on behalf of the parish. They must not be lent, given to, or used by another person, even temporarily.

They should only be worn or displayed when you are carrying out your assigned parish role and should not be used at any other time or for any other purpose. This is important because displaying the badge identifies you to others as someone who is acting with the authority and on behalf of the parish.

Badges and lanyards should therefore be treated with care and kept securely when not in use. If a badge is lost or stolen, this must be reported to the Parish Office immediately, so that appropriate action can be taken and, where necessary, those who may rely upon the badge for identification can be informed.

If you cease to carry out this ministry, for whatever reason, the badge and parish lanyard must be returned promptly to the Parish Office.

These arrangements are intended to provide a simple and consistent means of identification while supporting good safeguarding practice.

They help protect those whom we visit, give confidence to families, carers and care providers, and help protect and support our lay ministers as they undertake this important ministry on behalf of the parish.