

## 16/94 Lay and Diaconal Administration of The Lord's Supper

(A report from a committee appointed by the Standing Committee)

### 1. Preamble

1.1 In March 1994 Synod passed the following resolution (16/94) –

"In the light of Synod resolution 18/85 endorsing the principle of lay presidency, the report to the 1987 Synod with reports accepting that there existed no doctrinal objection and no legal impediment to lay presidency as contemplated by Synod, and the report to the 1993 Synod stating that there are no sound doctrinal objections to, and there are significant doctrinal reasons for, lay presidency at the Lord's Supper, this Synod requests Standing Committee, in consultation with the Archbishop concerning the matters raised in his Presidential Address, to bring to the next session of Synod legislation to enable deacons and lay persons, in appropriate circumstances, to preside at the Lord's Supper."

1.2 In accordance with this resolution, Standing Committee appointed a committee of Drs B.C. Newman and J.W. Woodhouse to consider the implementation of resolution 16/94. The Committee met 8 times, and consulted with the Archbishop on 2 occasions.

1.3 At its meeting on 20 June 1994 Standing Committee received a report from the Committee, and resolved that bills be promoted to the next session of Synod "by request of Synod" to enable Synod to consider the implementation of Options 1, 2, or 3 in item 6. However, it was decided on 25 July that Option 3 may not require legislation.

### 2. Preliminary Questions

*Lay and Diaconal "Administration", rather than "Presidency"*

2.1 Some confusion has come into the discussion of lay and diaconal involvement with the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, by the use of the term "presidency". For the following reasons, the Committee recommends that in future discussions or legislation with regard to this matter the word "presidency" should be replaced by "administration".

2.2 "President" is not a term found in the New Testament ("NT") or *The Book of Common Prayer* ("BCP"), and its first known relevant use (by Justin Martyr) seems to be a reference to the regular head of the congregation in terms that would be understood by outsiders (as suggested by D.W.B. Robinson in an unpublished paper). BCP speaks of "ministering" or "administering" the Sacrament, a rather different concept.

2.3 The Synod reports have used the term "president" to refer to the person who leads the people on a particular liturgical occasion (such as the Lord's Supper). The confusion arises because others (probably including Justin Martyr) refer to the "president of the community", an ongoing role, not restricted to any particular occasion. The matter under consideration has been whether the only person who can "preside" (in the former sense) is the "president of the community". Some have suggested that any "presidency" exercised by a lay person will undermine the "presidency" of the priest. This can be more clearly considered if different terms are used for the two concepts.

2.4 Even now lay people and deacons can (and probably do occasionally) "preside" (in an ordinary sense of the word) at the Lord's Supper quite legally, and without controversy. If, say, in the absence of the minister, a lay person or a deacon welcomes the congregation, and leads the first part of the liturgy, but invites a visiting priest to say the Prayer of Consecration, and to distribute the elements with the lay person's help, many would regard the lay person or deacon as the "president" of that gathering on that occasion. Legally he would have been "assisting" the priest, but in reality the priest would appear to be assisting him! The change that is envisaged is not lay or diaconal *presidency*, but permission for a lay person or deacon to pray the Prayer of Consecration.

2.5 Lay or diaconal administration of the Lord's Supper, as envisaged, acknowledges the oversight that rightly belongs to the priest to whose "cure and charge" the people have been committed. The rector (or archdeacon or bishop) remains the "president" of the congregation, but the particular service, at the "president's" direction, is carried out by a lay person or deacon. Like all lay and diaconal ministry, this ministry would be "assisting the priest". The term "presidency" for "administration" tends to obscure this fact.

2.6 In the Lord's Supper the focus is not on the minister, but on the corporate act of remembering the Lord's death through the activity of thanksgiving, distributing and eating together. The term "presidency" gives too much weight to the role of the minister.

*What is "Administration" of the Lord's Supper?*

2.7 The Committee understands lay or diaconal administration of the Lord's Supper to mean a lay person or deacon conducting any part or all of *The Order for the Administration of the Lord's Supper*, or another recognised service of Holy Communion.

*Why Should Lay Persons and Deacons be Permitted to Administer the Lord's Supper?*

2.8 Those advocating this change regard it as a positive reform, consistent with both Scripture and the theology of the Reformation reflected in BCP. While this is not the place to rehearse all the arguments of the various reports to Synod of the last decade, it might be helpful to refer briefly to some of the main reasons that have been expressed for proposing this change.

2.9 The present situation (as generally understood) is that lay persons and deacons may be authorised to preach the Word of God in a wide range of situations (there is no situation in which a lay person, by law, cannot be authorised to preach), but may not be authorised to administer the Sacrament (as defined in item 2.7) under any circumstances whatsoever.

2.10 Prohibiting lay people (or deacons) from this one activity, conveys to many an improper impression of the distinction between clergy and laity on the one hand, and priests and deacons on the other, as though it has to do with capacity to dispense sacramental grace.

2.11 Allowing lay persons and deacons to conduct the ministration of Baptism in some circumstances, but never the Lord's Supper can suggest an inappropriate distinction between the 2 Sacraments.

2.12 The absolute prohibition of lay people and deacons from administering the Sacrament, while permitting them to minister the Word of God by preaching sermons suggests a division between Word and Sacrament, where the Sacrament can appear to be more important than the Word because only priests can administer the former.

2.13 The restriction of administering the Lord's Supper to priests (and bishops) leads to misunderstandings of the nature of the Sacrament, as though its value depends somehow on the person who prays the consecration prayer.

2.14 When the 1 thing that only the priest can do is administer the Sacrament, a misunderstanding of the nature of the Anglican priesthood, and therefore of ordination, is difficult to avoid.

2.15 The absolute necessity of having a priest or bishop administer the Lord's Supper may convey the improper impression that Christ is not the only necessary mediator between man and God.

2.16 Items 2.10 to 2.15 raise substantial objections to Anglican order as it has developed and departed from BCP (see items 4.2 to 4.9).

*What Kind of Change is Proposed?*

2.17 The Synod has asked for the removal of a perceived prohibition, not the imposition of a new practice. In many churches there will be no change. The removal of the prohibition should be accompanied by adequate safeguards to preclude the new practice being introduced in circumstances where it would be inappropriate.

*What about Order?*

2.18 It has been said by some who oppose the proposed change that while there is no theological difficulty, there are difficulties related to "order". "Order" has a variety of meanings.

2.19 "Order" may mean "order" as opposed to chaos! What would happen to our relationships with other Anglicans, and to our relationship to the rest of the Anglican Church of Australia? The Anglican Church of Australia already lives with considerable diversity of opinion and practice. With goodwill and respect for sincerely held convictions, there is no reason for this change to be of greater concern than other differences.

2.20 "Order" may refer to the ordering of ministry in the Anglican Church. Specifically there is a constitutional commitment in the Anglican Church of Australia to the 3 "orders" of bishop, priest, and deacon. To think that lay or diaconal administration of the Lord's Supper will be more damaging to the orders than lay preaching suggests that ordination is more about the Sacraments than it is about preaching. This view cannot be supported from either the NT or BCP.

2.21 "Order" may just be a way of referring to custom. Some may feel that it is too great a change from the way in which Anglicans have always done things and the practice which BCP prescribes. Some may like to call such custom "tradition". This is misleading. Theologically the "tradition" of the Christian Church is the Scriptures. Custom, however ancient, must never be elevated to the level of "tradition". What is being proposed is a change in our customary ways. It is yet another change from the ways prescribed in BCP.

However to object to this change, but to accept lay preaching and lay assistance at the Holy Communion is arbitrary and unjustified.

2.22 If there are sound theological objections to our present "order" (items 2.8 to 2.16), appeals to maintain that "order" (in any sense) are not compelling.

*Particular Questions Related to Deacons*

2.23 Should all deacons automatically be given the authority to administer the Lord's Supper? A deacon is not, by virtue of having been made a deacon, thereby authorised to preach (he/she must be licensed by the bishop). Likewise it seems appropriate that a deacon should require the authorisation of the bishop before being permitted to administer the Lord's Supper.

2.24 Should deacons be authorised by a different process from that for lay persons? Since permission to preach the Word of God in the congregation and to administer the Lord's Supper is not inherent in the office of a deacon, any more than it is inherent in the laity, it seems appropriate that the authorisation of deacons to administer the Lord's Supper (and to preach) should be essentially the same as the authorisation of lay persons (items 5.2 to 5.4).

*Particular Questions Related to Lay Persons*

2.25 Should lay persons only be authorised to administer the Lord's Supper if they are authorised to preach, and *vice versa*? While the Committee recommends that authorisation to administer the Sacrament should be tied to authorisation to preach the Word of God, this introduces an anomaly. Under the Deaconesses, Readers and Other Lay Persons Ordinance 1981 lay persons who are not authorised to preach can nonetheless be authorised to read Morning or Evening Prayer, and conduct baptisms, funerals, and the churching of women. Consistent with the recommendations of the 1993 Doctrine Commission Report it would be desirable - if administration of the Lord's Supper is to be dependent on authorisation to preach - to raise the requirements for these other lay ministries as well. However this is a matter for future consideration.

2.26 Who should be involved in the authorisation of lay persons to administer the Lord's Supper? The bishop, the minister of the church in question, the Parish Council, and the churchwardens of the church should be required to agree to any authorisation.

*What is the Place of the Lord's Supper in Church Life?*

2.27 The Lord's Supper is an important occasion to which "all such as shall be religiously and devoutly disposed" should come, and "the people negligent to come" should be exhorted "that ye will not refuse to come thereto, being so lovingly called and bidden by God himself". The reasons given in the second Exhortation are that to refuse to come when God himself has bidden you is shameful, and a neglect of duty. "Sore punishments hang over your heads for the same; when ye wilfully abstain from the Lord's Table, and separate from your brethren ...".

2.28 The proposal to allow persons other than a priest to administer the Lord's Supper has led some to reconsider the place of the Sacrament in the life of the church. Some have found support for the present prohibition in a notion that the Lord's Supper is a complete occasion involving the whole community, and where the appropriate "president" must be the one with pastoral oversight (the priest). In the opinion of the Committee this reasoning rests on 2 fictions.

2.29 Fiction 1: that the administration of the Lord's Supper is now restricted to the one with pastoral oversight. This is not, and to our knowledge has never been, the case. An assistant minister who is a priest, or a visiting priest can and frequently does administer the Sacrament. An assistant minister who is a deacon or a lay person cannot.

2.30 Canon 56 of 1603 illustrates the point. This Canon envisages a minister who has "cure and charge of souls", and who may "chiefly attend to preaching", having "a Curate under him to execute the other duties which are to be performed for him in the Church". These duties include administration of the Lord's Supper. This Canon prescribes that such a minister must himself read the Divine Service and administer the Lord's Supper at least twice a year! On all other occasions "the Curate under him" may perform this duty for him. There is no suggestion that the Lord's Supper should normally be administered by the minister "that hath cure and charge of souls".

2.31 Fiction 2: that the Lord's Supper is the essential expression of the community's life. This, too, seems to be a novel invention to support a custom that has arisen without any such rationale. BCP has no such notion. "Every parishioner shall communicate at least 3 times in the year." Only 3 persons need to be present. If a sick person "be not able to come to the Church" the Lord's Supper can be administered in the sick man's house. In special circumstances a minister may communicate with a sick person with no one else present. BCP does not suggest that the Lord's Supper is *the* expression of the community's life.

2.32 Of course there are occasions where it is most appropriate for the one entrusted with the "cure of souls" in that place to administer the Sacrament, just as there are occasions when it is most appropriate for the Rector to preach. Since in the past there has not been a need to define such situations by legislation (with regard to preaching), there is no need to do so with regard to the administration of the Lord's Supper.

### 3. Possible Ways of Proceeding

*Should we Proceed at all?*

3.1 It is necessary to take note of various arguments against the introduction of lay and diaconal administration of the Lord's Supper. These arguments may be theological, pragmatic, or legal.

3.2 The theological arguments against lay (and by implication diaconal) administration of the Lord's Supper include unreformed views of the Sacrament and the priesthood, and sacramental ecclesiology ("the eucharistic community"). Such arguments have been repeatedly rejected by the Sydney Synod and the Diocesan Doctrine Commission.

3.3 There are also various pragmatic arguments. Some suggest that in the Anglican Church the administration of the Lord's Supper is an essential and definitive part of the priest's role. "If *anyone* can do this, is a priest's ordination and the years of training for nothing?" A related concern is whether the demand for trained full-time ordained priests will diminish if "lay people can do everything".

3.4 The Committee sees no sign of such a trend, and no reason to suppose that allowing lay persons and deacons to administer the Lord's Supper would create such a trend.

3.5 In BCP ordination authorises a person to oversee a congregation: "how great a treasure [the sheep of Christ] is committed to your charge", "the people committed to your charge", "the people committed to your cure and charge", "them that are or shall be committed to your charge", "the flock of Christ". This oversight certainly involves preaching the Word of God and ministering the Sacraments, but just as a person may be competent to preach sermons from time to time, without all the training and gifts necessary for full time pastoral oversight of the congregation, so such a person may be fully competent to administer the Lord's Supper from time to time, without either being ready to be ordained, or threatening the significance of ordination.

3.6 A further pragmatic argument relates to the anticipated controversy. At a local level the views of congregational members should be taken into account, and, where appropriate, teaching on the nature of the Sacrament should be given. If it appears to either the minister, the parish council or the churchwardens that there are good reasons for not introducing lay or diaconal presidency to a given congregation, then it should not happen. At a wider level, members of other dioceses might take offence. While every effort should be made to explain the genuine motives behind this change, and to make clear that the Sydney Synod is not seeking to impose this practice on other dioceses or to cause them difficulties by seeking their approval, others should recognise that the Sydney Synod sees the issue in significant theological terms. It is a matter of conviction, not convenience.

3.7 As for legal arguments sections 3 and 4 of the Constitution are regarded by some as legal obstacles to this change. Section 3 requires this Church to "preserve the three orders of bishops, priests and deacons in the sacred ministry" and Section 4 states "this Church retains and approves the doctrines and principles of the Church of England embodied in the Book of Common Prayer".

3.8 It needs to be recognised that the constitutional commitment to these "orders", "doctrines" and "principles" does not imply that all prescriptions of BCP are unalterable.

3.9 Among the accepted departures from BCP, whose constitutionality is not in question, are: a deacon directly assisting the poor or bereaved, an unordained lay person working in full time ministry alongside a deacon, lay persons preaching or assisting the needy, instructing the young in the Word of the Lord, women deacons, deaconesses, lay assistants at the Lord's Supper.

3.10 It is by no means obvious that the further departure from BCP involved in lay and diaconal administration of the Lord's Supper would be unacceptable constitutionally. The Ordinal emphasises the pastoral oversight of the priest (item 3.5). This oversight is not diminished by lay or diaconal administration. While BCP does not envisage lay or diaconal administration of the Lord's Supper, it does not articulate any "principle" by which, for example, the Prayer of Consecration can be more exclusively the prerogative of a priest than other parts of the liturgy (item 4.3).

3.11 The 1987 Legal Committee's Report found no legal obstacle to lay administration of the Lord's Supper as then envisaged.

3.12 The arguments against proceeding in the manner envisaged by Resolution 16/94 do not appear to outweigh those for moving ahead.

*Should we Proceed with Deacons First?*

3.13 It may be argued that since this is a contentious matter, we should move slowly, proceeding first with diaconal administration, considering lay administration at a future time. While it may initially appear "logical" to admit deacons to this role first, and lay people possibly later, this procedure would raise serious problems. The strongest arguments against lay administration of the Lord's Supper (such as, a lay person does not have pastoral oversight) are equally arguments against diaconal administration. To reject the arguments in the latter case, but not in the former would only compound the inconsistencies.

*Should we Proceed by Way of a General Synod Canon?*

3.14 Given the controversy associated with this subject, is there wisdom in taking the matter first to the General Synod and asking that body to express its mind on the issue?

3.15 The 1981 General Synod Doctrine Commission report *Towards a Theology of Ordination* outlined a view of priesthood in relation to the administration of the Lord's Supper which the Sydney Doctrine Commission Report of 1983 found to be in serious error. There has been no indication since then of any significant change in this understanding at the General Synod level. It is difficult to imagine that General Synod would, in the foreseeable future, assent to a Canon permitting lay or diaconal administration of the Lord's Supper. Would it be wise to seek approval from General Synod, if the outcome can be predicted with some confidence? An intense debate is certain, on such issues as the theology of the priesthood and the Sacrament, with almost no prospect of a happy resolution. When General Synod says "No", it would be perceived as more confrontational for Sydney then to proceed. The Committee considers that the wisest course is to proceed with the best advice presently available to us, testing the legal waters if they arise. If a Sydney Ordinance were legally challenged, the matter might then come before the Appellate Tribunal. The Tribunal would then make its judgement. At that point in time Sydney would have to decide its response.

*Should we Proceed Now with a Sydney Ordinance?*

3.16 It seems perfectly proper for Sydney to proceed now with an appropriate ordinance prepared in accordance with the recommendation of item 5.19, and as outlined in item 6.

3.17 In any case a comprehensive debate in the Sydney Synod on such an ordinance is important for a number of reasons. It may assist the Archbishop, in his extra-diocesan responsibilities, to know what the Synod desires and its reasons. Likewise, if the matter were to be raised in General Synod it would be essential for the Sydney representatives to be aware of the same. It is also valuable for parish representatives and clergy to have the benefit of hearing a proper debate. A debate that is curtailed will leave us all seriously uninformed.

3.18 To allow consideration of any responses from outside the Diocese, the Committee recommends that, the third reading of any ordinance be deferred until the next session of Synod.

**4. Historical Matters***The Book of Common Prayer 1662*

4.1 BCP envisaged no lay ministry of the Word or the Lord's Supper. However, the following statement is made in *The Form and Manner of Making of Deacons* -

"It appertaineth to the office of a Deacon ... to assist the Priest in Divine Service, and specially when he ministereth the holy Communion, and to help him in the distribution thereof, and to read holy Scriptures and Homilies in the Church ... and to preach if he be admitted thereto by the Bishop."

4.2 It is not clear how extensive the involvement of the deacon in the Lord's Supper might have been. The rubrics of the *Order for the Administration of the Lord's Supper* specifically indicate that it was to be the priest who said/read -

The Lord's Prayer	The call to repentance
The Collect	The Absolution (said by the Bishop, if present)
The Ten Commandments	The comfortable words "It is meet, right, and ..."
The Collect for the Queen	The prayer of humble access
The Epistle	The Prayer of Consecration
The Gospel	The Lord's Prayer
The Offertory Sentence(s)	The Blessing (said by the Bishop, if present)

The general Prayer for "the whole state of Christ's Church ...

The Exhortation (at the time of the celebration of the Communion)

4.3 The Prayer of Consecration is one of many items which, according to the rubrics, are to be said by the priest. The 1662 Act of Uniformity made it clear that only those who had been episcopally ordained priest may "consecrate and administer the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper". However, it is now commonly accepted that a person other than the priest (a deacon or an authorised lay person) may say/read several of the above items, but never the Prayer of Consecration. It is not clear why the rubric to that prayer has popularly been given more weight than the others. Restricting that prayer to the priest, except on the same grounds that virtually the whole liturgy is restricted to him, has no basis in BCP.

*Lay Assistants at Holy Communion Canon 1973*

4.4 As far as the Anglican Church of Australia is concerned, lay involvement in the administration of the Lord's Supper began with the Lay Assistants at Holy Communion Canon 1973. This Canon, which was adopted by the Sydney Synod in the same year, allows for lay persons to be "authorised by the bishop to assist the priest in the ministration and distribution of the Holy Communion".

4.5 The really significant change to Anglican order in the Anglican Church of Australia, as far as lay involvement in the Lord's Supper is concerned, occurred with the 1973 Canon. There a shift took place. The ministration of the Lord's Supper is now no longer restricted to the clergy only. Few may have recognised that no principle was in place which would provide any limitation on what a lay person might now be authorised to do in his/her assistance to the priest. So significant was the change that it has been suggested that the Canon may be unconstitutional (D.W.B. Robinson in an unpublished paper). It has, however, never been challenged.

4.6 What does the term "ministration" mean in this Canon? From the context "ministration" means something additional to "distribution". BCP uses the word "ministration" in several contexts. In the table of Contents the Lord's Supper is called *The Order of the Ministration of the Holy Communion*, while the title given to the liturgy itself is *The Order for the Administration of the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion*. This suggests that "ministration" and "administration" are synonyms, and in these contexts refer to the whole activity. In the Ordinal the priest is given authority to "minister the holy Sacraments", while the deacon is "to assist the Priest when he ministereth the holy Communion". To "minister" the Sacrament seems to be a general term applying to the occasion as a whole.

4.7 The Lay Assistants at Holy Communion Canon 1973 does not specify limits to the assistance which a lay person may give. The Canon allows for "the synod of any diocese by ordinance [to] set further limitations". No such ordinance has been made in Sydney. It seems therefore that there is no reason in law to prevent the assistance which can be authorised under this Canon extending to the Prayer of Consecration. In other words if the Canon allows for some of the rubrics in BCP to be relaxed, it is arbitrary to say that it does not allow the same for the rubric to the Prayer of Consecration.

4.8 While this Committee believes that the above argument is sound, it seems clear that neither the General Synod nor the Sydney Synod *intended* to allow for lay people to be authorised to offer unlimited assistance to the priest in the administration of the Lord's Supper. To our knowledge it has never before been suggested that the Lay Assistants at Holy Communion Canon 1973 enables so much. It therefore seems advisable to proceed by way of making explicit and deliberate allowance for lay persons and deacons to be authorised to administer the Lord's Supper (however see item 6.3).

4.9 If there is no principle to prohibit a lay person authorised under the Lay Assistants at Holy Communion Canon 1973 from any particular part of the administration of the Lord's Supper, it would follow that there is likewise no principle limiting the scope of a deacon's assistance.

*Sydney Synod and General Synod 1977 – 1994*

4.10 Sydney Synod's consideration of the desirability, appropriateness, and possibility of lay administration of the Lord's Supper began (as far as we have ascertained) with a resolution in 1977 (9/77), which requested a committee -

"to investigate the issue of licensing lay persons for the ministry of Word and Sacrament and to report to the next session of Synod".

4.11 The question of whether lay persons might be licensed to administer the Lord's Supper was put to the General Synod Doctrine Commission, and the response was contained in their 1981 report titled *Towards a*

*Theology of Ordination.* That report concluded (among other things) that lay administration of the Lord's Supper would "call in question the very necessity of ordination itself" -

"The Commission cannot recommend that laymen be licensed to preside at the eucharist, because a layman thought fit by the bishop and congregation and willing to lead that congregation in this way ought to be ordained."

4.12 In 1983 the Sydney Diocesan Doctrine Commission responded to the General Synod Report, with a survey of Biblical and historical data, concluding firmly that the General Synod report was -

"in error regarding (a) 'the nature of ministerial priesthood', ... (b) 'the relationship between ordination and presidency at the Holy Communion', (c) 'lay presidency at the Holy Communion', and (d) 'indelibility'."

4.13 On the subject of lay administration of the Lord's Supper, the Sydney Report concluded -

"The Doctrine Commission believing, therefore, that there is no Scriptural or doctrinal barrier to lay presidency at the Eucharist RECOMMENDS that the [Sydney] Synod explore immediately the desirability and constitutional aspects of such a presidency."

4.14 From 1983 to 1993 there has been a series of reports to the Sydney Synod on the question of lay administration of the Lord's Supper from theological, historical, and legal perspectives, and 1 report on the question of diaconal administration (1993). These reports have consistently endorsed the general position of the 1983 Report of the Sydney Diocesan Doctrine Commission, and encouraged the Synod to proceed with necessary legislation.

4.15 Dissenting voices have been expressed including -

- (a) Archbishop Robinson's indication in 1985 that he would not assent to any ordinance purporting to enable lay persons to administer the Lord's Supper.
- (b) A dissenting view in the 1985 Synod Committee Report "to the effect that there is insufficient need for this provision in the Diocese, and that a reformed view of word and sacrament does not of necessity require that those licensed to preach should also preside at the Lord's Supper".
- (c) The view of 1 member of the 1986 Committee who saw "a diminishing area of leadership for the priest due to a confusion of roles", which "would profoundly affect the 'style' of worship", and "the character of our church".
- (d) The view of another member of the 1986 Committee, that a "legal objection may exist" based on "a principle of priestly presidency" which he derived from BCP.
- (e) The minority opinion of J.R.L. Johnstone in the 1987 Legal Committee's Report, based on the view that it is "a 'principle of worship' ... in the Book of Common Prayer that the Holy Communion cannot be consecrated and administered by a person who has not been episcopally ordained priest".

4.16 In the reports advocating lay administration of the Lord's Supper 2 general positions can be discerned as to the circumstances in which lay administration would be appropriate.

4.17 The narrower view was expressed in the 1985 Synod Committee's Report, which recommended changes to the Deaconesses, Readers and Other Lay Persons Ordinance 1981, to the effect that lay persons could be authorised to administer the Lord's Supper where the minister is unable to preside, where there is no minister, and in a church to which no minister is ordinarily appointed.

4.18 This narrower view was endorsed by the 1986 Synod Committee, which affirmed that -

"... there exist no doctrinal objections to lay presidency ... where the regular ministry in the local congregation of an episcopally ordained priest is not available."

4.19 The 1987 Report of the Legal Committee seems to indicate a broader view. While endorsing the Reports of 1985 and 1986, the situations in which there would be "no principle of worship involved, nor any principle of doctrine" in having lay administration of the Lord's Supper are described as -

"... situations where the rector (archdeacon or bishop) is obviously the president of the congregation, but the particular service, at the president's direction, is carried out by a lay person."

4.20 The broader position is endorsed and elaborated by the 1993 Doctrine Commission Report -

"It is unlikely that lay presidency will become the 'norm' (in the sense of more usual than clergy presiding), any more than lay preaching has. On the other hand the suggestion that lay presidency should be perceived as a departure from 'the norm' (in the sense that it should be thought of as 'abnormal') must be opposed on theological grounds. Therefore to allow lay presidency only 'where the regular ministry in the local congregation of an episcopally ordained

priest is not available' (as envisaged in the 1986 report) is unacceptable, unless we are going to insist on the same principle for lay preaching, and for lay presiding at Morning and Evening Prayer. The position expressed in the 1987 report (which is consistent with the 1983 report) is preferable."

## 5. Possible Models

5.1 Before considering various models for the introduction of lay and diaconal administration of the Lord's Supper, 3 matters need to be considered: the process by which such ministry should be authorised, the requirements of fitness that should apply and the circumstances in which lay or diaconal administration should be permitted.

### *Authorisation*

5.2 With respect to lay administration of the Lord's Supper, conditions similar to those applying to the authorisation of lay persons for ministry under the terms of the Deaconesses, Readers and Other Lay Persons Ordinance 1981 and the Regulations for assistance at Holy Communion do not seem inappropriate. It would then follow that before a lay person could be authorised he/she would require the approval of -

- (a) the Archbishop or an assistant bishop (acting on his behalf);
- (b) the minister; and
- (c) the parish council and the churchwardens of the church concerned.

5.3 The authorisation could be Continuing or Periodic.

5.4 It would seem appropriate for the process of authorisation applying to lay persons to apply to deacons (item 2.24). This would recognise the importance of the parish council and churchwardens.

### *Requirements of Fitness*

5.5 The requirements that a lay person or a deacon must meet before being authorised to administer the Lord's Supper need to be considered in relation to the existing requirements for various forms of ministry.

5.6 Two alternatives exist for lay administration of the Lord's Supper.

- (a) Since administration of the Lord's Supper as envisaged involves leading the congregation in a prescribed liturgy, but not necessarily preaching, it might be argued that the requirements should be the same as those set out in the Deaconesses, Readers and other Lay Persons Ordinance 1981 for leading Morning or Evening Prayer, but not necessarily the requirement regarding preaching. This is the less demanding alternative, and could be supported in principle by reference to Canon 57 of 1603 ("The Sacraments not to be refused at the Hands of unpreaching Ministers"). This Canon insisted that the virtue of the Sacraments does not depend on the minister's ability to preach, since the teaching of the Sacraments is so sufficiently set down in BCP that "nothing can be added unto it that is material and necessary".
- (b) Since, however, a sermon must be preached at the Lord's Supper (but not necessarily at Morning or Evening Prayer), it might be argued that the person who is authorised to administer the Sacrament should be a person who is fit to preach. This would emphasise the necessary dependence of the ministry of the Sacrament on the ministry of the Word. In this case the requirements applying to those authorised to administer the Sacrament would be the same as the requirements applying to those authorised to preach. This is the more demanding alternative.

5.7 Corresponding alternatives exist for diaconal administration of the Lord's Supper.

- (a) Since the requirements for lay ministry set out in the Deaconesses, Readers and other Lay Persons Ordinance 1981 are already requirements for the ordination of deacons, no further requirements are needed for the alternative in item 5.6(a).
- (b) If for lay persons only those who are authorised to preach are to be authorised to administer the Lord's Supper, the same requirement should apply to deacons.

5.8 The Committee recommends alternative (b) for both lay and diaconal administration.

### *Circumstances*

5.9 Under the Deaconesses, Readers and Other Lay Persons Ordinance 1981, the circumstances in which an authorised lay person may exercise various ministries is not prescribed, except that it is to be at the invitation of the minister. Should the circumstances in which an authorised lay person or a deacon may administer the Lord's Supper be specified in legislation? In general terms there are 2 views (see items 4.16 to 4.20), which yield 2 alternatives.

5.10 The narrower view expressed in the changes to the Deaconesses, Readers and Other Lay Persons Ordinance 1981 proposed in the 1985 Synod Committee's Report (see item 4.17) seems to be based on the notion that the minister, being the most "senior" member of the congregation, should be the one who leads the people in this particular liturgy if he is present. Against this see items 2.29 and 2.30. The narrower alternative is that only in the absence of the minister (or if for some other reason the minister is unable to administer) may an authorised lay person or deacon administer the Lord's Supper.

5.11 The broader view (see items 4.19 and 4.20) is based on the understanding reflected in the 1983 Doctrine Commission Report.

"The Lord's Supper is first and foremost a congregational activity ..... the New Testament is silent in defining [the president's] identity. We maintain that the role of the President is relatively unimportant since the focus is not on what he does but on the corporate act of remembering the Lord's death through the total activity of thanksgiving, distributing and eating together (see 1 Cor. 10:16-17)."

5.12 The broader alternative, then, is that the circumstances in which a lay person or a deacon may administer the Lord's Supper should not be prescribed in legislation, except that it should only happen at the invitation of the minister, like other authorised lay or diaconal ministry.

5.13 For some congregations the change may be very significant, and even unwelcome and it is therefore desirable that the parish council and the relevant churchwardens be involved in approving the introduction of lay or diaconal administration to a congregation. Further, the lay person or deacon so authorised would exercise his or her right to decline to administer the Lord's Supper if he/she judged the circumstances inappropriate.

5.14 The Committee recommends the broader alternative.

### 3 Models

5.15 The various possibilities canvassed here suggest 3 models for lay and diaconal administration of the Lord's Supper.

5.16 In *Model 1*, which places most restrictions on the practice of lay and diaconal administration, persons are permitted to administer the Lord's Supper who -

- (a) in the case of lay persons, have an authority to preach under the Deaconesses, Readers and other Lay Persons Ordinance 1981 and in accordance with its regulations, or, in the case of deacons, have a licence to preach; and
- (b) have been approved by the appropriate parish council, churchwardens and incumbent and subsequently given an authority or licence by the Archbishop.

Such persons may administer the Lord's Supper only -

- (c) when a priest or bishop is not present (or if present is unable to administer the Lord's Supper);
- (d) if invited to do so by the minister; and
- (e) provided that the parish council and churchwardens have agreed to the introduction of lay or diaconal administration to the congregation in question.

5.17 In *Model 2*, which places least restrictions on the practice of lay and diaconal administration, persons are permitted to administer the Lord's Supper who -

- (a) have been baptised;
- (b) have been confirmed;
- (c) have attained the age of 18 years;
- (d) have assented to the doctrine of the Thirty Nine Articles;
- (e) have undertaken to obey all lawful and honest commands of the Archbishop; and
- (f) have been approved by the appropriate parish council, churchwardens and incumbent and subsequently given an authority or licence by the Archbishop.

Such persons may administer the Lord's Supper -

- (g) when invited to do so by the minister; and
- (h) provided that the parish council and churchwardens have agreed to the introduction of lay or diaconal administration to the congregation in question.

5.18 In *Model 3*, which is narrow in terms of who may be authorised, but broad in terms of the circumstances in which a lay person or deacon may administer the Lord's Supper, persons are permitted to administer the Lord's Supper who -

- (a) in the case of lay persons, have an authority to preach under the Deaconesses, Readers and other Lay Persons Ordinance 1981 and in accordance with its regulations, or, in the case of deacons, have a licence to preach; and
- (b) have been approved by the appropriate parish council, churchwardens and incumbent and subsequently given an authority or licence by the Archbishop.

Such persons may administer the Lord's Supper -

- (c) when invited to do so by the minister; and
- (d) provided that the Parish Council and churchwardens have agreed to the introduction of lay or diaconal administration to the congregation in question.

#### *Recommendation*

5.19 *Model 3* recognises the dependence of the ministry of the Sacrament on the ministry of the Word, acknowledges the importance of the parish council and churchwardens, and allows the appropriateness of the circumstances to be evaluated by the minister, parish council and churchwardens. The Committee therefore recommends the consideration of legislation which will give effect to *Model 3*.

5.20 All other relevant matters such as -

- (a) the scope of any authority or license;
- (b) any time limit applicable to any authority; and
- (c) rights for withdrawal of licenses or authorities;

would be, in the case of lay persons, as they may appear in any applicable ordinance or regulation or, in the case of deacons, as they may apply by way of Archbishop's licence. Some aspects of existing ordinances, regulations and procedures may be in need of revision. However that would be an issue for future consideration.

## **6. Possible Options**

### *Option 1*

6.1 *The Administration of Holy Communion Ordinance 1994* amends the Deaconesses, Readers and Other Lay Persons Ordinance 1981, and allows for the authorisation of deacons to administer the Lord's Supper if they are licensed to preach. In both cases the approval of the minister, the parish council and the churchwardens of the church concerned is required. The proposed ordinance also requires the parish council and churchwardens to approve the introduction of lay and diaconal administration of the Lord's Supper to any congregation.

### *Option 2*

6.2 *The Ministry Ordinance 1994* comes to the October 1994 session of Synod at the second reading stage, and in its present form will allow for lay and diaconal administration of the Lord's Supper. However it may be desirable for the bill to be amended. For example instead of giving various parties a power of veto, their explicit approval could be required. A proposed amendment will be circulated to Synod members separately.

### *Option 3*

6.3 The *Lay Assistants at Holy Communion Canon 1973* may allow for all that is envisaged in Synod resolution 16/94 with respect to lay persons and no further legislation may be required. It may be advisable for the Regulations re Lay Assistants at Holy Communion to recognise this situation. In the light of item 4.9 no further legislation may be required for diaconal administration. The Standing Committee has asked its Legal Committee for an opinion on questions related to these possibilities.

### *Deferral of Third Reading of Any Bill*

6.4 In accordance with the recommendation of the Committee the Standing Committee has resolved -

"That Standing Committee in promoting a bill to the next session of Synod to authorise lay and diaconal administration of the Holy Communion recommends to the Synod that the third reading of the ordinance be deferred until a later session of Synod."

For and on behalf of the Committee

B.C. NEWMAN  
J.W. WOODHOUSE

2 August 1994