

RECEIVING THE SACRAMENT

George Abbot (1562–1633), Archbishop of Canterbury (1611–1633)

The parishioners of Crayford divided over the placement of the communion table. The Puritan faction desired the table in the main body of the church, reflecting the Eucharist as religious feast. The high church parishioners, emphasizing the Eucharist as sacrament, desired the table at the east end of the chancel.

3 July 1633

George, by the providence of God, Archbishop of Canterbury, primate and metropolitan of all England, to our well-beloved in Christ, the parson, church-wardens, and other the parishioners and inhabitants of the parish of Crayford in the county of Kent and deanery of Shoreham, of the peculiar and immediate jurisdiction of us and of our cathedral and metropolitical church of Christ Canterbury, and to all other persons whatsoever to whom these presents shall come, or may any way concern, greeting in our Lord God everlasting.

Whereas upon some difference arising among you about the decent and reverend ministering and receiving of the holy communion in the chancel of the said church of Crayford, we, upon the petition of you, the parson, did refer the viewing of the said church and examination of the said difference unto Sir Nathaniel Brent, knight, our vicar-general, who having viewed the said church in the presence of you, the said parson, church-wardens, and some others of the said parish, has certified us what seems to him upon the said view to be most decent and convenient for the most reverend and orderly receiving of the holy communion in the said chancel of the said church. Now know you that upon the relation of the said Sir Nathaniel, as also upon a mature and deliberate hearing of the parties interested in the said difference, in our manor house of Lambeth in the county of Surrey upon the twenty-first day of May, *Anno Domini* MDCXXXIII, in the presence of our said vicar-general and divers others, and also in the presence of Thomas Tane, clerk, the now-incumbent parson of the parish church of Crayford, and Thomas Andrews, John Ludlow, church-wardens, and Joseph Bingham, Thomas King, and John Kettle, parishioners of the said parish of Crayford, and others then and there present, we have ordered and decreed, and by these presents do order and decree as follows;

Videlicet, that the parishioners and inhabitants of the said parish of Crayford, and others intending hereafter to receive the holy communion there, shall repair unto the two ascents, or foot paces in the chancel before the communion table, and there mats being laid upon the said two ascents, or foot paces, to kneel upon, and mats being also laid on either side above the said steps to kneel upon (if by reason of the number of communicants it seems requisite, the two ascents or foot paces being first filled), they shall, in decent and reverend manner humbly kneeling upon their knees on the said two ascents or foot paces, receive the holy communion and sacrament of the body and blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

And after the first company has received the same, they to return to their seats and places in the said church, and to give way for a second company to receive in like manner. And the to second, after they have received in like manner, to return and give way for a third company. And the third to the fourth, and so successively until all the communicants there have received the holy communion in manner and form aforesaid.

And we do require you, the minister of Crayford aforesaid, that upon some Sundays or holy days, in the time of divine service, you do publish and declare this, our order, and decree to the parishioners of the said parish of Crayford. And we admonish you, the parishioners of Crayford, that upon notice of the premises, you be obedient and conformable thereunto, as you will answer the contrary at your peril.

Given under our archiepiscopal seal at Lambeth, the eighth day of July, *Anno Domini* MDCXXXIII, and in the three and twentieth year of our translation.