



Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania

GUIDELINES FOR THE BISHOP'S VISITATION

My brothers and sisters,

I present this customary as an offering of help and service to our congregations. A Bishop's Customary is of great use in planning an official visitation. It alleviates many questions and is offered as a guide, and not a mandate. If there are long standing customs or liturgical charisms of a church that are essential, please discuss with me. Know you are in my prayers and I am blessed to serve as your Bishop.

Please, complete the Visitation Worksheet and return it to the Bishop's office within six weeks of the visit date at the address listed on the worksheet. Include all information concerning service times and events scheduled. If there is any need to deviate from these guidelines, you will need to check with the Bishops office as soon as possible. When possible, email the service bulletin to the Bishop by Tuesday proceeding the visit. A draft of the service is acceptable.

SCHEDULING

Visitations will be scheduled in such a way as to balance the following priorities:

- The length of time since the last pastoral visitation
- The need to schedule Episcopal rites. Some of these will of necessity be scheduled on days other than Sunday – for instance: Major parish anniversaries, Dedications of new buildings, Groundbreakings, etc.
- Pastoral needs of the parish
- The celebration of the feast of title or other significant event in the life of the parish

The scheduling of visitations may be initiated by the Rector, Priest in Charge, or Vicar of the parish, or by the Bishop's Office.

To facilitate planning, the visitation schedule is created to cover the upcoming six months, and is normally available in late November and late May. You may request upcoming dates, but normally we will not make final commitments more than six months in advance. Even with great care given to the visitation schedule, there will still be some need for flexibility. There will be parish emergencies, personal illness, travel delays, and a host of other things that may require last minute rescheduling. It is the Bishop's commitment that such changes will be kept to a minimum, but from time to time they will occur.

When it is necessary or requested to schedule one of our assisting Bishops, all such invitations should come from Bishop Gutierrez's office. The mere convenience of parish confirmations and receptions is not considered adequate reason for scheduling one of the assisting bishops.

Procedure:

1. Please call the Bishop's office (215-627-6434 x 108) and schedule a phone call with the Bishop one month prior to the visitation. The Bishop should have the completed worksheet before the scheduled call. When possible please have the service bulletin to the Bishop's assistant by the Tuesday before the visitation. A draft is fine.
2. Once the diocese receives your Visitation Worksheet and the number of candidates is filled in, blank confirmation/reception certificates will be mailed to the church. If there are more than 25 people needing certificates please call for information on how to have the cards pre-signed by the Bishop. (215-627-6434 x 108 or cfisher@diopa.org)
3. Notify your congregation of the Bishop's visit as far in advance as possible. Explain that the offering on a Bishop's visitation will be for the Bishop's Discretionary Fund and to be used for needs of the diocese not covered by diocesan budget, such as religious and charitable purposes, pastoral emergencies and ministries arising during the course of the year. Checks can be made out to the "Diocese of PA"
4. Have the parish register and service register available for the Bishop's review. Per Canon III.9.5(c), the Bishop will review the register of services, and register recording baptisms, confirmations, marriages, and burials.
5. The Bishop will baptize, confirm (if there are candidates sufficiently prepared), preach and celebrate. If there are no confirmations needed, the Bishop will still be glad to visit and celebrate and preach.

THE DAY OF THE VISIT

In many of our parishes it is necessary to have multiple services to accommodate a growing congregation. In these cases, we will have as many morning services as necessary. The Bishop would like to spend time with the congregation through the liturgy and in fellowship. An occasional opportunity to merge the whole parish together is good, and there is perhaps no

better time than the Bishop's visitation. This also means there is more time to be flexible with adult forums, meetings with youth and children, spending time with the Vestry, etc.

The Bishop may be accompanied by the Canon to the Ordinary and/or a Deacon. If Canon is present, whether they have a liturgical role or not, they will vest and process immediately in front of the Bishop's chaplain. Please speak with the Archdeacon as to the role of the Deacon in the liturgy.

The Bishop will meet with parishioners during the education hour. This will be the opportunity to have an open forum, teach the Scriptures and Prayer Book, or the Bishop will do a presentation on another subject. The Bishop loves spending time with members of the parish.

One of the most important components of the Bishop's visitation is his meeting with the vestry. This meeting should be arranged at a time that works best with the overall flow of the Sunday events but should not take the place of the Bishop's time for formation with the candidates and/or another Sunday morning formation class

The Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-charge, or senior warden where appropriate, should work with the vestry, well in advance of the visit, to plan for their time together.

Staying through the coffee hour/reception after the final liturgy is figured into the Bishop's Sunday schedule. In most cases, he can stay for lunch with the Clergy, the Wardens and Vestry, It is neither required nor necessary to host a meal, however,

- Bishop will make every effort to arrive no less than 30 minutes before the first service.
- The Rector, Vicar, or Priest-in-Charge should make the necessary parish announcements. While it is always pleasant to be greeted, the Bishop's preference is that you not use the language of "welcome." In the Diocese of Pennsylvania, we are a family and the Bishop is the Chief Pastor of the Diocese. The Bishop does not feel like a guest of the when he is present at any of our congregations.
- Please note: The Bishop is open to working with the priest to design the conversation that will be most helpful and appropriate to the faith community in the carrying out of its Gospel mission. If, for example, there are ministry opportunities, possibilities, dreams, challenges, or concerns that the clergy and vestry wish to share, the conversation can certainly be structured accordingly.

THE LITURGY OF THE DAY

Bishop Gutierrez anticipates that all visitations will be celebrations of the Holy Eucharist. The Bishop will be the preacher, teacher, celebrant, and officiant of the entire liturgy, unless otherwise arranged. The Rite II liturgy form the 1979 Book of Common Prayer is the normative rite for liturgies of baptism and confirmation. Eucharist without baptism or confirmation may be Rite I or Rite II per the custom of the congregation.

Language of the liturgy: The liturgy should be conducted in the language of the people. If the language is not English, please consult with the Bishop as to whether a translator is needed, and for which parts of the service.

When there are no baptisms, confirmations, or receptions, the liturgy on the day of the bishop's visitation should include the renewal of baptismal vows. This should be substituted for the Nicene Creed at all services, even those that are otherwise Rite I.

If the occasion is a visitation with baptism or no special service, the Bishop will follow the local practice for the seating, standing, and movement of the celebrant for such a service.

The Proper of the Day will be used, even when initiation rites are to take place. It is expected that all three lessons, and the Psalm appointed for the day will be read during the liturgy.

- The Revised Common Lectionary (Episcopal Edition) is the norm in the Diocese of Pennsylvania. If it seems appropriate to use other readings, this must be cleared with the Bishop well in advance of the visitation. Please note the actual readings that will be used.
- If the chaplain is a deacon and is assigned to read the gospel, the Bishop will bless the deacon before the proclamation of the gospel. It is a blessing of the deacon, not the book.
- If another deacon reads the gospel, the chaplain will give the crozier to the Bishop-it is an ancient custom for the bishop to hold the crozier with both hands during the gospel.

Normally, the liturgical color will be that of the day. Any departure from this should be discussed before the day of the visitation. The Bishop prefer the liturgical color of the day or season when celebrating a confirmation or baptism, but red may be used at any time except during Easter.

The Bishop's Chaplain: in general, the chaplain helps the bishop with the crozier and mitre and in other ways.

- In the entrance procession, the chaplain precedes the bishop.

- If this occasion is a visitation with confirmation, there is normally a chair placed near the people for the bishop. Upon arrival at the chair, the chaplain will take the crozier from the bishop and stand next to the chair, on the bishop's right, facing the people and hold the crozier in right hand with the crook pointed in. When not standing immediately beside the bishop, the chaplain carries the crozier with crook pointed in.

Said or sung: The Bishops will say the Sursum Corda and Proper Preface to the Eucharistic Prayer.

The Bishop will not do children's sermons, but is happy to spend time with the children in the parish in other contexts.

If the parish has a deacon, they should be prepared to assist the Bishop and coordinate with the Deacon that travels with the Bishop . Except under unusual circumstances these duties are not to be performed by presbyters..

The details will vary, but will normally include such things as:

- Holding the Prayer Book so that the Bishop's hands are free for liturgical gestures.
- Holding the pastoral staff for the Bishop when he is not in procession.
- Assisting with chrism at baptisms.

If the Bishop chooses not to be the principal celebrant, the one presiding over the service should observe the Bishop's prerogative to give absolution after confession (BCP pg. 360), and to give the blessing following the post communion prayer (BCP pg. 365 or 366).

VESTMENTS

The Bishop will wear the chasuble or rochet and chimere for the entire liturgy. Please indicate which you prefer on the Visitation Preparation Form. The Bishop will not wear a cope except when it is appropriate for non-Eucharistic liturgies, or on those rare occasions when he will be present for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist but not the principal celebrant.

The Bishop only wears his miter during the procession in, laying of hands during confirmation/reception, final blessing, and procession out.

AT THE ALTAR

It is the Bishop's preference that the Altar be set as minimally as possible.

- No missal stand. The Bishop likes for the service book to lie flat.
- One paten and one chalice on the corporal – all other vessels off to the side on a credence table or suitable substitute.
- The Bishop does not want his crozier or miter to rest on the altar.
- There should be someone available to help with ablutions using wine and water following distribution of Communion. The Bishop will instruct on the ablutions which includes a chalice, water and wine.
- The Bishop may occasionally invite children to join him at the altar after the final blessing. If possible, they will process out with the Bishop.

WHEN THERE ARE BAPTISMS

The Pastoral Visitation of the Bishop is one of the principal times for baptism and every effort should be made to make the visitation a baptismal feast, in contrast to an occasion for confirmation and reception alone.

- The Bishop will bless the water and will say the thanksgiving over the water.
- The newly baptized or their sponsors in the case of babies and small children are given a candle lighted from the paschal candle for the procession back to the altar.
- The Bishop will normally baptize and perform the chrismation, but may invite the Priest to Baptize.

Please, notify the Bishop in advance, if chrism is required. Otherwise, the Bishop will anticipate an adequate supply.

If possible, please make the chrism available in some sort of vessel worthy of the public celebration of the liturgy. Oil stocks are for pastoral, not liturgical use.

CONFIRMATION, RECEPTION, AND REAFFIRMATION

We will continue to schedule diocesan-wide liturgies for confirmation and reception. These liturgies will be scheduled no less than two times a year, at the Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral.

The question of who should be confirmed, who should be received, and who should be reaffirmed is not as complicated as it once was. Changes made in the canons with respect to

church membership by the General Convention of 1985, and refined in 1988, have made this simple in practical application:

- Confirmation is for children who were baptized in the Episcopal Church or who came to this church with their families before making a “mature commitment.”
- Confirmation is also appropriate for those who are properly formed and have reached the age of 14
- Reception is for those who have previously made a mature commitment in any other Christian church

Since the canons require that all persons come “under the hands” of the bishop, persons who are received are, for canonical purposes, understood to be confirmed.

After the sermon, the service continues as follows:

A chair is placed before the altar or at the entrance to the chancel. If the space of the chancel is prohibitive or small, the Bishop does not want to detract from the liturgy. The chair can be placed to the side.

When there is to be confirmation, reception, or reaffirmation at a parish visitation, candidates may come in the most convenient order.

- Each candidate should have a card with their name printed to hold up for the Bishop that also notes whether they are being confirmed, received, or reaffirming vows.
- Candidates should come up one at a time.
- Chrism is not used for confirmation.
 - o in the New Testament, anointing is associated with Baptism
 - o in the Prayer Book, the use of chrism occurs only in the baptismal liturgy, while the laying on of hands is associated with confirmation

To comply with the changes in the canons on church membership, the laying on of hands will be used for reception and reaffirmation as well as confirmation.

The Bishop prefers to stand in front of the Bishop’s Chair for confirmations, receptions, and affirmations.

FOLLOWING THE BISHOP'S VISIT

Please, do not give the offering to the Bishop during his visit. Rather, have it counted and sent by check to the Diocesan office, 3717 Chestnut Street, Suite 300, Philadelphia, PA 19104 - **noting on the "for" line a visitation and which Bishop.**

Please fill out and mail the Official Record of Bishop's Visitation to the offices of the diocese the following week of the visit, listing all confirmations and receptions. If you do not have any confirmations and receptions, sign the designated place on the bottom and return the form.