



## THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF PENNSYLVANIA

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### GUIDELINES FOR THE BISHOP'S VISITATION

My brothers and sisters,

I present this customary as a guide to assist with my visitation as a service to our congregations. A Bishop's Customary is of great use in planning an official visitation. It alleviates many questions and facilitates the process. It is necessary that the guidelines offered in this customary are followed. However, if there are long standing customs or liturgical charisms that are essential; let's discuss. Know you are in my prayers and I am blessed to serve as your bishop.

**The Rt. Rev. Daniel G.P. Gutiérrez**  
**XVI Bishop of the Diocese of Pennsylvania**

Please complete the Visitation Worksheet and return it to the Bishop's office at the address listed on the worksheet. Please, include all information concerning service times and events scheduled. If there is any need to deviate from these guidelines, you will need to get permission from the Bishop's office as soon as possible. Please email all requests and forms to both:

Ms. Celeste Fisher - [cfisher@diopa.org](mailto:cfisher@diopa.org)

Mr. Jeremiah Mustered - [jmusted@diopa.org](mailto:jmusted@diopa.org)

### **SCHEDULING**

Pastoral 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.
- Particular pastoral needs of the parish.
- The celebration of the patronal feast or other significant event in the life of the parish.

The scheduling of visitations may be initiated by the rector or vicar of the congregation or by the Bishop's Office.

In order 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 an assisting Bishop, all such invitations should come from Bishop Gutiérrez's office. The mere convenience of parish confirmations and receptions is not considered adequate reason for scheduling an assisting Bishop.

- 1) Please call the Bishop's office (215-627-6434) and schedule a phone call with Mr. Mustered prior to the visitation.
- 2) Two weeks before the scheduled service and prior to the call, the Bishop should receive:
  - a) The completed visitation worksheet and a detailed agenda of the morning. Please make sure that the color of the day is specified on the paperwork.
  - b) The service bulletin (a draft is fine). For services where the Bishop is celebrant, the Bishop will approve of the liturgy during this process. Please do not make subsequent changes to the liturgy without consulting the Bishop's office.
  - c) Information on where the Bishop should park.
  - d) A letter from each confirmand telling the Bishop of their relationship with Jesus and the importance of confirmation in their lives.
    - (i) Special circumstances can be considered with approval from the Bishop's office.
- 3) Once the Diocese receives your visitation worksheet, the number and names of the candidates will be filled in and completed confirmation/reception certificates will be mailed to the church.
- 4) 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 to be used for needs of the church 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."
- 5) Please 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 registers recording baptisms, confirmations, marriages, and burials.

- 6) The Bishop will confirm (if there are candidates sufficiently prepared), preach and celebrate. The Bishop will not confirm or receive anyone who was not in the list provided to the Office. If there are no confirmations needed, the Bishop will still be glad to celebrate and preach. Special circumstances can be considered with prior approval from the Bishop's office.
- 7) When creating the liturgy, it is the Bishop's preference that Rite II Eucharistic Prayers A or B are used; and that for non-Sunday visits the week's Propers are preferred (or if a Saturday service, the next day's Propers).
- 8) The preference is to have the announcements after the final blessing and the processional.

### **THE DAY OF THE VISIT**

**Where space is available to merge the morning liturgies into one service, it is the preference of the Bishop to do so.**

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.

If a parish does not have a deacon, a deacon will accompany the Bishop. A chaplain or a canon may also accompany the Bishop. If a canon is present, whether or not they have a liturgical role, they will vest and process immediately in front of the Bishop's chaplain. The Bishop invites all of the clergy of a parish to vest and to be involved in the service.

Please have the sponsors of those being confirmed, received, or baptized gather before the service. It may not always be possible to have a formal practice, but a brief discussion about where and when they come up, and having them prepared for their part of the service is necessary.

The Bishop would like to meet with the confirmands for 10-15 minutes prior to the service.

The Bishop will meet with parishioners during the education hour. There 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/her 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. It is expected that this meeting will last about an hour.

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, or any other combination of folks where this would seem to be a useful thing to do. It is neither required nor necessary.

- Bishop will make every effort to arrive no less than 30 minutes before the service. The Bishop would like a few moments to pray prior to the start of service; please direct him to a small chapel or other quiet space.
- The rector, vicar, or priest-in-charge should make the necessary parish announcements. The preference is for the announcements to take place between the final blessing and procession out; and that they are not long. 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 of congregations. The Bishop does not feel like a guest of the congregation.
- 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 particular 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**

The Bishop 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. Language of the liturgy: The liturgy should be conducted in the language of the people. If the language is not English, please consult with Bishop as to whether a translator is needed, and for which parts of the service. Please use Eucharist Rite I or Rite II. With Rite II, the Bishop prefers Eucharistic Prayer A or B.

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. At all services where a baptism or the renewal of baptismal vows occur, the Paschal candle should be lit and placed appropriately near the font.

The Propers of the Day will be used, even when initiation rites are to take place.

- The Revised Common Lectionary (Episcopal Edition) is the norm in the Diocese of Pennsylvania.

Normally the liturgical color will be that of the day. In the case of celebration of new ministries, baptisms and anniversary celebrations the color should be white. Any departure from this should be discussed and approved before the day of the visitation.

The Bishop's preference is to say the Sursum Corda and Proper Preface to the Eucharistic Prayer.

If incense and a thurible are to be used (it is not required, and are discouraged if this is not your normal practice) the Bishop will cense the altar at the procession in, the Deacon will cense the Gospel at the reading of the Gospel, and the Bishop will cense the altar during the offertory prior to the altar being set.

The Bishop will not do children's sermons, but is happy to spend time with the children in the parish in other contexts. Also, the Bishop would like the children of the congregation to process out with him. After the Bishop has revered the altar, the children should meet him at an appropriate place (past the rails, bottom of the steps, edge of the transom, etc.) and process out with the Bishop. Please add to the bulletin the state "*all children are invited to join the Bishop for the procession out*".

If the parish has a deacon, they should be prepared to assist as the deacon of the mass. If the parish does not have a deacon, the office will contact one of our deacons and have one available.

In the absence of a chaplain, the deacon can also assist the Bishop. These duties may be performed by a senior acolyte or assisting lay minister. 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 crozier staff when the Bishop is not in procession.
- Holding the miter and crozier if the Bishop reverences the altar.
- Assisting with chrism at baptisms.
- Blessing the Gospel book and the deacon prior to reading of the Gospel.
- The Bishop will hold his crozier during the reading of the Gospel.
- Giving the miter and crozier during the blessing.

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. 366).

## **VESTMENTS**

The Bishop will wear the mitre and chasuble. If the congregation has a historical preference for the rochet and chimere, that may be requested. The Bishop will wear a cope on certain occasions, and on those occasions will require changing. The crozier may be placed in a stand during the lessons, sermon, and during Eucharist.

## **AT THE ALTAR**

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

- No missal stand. The Bishop likes 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.

## **WHEN THERE ARE BAPTISMS**

Baptisms are important. If there is a special circumstance, please contact the Bishop's office prior to the visit. When the Bishop is involved in a baptism, unless the space militates against it, the baptismal liturgy should unfold as follows:

- The presentation of the candidates, interrogation, and the baptismal covenant will be conducted from the chancel steps or the equivalent.
- During the litany the prayer for the candidates we will process to the font in the following manner:
  - The Deacon or acolyte bearing the Paschal candle
  - The Bishop
  - Presbyters, deacons and assisting clergy
  - Baptismal candidates and sponsors
  - The congregation where practicable

- The Bishop will bless the water and will normally say the thanksgiving over the water.
- The altar book should be available for the water blessing.
- One or more of the presbyters should do the water bath.
- 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 procession back before the altar takes place in the same order as above.
- The prayer for the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the chrismation will take place before the altar.

The Bishop will offer the Prayer of Thanksgiving over Water (p. 306) and the prayers following the baptism.

The Bishop will normally perform the chrismation but may on occasion invite the priest to do so.

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

Many in the diocese, lay and clergy, have spoken positively of their experience of the diocesan-wide liturgies and have expressed their hope that they will continue. We believe one of the real benefits of such services is that it helps to erode the notion that we are a congregational church and helps to underscore that in committing to this Church, one is related to and committed to the Body of Christ beyond the local parish.

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 1998, have made this fairly 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, regardless of the pedigree of the minister.

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.

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

- Each candidate will have a card with their name printed to hold up for the Bishop.
- Candidate should come up one at a time.
  - In the Prayer Book, the use of chrism occurs only in the baptismal liturgy, while the laying on of hands is associate with confirmation.

In order to comply with the canons on church membership, the laying on of hands will be used for reception and reaffirmation as well as confirmation.

The Bishop’s chair should be placed in the middle of the chancel. It may be moved after the confirmations to facilitate the Eucharist. Please coordinate the logistics with the chaplain and deacon.

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.**



## FOR THE BISHOP'S SPECIAL SERVICES

If there is any need to deviate from these guidelines, you will need to get permission from the Bishops office as soon as possible.

### **SCHEDULING**

Events will be scheduled as follows:

*Celebration of New Ministry* – It is customary after the arrival and settling in (approx. 90 days) of the new rector for the parish to schedule a Celebration of a New Ministry. The new rector or vicar should contact the Bishop's Executive Assistant to schedule this service. The Bishop's preference is that this service take place on a Wednesday evening, allowing the parish and diocese to participate fully. Please contact Celeste Fisher to begin the process (215-627-6434 x 108 or [cfisher@diopa.org](mailto:cfisher@diopa.org))

*Ordination to the Diaconate* – It is the custom of this Diocese for all deacons (transitional and vocational) to be ordained at the Diaconal Ordination that takes place in June of each year held at the Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral.

*Ordination to the Priesthood* – Those being ordained will work with the Canon for Transition's office to have an appropriate time and place for the ordination. The service may take place at the Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral or at a home parish. The Canon for Transition will coordinate with the Bishop's Office for final approval of the date and the time. For those taking place outside the Cathedral, a master of ceremony will be provided by the Diocese to help with the planning of the event.

Even with great care given to the 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.

### **CELEBRATION OF NEW MINISTRY**

**The Bishop sees the Celebration of New Ministry as an opportunity for the Diocese, the local deanery, and the parish to welcome the new rector or vicar into our community. It is a time to celebrate a new chapter of life for the parish.**

The Bishop does not want to conflate the important work of his Sunday Visitations and the important Celebration of New Ministry into one service. The confirmations, receptions, reaffirmations and baptisms are important spiritual milestones in the life of a person and congregation. A Celebration of New Ministry is an important milestone of the parish and in the ministry of the ordained. It is our custom, to facilitate this assembly of local clergy, that a Celebration of New Ministry is normally scheduled for Wednesday evenings.

Please remember to invite the clergy of the deanery to participate as appropriate. It is a good way for the new rector to meet his/her fellow colleagues in ministry as well. We encourage also the invitation of those people who have been helpful throughout this process, including the search consultant, the Interim Priest, and any clergy who have served the parish during the interim period.

The Book of Common Prayer allows for the Bishop to be the chief celebrant and for other priests and ministers to take part in the service (BCP, 558). It is the custom of the Bishop to be the presider and the preacher at these services. Any request for a different preacher should be made in writing to the Bishop prior to an invitation being sent.

Normally, the readings for the service are chosen from the list provided in the Book of Common Prayer page 560. Alternate readings may be requested but will require approval. It is the Bishop's custom to consider those requests – along with the theological reasoning behind them.

If the parish does not have a deacon, the Bishop's Office would be delighted to help find one from within our diocese. If there is a desire for a deacon from another diocese to serve at the Celebration, it is customary to send a request to the Bishop prior to inviting them.

### **Color of the Service: White**

If the Celebration takes place on the day of a feast or commemoration, please contact the Bishop's Office to confirm an alternate color.

### **Ordinations**

The Bishop's custom is to be the presider and preacher at all ordinations held within the diocese. The ordination liturgy will originate from the Bishop. Any request for a different preacher should be made in writing to the Bishop prior to an invitation being sent. A designee by the Bishop will work with the chaplain, deacon, and host church to facilitate the liturgy, the rehearsal, and the event. It is customary for the Bishop's seat to be in the middle of the chancel until the offertory; consideration of the physical space will be considered in planning.

Normally, the readings for the service are chosen from the list provided in the Book of Common Prayer pages 540-541 for Deacons, and page 528 for Priests. Alternate readings may be requested. It is the Bishop's custom to consider those requests – along with the theological reasoning behind them.

For the ordination of a priest, if a parish does not have a deacon, the Bishop's Offices would be delighted to help find one from within our diocese. If there is a desire for a deacon from another diocese to serve at the Celebration, it is customary to send a request to the Bishop prior to inviting them.

**Color of the Service: Red**

If the Celebration takes place on the day of a feast or commemoration, please contact the Bishop's Office to confirm an alternate color.



## THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF PENNSYLVANIA

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### Official Record of Bishop's Visitation

Please complete this electronic form and return it to the Diocesan Office by email or regular mail the **week after** the Bishop's visit. The information on this form becomes a part of the permanent record in the Diocesan Office of all confirmations and receptions in the Diocese of Pennsylvania. If lost, please notify the office by email or phone and we will be glad to send a duplicate.

**DIOCESE OF PENNSYLVANIA**  
**3717 Chestnut Street**  
**Suite 300**  
**Philadelphia, PA 19104**  
**Phone: 215-627-6434 x108**  
**email: cfisher@diopa.org**

Clergy or Sr. Warden \_\_\_\_\_

Church \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

Visiting Bishop \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Visitation \_\_\_\_\_

Please **type** the full baptismal names, age, previous ecclesiastical connection, if any, and address of those being confirmed or received, noting whether confirmed (C) or received (R). For married women, please put husband's first name in parenthesis after the woman's full name. [ex. Mary Ann Smith Cuthbert (Mrs. John)]. **Whether there are confirmations and receptions or not during the Bishop's visit, please sign below and return to the diocesan office.**

The Bishop asks that notice of the Visitation be given in advance to your congregation with explanation that the loose offering on that occasion will be for the Bishop's Discretionary Fund to be used for needs of the Church not covered by the Diocesan Budget.

Total Number of Confirmed \_\_\_\_\_ Received \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Clergy of Senior Warden \_\_\_\_\_

