

CUSTOMARY FOR BISHOP'S VISITATION

The What and the Why of a Customary

A customary provides a process, a pathway, for us to make an Episcopal visitation an opportunity to celebrate your congregation's mission and ministry. Hopefully it informs you of my preferences for the visitation and all of its elements, so we know what to prepare, how to prepare, and what to expect. It has more than just a practical side to it. It allows all of us to fully participate in the day, the worship and whatever else we plan. Getting all of this taken care of well before my arrival should make it more relaxing for all of us and allow us to be open to what the Spirit is doing, rather than wondering about the details of what happens and when. So, I ask you to please plan for my visit carefully.

Let us celebrate our joy in Christ, as a way of life through our worship and witness together. Let us journey deeper in our stewardship, leadership and relationship. +Prince

Scheduling

I would like Episcopal visitations to be scheduled to balance the following priorities:

- the length of time since the last Episcopal visitation, preferably annually;
- the need to schedule Episcopal rites: major parish anniversaries, dedications of new buildings, groundbreakings, etc. (Some of these will be scheduled on days other than Sunday);
- address particular pastoral needs of the parish;
- the celebration of a patron saint or other significant event in the life of the parish.

The scheduling of visitations will be coordinated by the Rector (or Wardens in absence of a rector) and the Bishop's Office. As a general rule, I do not return to a parish for a regular pastoral visitation until all other parishes have been visited.

In order to facilitate planning, the visitation schedule is created to cover the next yearly rotation cycle. 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 my 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 my commitment that such changes will be kept to a minimum, but from time to time they will occur. In order for me to visit each parish in a 52-week period, I am open to having visits on a weeknight or Saturday, especially when there are no confirmations, receptions, reaffirmations or baptisms.

Procedures

Since it is an annual visit, I will celebrate, confirm, receive or reaffirm, and preach at each visitation.

- I prefer to use a festive red for confirmation.
- I would like to meet candidates for about thirty minutes before the liturgy.
- I prefer to confirm in a standing position.

- Each candidate approaches the Bishop and before kneeling, standing, or sitting, loudly and clearly says: “Bishop Singh, my name is . . . and I would like to be _____”. This simple statement encourages the candidate to own their decision.
- It is my preference to have clergy and the candidate’s family stand around and lay hands, when possible, on the candidate’s shoulder as I pray for the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.
- Please use the Propers for the Day, not the Confirmation Propers.

When there are no candidates, I would like you to discern a celebration of missional practices, dedication of new initiatives, commissioning of lay leaders, community-centered celebrations, or such, as part of the official Episcopal visit. Let us use the Baptismal Covenant in place of the Nicene Creed.

Vestments:

Please indicate, during the planning phase, if your preference is for me to wear rochet and chimere, or chasuble (cope) and miter for my visit.

Liturgy:

I prefer to use the Revised Common Lectionary.

Please let me know ahead of time if you would like me to chant (setting) any portion of the liturgy, preach a children’s sermon, or teach a joyful song with my guitar.

I invite you to sustain the rhythm of Eucharistic Prayer you are using for the season.

When we have a confirmation liturgy, I suggest that we move from the Peace to the Offertory, omitting the Prayers of the People and Confession. The request for special intentions in prayer can be made prior to the Eucharistic Prayer, or included in the prayers for the candidates.

Baptism

If baptism is scheduled I would prefer that the priest, when present, do the actual baptism. I am happy to do the chrismation.

Holy Eucharist

I invite the priest, or the Deacon, to set the altar and do the ablutions as is your custom.

Please be mindful that as host and celebrant, I prefer to receive communion after everyone else in the congregation.

Additional Procedures for Visitation

In preparation for my visitation, I prefer to have a telephone or face-to-face conversation with the priest, or warden, two weeks prior to a scheduled visitation in order to plan the broad outline. Please contact my executive assistant to make an appointment.

- Kindly email/mail me your latest Mutual Ministry Review summary prior to the telephone or face-to-face conversation with a copy to the Canon to the Ordinary.
- Kindly let me know if there is anything significant that I should be aware of, or something specific you'd wish me to address during my visit.
- Kindly contact the Communications Director when commissioning first responders or recognizing other community or parish leaders so certificates can be prepared in advance of my visit.
- Kindly email names of your parish leadership, those in diocesan leadership, or anyone to specifically acknowledge on the day of my visit, to my executive assistant.
- Kindly send me an electronic copy of the liturgy with a copy to my executive assistant early in the week.

My executive assistant will call the priest, or warden, in advance of the date of the visitation to confirm the time, details of the liturgy, number of confirmands, etc., and then send the priest, or warden, the appropriate number of signed certificates and a form to be completed and returned to the Bishop's office after the visitation.

We invite the parish treasurer to send the unpledged offering on the day of my visit as a check, made payable to The Bishop's Discretionary Fund, to Episcopal Diocese of Rochester, 3825 East Henrietta Road – Suite 100, Henrietta, NY 14467. Due to your generosity, I am able to support ministries I am aware, such as, Clergy/their families, mission, theological education, disaster relief, saints in need, and Interfaith ministries. This fund gets audited annually.

- If the priest, or warden, choose to use discretionary fund envelopes, they are available at the diocesan office. I am told it is helpful to send them out in the previous month's newsletter so if the priest, or warden, plan on doing that, please contact us in advance to have them sent. If the priest, or warden, are not planning on including them in a newsletter mailing, please arrange to pick them up. I hope you will mention the importance of your discretionary fund and that of the Bishop's in your announcements, prior to my visit. These offerings for the ministry are crucial.

The Canons require that the I examine the parish records [III.12.3(a)1.]

At every such visitation the visiting Bishop shall preside at the Holy Eucharist and at the Initiatory Rites, as required, preach the Word, examine the records of the Congregation required by Canon III.9.6.(b)5, and examine the life and ministry of the Clergy and Congregation according to Canon III.9.6.

- Please have the parish records (Burials, Baptisms, Confirmations, Marriages) available along with a copy of your most recent parochial and annual report.

- All recorded marriages of divorced persons should have a copy of the consent appended to the records or readily available.
- The names of people confirmed and received that day should be entered with all information complete.

During my visitation, I wish to meet with clergy and vestry for about forty-five minutes, preferably before the primary liturgy. You are welcome to invite members of your congregation who are elected officials, delegates and those serving in the diocese in some capacity to the meeting. At the vestry meeting, I would like to discuss how your parish is working on its goals in relation to Diocesan goals as related to the areas of congregational development, mission, evangelism and creation care.

Finally, I am open to being with you for your 8 AM liturgy, but only if you feel that is pastorally the best use of our time together.

Following my visit, the Canon to the Ordinary will call the Priest for any appropriate follow up or feedback.

Hospitality

I encourage your community to use the hospitality experience to reflect the witness of the diversity of your community without going over the top!

Parking

Please save a parking place for me near your entry door. This helps me with carrying my vestments and crozier, and occasionally my guitar!

You are very important to me!

Please feel free to meet with me if that would be helpful to you personally or to your ministry in general. My staff and I stand ready, at any time, to be contacted, but especially in case of emergencies. We are committed to supporting you in our mission and ministry of growing our congregations numerically and in spiritual and missional leadership. If you would like to meet with me for pastoral reasons, you could schedule it through my executive assistant. You are a priority to me.

Joy in Christ, as a way of life!