

Visitation Customary

The Rt. Rev. Stephen Lane

The What and the Why of a Customary

A customary provides a path for us to make an Episcopal visitation a celebration of your congregation's mission and ministry. Hopefully, it informs you of my preferences for the visitation, so you know how to prepare, and what to expect. It has more than just a practical side to it. It enables all of us to fully participate in the day, the worship and whatever else we plan.

I am easy with visitations and enjoy meeting with you and your community. The bishop's presence creates a disruption in the normal flow of parish life. Mistakes are inevitable. I don't worry about them, and I don't want you to either.

Visitation Planning Form

After you have reviewed the customary, please complete the online [Visitation Planning form](#) at least **[3] weeks** prior to the visitation. This will help me collect all the necessary details covered in the customary. I also ask that you utilize the visitation checklist included on p. 5.

Scheduling

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

- The length of time since the last Episcopal visitation, at least every other year
- The need to schedule Episcopal rites: major parish anniversaries, dedication of new buildings, groundbreaking, etc., which can be scheduled on days other than Sunday
- Baptism, confirmation, reaffirmation, and reception
- Recognizing/commissioning of first responders, community leaders, lay leaders including sextons and other administrative staff
- 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 rule, I do not return to a parish for a regular pastoral visitation until all other parishes have been visited.

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

Confirmations/Receptions

I am willing to confirm, receive, or reaffirm at each visitation. (I'm also willing to undertake regional confirmation services with several parishes.) I would like the Rector(s) to join me in presiding at the liturgy of the Table.

- I prefer to use a white for the renewal of baptismal vows.
- I would like to meet candidates for about **30 minutes** before the liturgy.
- I prefer to confirm in a standing position.
- Each candidate approaches the bishop and clearly says:
“Bishop Lane, 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 with candidate and lay hands, 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. Please 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

- We will use the Revised Common Lectionary which is the authorized lectionary of The Episcopal Church.
- Please let me know ahead of time if there are special elements or local customs related to the liturgy, e.g., chanting, time with children, etc.
- I invite you to continue 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.
- Please use the Episcopal Blessing, BCP p. 523.

Baptism/Chrismation

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, I prefer to receive communion after everyone else in the congregation.

I encourage the use of the eucharistic prayers from *Enriching Our Eucharist*. There are amended versions that use more inclusive language. I'd like us to use the contemporary version of the Lord's Prayer. You can blame me if people wonder why.

Bishop's Appeal

- 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 Appeal, to Episcopal Diocese of Rochester, 3825 East Henrietta Road – Suite 100, Henrietta, NY 14467.
- If the priest, or warden, choose to use Bishop's Appeal envelopes, I will have envelopes with me the day of the visit. Please discard any cards/envelopes from 2021.
- It's been apparent that by creating a special theme or celebration for the visitation ahead of time, attendance increases for the Bishop's Visitation. Need ideas? Check in with Communications Director Steve Richards for collaborative ideas!
- Due to your generosity, we are investing in Leadership Development in Deaf Ministry, College for Congregational Development, Formation of Children, Youth and Young Adult ministries, Seminarian Scholarships, along with the Bishop's Discretionary Fund to support for Clergy/their families, mission, theological education, disaster relief, saints in need, and Interfaith ministries. The Bishop's Appeal is audited annually.
- These offerings are a crucial investment in leadership development for special Diocesan priorities without raising apportionments and draw-rates on investment.

Parish Records

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(c), 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.
- Please have the worship register available.
- The names of people confirmed and received that day should be entered with all information complete.

Meeting with Vestry

- During my visitation, I wish to meet with clergy and vestry for **30-60 minutes**, at a time which fits with your worship schedule.
- 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 things are going and what concerns you have. What might the diocese do to support your work?

Hospitality/Q&A

I encourage your community to offer simple hospitality following worship. If desired, we can use the time for a Q&A.

Parking

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

You are very important to me!

Please feel free to schedule time with me if that would be helpful to you personally or to your ministry in general. I look forward to seeing you.

Joy in Christ, a way of life!

Visitation Checklist

3 Weeks Before

- **Visitation Planning Form:** The online visitation planning form must be submitted **[3] weeks prior** to the visitation.
<https://www.cognitofrms.com/EpiscopalDioceseOfRochester1/PLANNINGFORAVISITATION>
 - Please 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.
 - Use this form to submit names for Baptism/Confirmation/Reception certificates.

2 Weeks Before

- **Visitation Planning Zoom:** In preparation for my visitation, I prefer to have a zoom meeting with the priest, or warden, **[2] weeks prior** to a scheduled visitation to review the broad outline. Please contact my executive assistant, Sarah to make an appointment.
- **Mutual Ministry Review:** Email your latest Mutual Ministry Review summary prior to the visitation planning zoom.

1 Week Before

- **Bulletin:** Email to Sarah at least **[1] week** prior to visitation, a draft is acceptable.
- Check color of hangings
- If chrism oil is needed, must notify office

During Visitation

- **Bishop's Appeal:** Announcement made/written concerning the designation of the unpledged offerings to the Bishop's Appeal.
- **Person assigned to be photographer:** During the visit, please arrange for someone in the parish to take a few group photos with the bishop, and email photos to Steve Richards.
- **Records:** Parish and Service Registers made available for review.

After Visitation

- **Bishop's Appeal Check:** Send check, made payable to The Bishop's Appeal, to Episcopal Diocese of Rochester, 3825 East Henrietta Road – Suite 100, Henrietta, NY 14467.
- **Email Photos:** Email group shots from the visit to Steve Richards, steve@episcopaldioceseofrochester.org