

El Camino Real Bishop's Visitation Customary for Parishes

It is the Bishop's custom to visit each parish in the diocese within a 15-18-month period. Some parishes are on a regular schedule due to the number of confirmations that need preparation. Most parish visitations are on a rotation, with an eye toward having the Bishop in different deaneries each Sunday. Exceptions are made for special events and ordinations.

Two weeks before the visitation, please contact Kirstin Nielsen kirstin@realepiscopal.org to discuss the nature of the visitation:

- Please review the visitation customary.
- Please notify Kirstin of receptions or meetings following the service.
- Email the final draft of the bulletin to Kirstin and the Bishop for approval 7-10 days beforehand.
- Once the bulletin is approved, please send the final draft to Kirstin in a Word or PDF format for the Presider's Book

For the day of the Visitation, the Clergy Leader should:

- Designate a parking space for the Bishop.
- Greet the Bishop and show her the restroom and the room to meet confirmands, those being received or affirmed, and those being baptized.
- Have certificates prepared for the Bishop's signature.
- Have Church Service Book and records ready for the Bishop to review and sign.
- Have Bishop's Discretionary envelopes available for the congregation, and make an announcement about donating to this fund.

My visitation is an opportunity to tend to canonical responsibilities, as well as enjoy the life of the congregation. Visitations include Eucharist, and when possible, baptisms, confirmations, receptions, and reaffirmations. If there are not to be any of the above, a Renewal of Baptismal Vows should be included in the service.

In addition to important liturgical events, a visitation provides me with the opportunity to meet with Vestries, enjoy coffee hour, hold parish conversations, and even teach. However, not all of these would be able to take place during a single visitation, so if you have preferences for how you would like me to engage in life of the congregation, in addition to the Eucharistic events, then please state those. We can also meet at times other than on Sundays, which opens up possibilities for meaningful engagement in other ways. As you prepare for your visitation, please contact the Bishop's Assistant, Kirstin Nielsen for help with planning and coordinating. Kirstin keeps my calendar and helps to plan my time with congregations and leaders.

Below are important points to attend to for my visitation. Most of these are canonical requirements, and a few are personal preferences:

Liturgy:

Liturgies in our diocese are to follow the Book of Common Prayer, Enriching our Worship, the Book of Occasional Services, and other liturgies and sources approved by General Convention. You do not need to seek special permission from me for any Convention approved liturgies. If, however, you

wish to deviate from approved liturgies and their intended use of The Episcopal Church for a visitation, or at any time, this needs to be discussed with me first. I appreciate and enjoy conversations about liturgies, your theological reasoning, and your attention to the beauty of our rituals.

On the day of the service, please let me know the following BEFORE the service:

- How communion is distributed.
- When announcements usually take place, and who gives them.
- What kinds of gifts are brought forward at the offertory.
- Additional items that need to be blessed.

For baptisms, reaffirmations, receptions and confirmations, the candidates should know what to expect and have been prepared for the rite itself. When necessary, I will give some additional instruction and encouragement as we proceed through the service.

Specific liturgical preferences:

- ✓ *If there are baptisms, with or without other rites of initiation, the liturgy begins on page 299 of the Book of Common Prayer. On page 308, I administer Chrism before the Collect the top of the page.*
- ✓ *If there are rites of initiation, but NO baptisms, the liturgy begins on page 413 of the Book of Common Prayer*
- ✓ *Should there be no baptisms, confirmations, receptions or reaffirmations, please include the Renewal of the Baptismal Vows in place of The Nicene Creed.*
- ✓ *I will give my own blessing at the end of the service. Should I desire to use the Apostolic Blessing, I will let you know before the printing of the bulletin.*

Color:

The color of the day for confirmations, receptions, and reaffirmations is RED. If there is a baptism, that takes precedence, and the color of the day would be WHITE. Should there not be any of these rites, then the liturgical color of the day is proper.

Readings:

Texts assigned for the day from The Revised Common Lectionary are the norm, although in a few festal occasions, other scriptural passages could be appropriate. Use your discretion wisely, and please consult with me at least 10 days ahead of time about readings other than the RCL.

Singing:

I have a vocal cord injury that often will not permit me to chant—unfortunately. However, if you do wish a chanted service, please let me know, and if I am able on that day, I will do so.

Bishop's Chair:

The Bishop's Chair is usually placed in the center, in front of the altar for Confirmations, etc. Whether Candidates choose to stand or kneel for confirmations, etc. will influence the placement of the chair. In the case of ordinations, the chair MUST be in the center in front of the altar. For other occasions,

depending on the architecture and space, the chair may be to the side. The Bishop should be visible at all times. *Important:* The chair for the Bishops' Chaplain should always be to the Bishop's left.

Personnel:

Deacon of the Liturgy:

For the Deacon of the Liturgy, I prefer the parish deacon serve, if there is one. If not, please contact another deacon in your deanery to serve in that role.

Bishop's Chaplain:

The Bishop's Chaplain may be lay or ordained. If there is a lay leader or a person in ordination process who you believe well-suited for this role, please invite them to serve with approval from Kirstin. Please share the Bishop's Chaplain Customary with them prior to the service.

Discretionary Envelopes:

It is the custom of this diocese when the bishop visits to provide envelopes for contributions to the Bishop's Discretionary Fund. When working on details with Kirstin, please let her know if you need them provided. Your generosity to the Discretionary Fund provides financial support to those with special needs beyond what a parish is normally able to attend to—whether clergy or lay.

Meeting with candidates:

I enjoy doing this for about 20 to 30 minutes, depending on the number of candidates; allowing me about 20 minutes to vest and prepare for worship. I anticipate that candidates are liturgically prepared for the day, and I enjoy getting to know them and learning about their personal and spiritual journeys.

If there are more than 5 or 6 candidates, please plan to hold a preparation session during the week before so that I may give appropriate time to each person.

About the Preparation of Candidates:

Rites should always be connected to ongoing formation in the parish. For example, the rite of confirmation should occur as a result of formation and discernment. Some typical topics to address during Confirmation class are:

Hebrew Scriptures

New Testament and the Early Church

The Anglican Tradition and The Episcopal Church

The Book of Common Prayer—Spirituality and Practice

Baptism and Eucharist

Mission and Ministry

Life in the Parish/Congregation

Participation of Family and Sponsors:

It is a local decision as to whether candidates sit together or with their families. The families and

sponsors are more than welcome to join the candidate, placing their hands on their shoulders while I lay hands on their head. This is a gesture of the prayerful participation of the whole community as we ask for the Spirit to confirm, strengthen, defend, and continue to be at work in the candidate.

Signing Prayer Books and certificates:

Depending on the number of candidates, please factor the need for this when determining my arrival time. I prefer not to be signing documents or books when I am meeting with candidates.

Checking the Books:

I will want to review and sign the church registers. Please allow time for this and have them set aside for me.

Chrism:

Please have the Chrism placed in an oil stock or small bowl for confirmation, reception, and reaffirmation. Please consult with the Bishop's Chaplain about the vessel being used. Additionally, please have a small towel or tissue so that the Bishop may wipe her hands.

standing or kneeling.

Photographs

Please plan to have photographs taken at the END of the service, and not during.

If there are group photos, please have a designated photographer present. Please inform the candidates and families to stay for the photos right after the service. Please inform the photographer that the “photo shoot” is to be very brief and efficient so that the families may proceed to the festivities afterward.

Group photos may be sent to Elrond Lawrence <Elrond@RealEpiscopal.org> for publication in the diocesan newsletter.

A few comments on Confirmation, Reception and Reaffirmation:

Canon 17 states:

“All persons who have received the Sacrament of Holy Baptism with water in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, whether in this Church or in another Christian Church, and whose Baptisms have been duly recorded in this Church, are members thereof.

It is expected that all adult members of this Church, after appropriate instruction, will have made a mature public affirmation of their faith and commitment to the responsibilities of their Baptism and will have been confirmed or received by the laying on of hands by a Bishop of this Church or by a Bishop of a Church in communion with this Church. Those who have previously made a mature public commitment in another Church may be received by the laying on of hands by a Bishop of this Church, rather than confirmed.

Any person who is baptized in this Church as an adult and *receives the laying on of hands by the Bishop at Baptism* is to be considered, for the purpose of this and all other Canons, as both baptized and confirmed; also any person who is baptized in this Church as an adult and at some time after the Baptism receives the laying on of hands by the Bishop in Reaffirmation of Baptismal Vows is to be considered, for the purpose of this and all other Canons, as both baptized and confirmed.”

To help clarify:

Confirmation is for youth who were baptized in The Episcopal Church at a young age, or who came to this church with their families before making a “mature commitment”. It is preferred that confirmands be at least 14 years of age.

Confirmation is also appropriate for those of any age who are making a mature commitment for the first time.

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.