

THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MAINE



Customary for Visitations

Part 1: The Bishop's Visitation

The bishop is the chief priest and pastor of a diocese and may visit a faith community for many reasons: to share in the joys and sorrows of community life, to provide pastoral care in times of crisis, to assist during a time of transition between ordained leaders, to celebrate anniversaries and special occasions, etc. Such visits occur as needed.

The bishop also has responsibility for the oversight of ministry in the diocese, not only regional and diocesan-wide ministry, but also the ministry of each faith community. The canons of The Episcopal Church require the bishop to visit each church at least once every three years for this purpose. Such a visit is called a Visitation. I look forward to being with you, and to learning more about your church life, mission and ministry. I am eager to hear and to share the stories of your faith journeys.

Part 2: The Parts of a Visitation

- a) There are two basic elements to a Visitation: 1) the opportunity for the bishop and people to worship God together, and 2) conversation between the bishop and faith community leadership about the ministry of the community. A visitation may occur on any day of the week, not just on Sundays. I will preach and celebrate Holy Eucharist, and meet with the Vestry or Bishop's Committee. (Please see information about Regional Confirmations.)
- b) You are welcome to add special observances (anniversaries, blessings of new space or furnishings, etc.) to our time together, but be careful not to over-load the service.

- c) In addition to worship and conversation, I will also:
- ✚ Inspect the records of the church (Record of Services and the Parish Register).
 - ✚ Listen to members of the congregation describe the life of their faith community and provide consultation about challenges the community may be facing.
 - ✚ Respond to questions about the life of the diocese and larger church.
 - ✚ Make sure the congregation-clergy relationship is open, healthy and fruitful, including adequate compensation and care for the clergy and their families.

Part 3: Planning for the Visitation

- a) Relax, please. We're going to have a good time together. Through careful planning, a lot of stress can be managed. This should be a time of celebration, not exhaustion.
- b) You are always welcome to be in touch with me, either by phone or email, and I want to hear about any questions or concerns you might have as we plan our time together. For help with questions, concerns, or to reach me, just contact Barb 207-772-1953 x 125 or bmartin@episcopalmaine.org.
- c) Advance planning is important to me. Please fill out the "Visitation Worksheet" and return it to my office (snail or e-mail) at least 2 weeks before our time together.
- d) Last minute changes are expected. Please be in touch with Barbara quickly so we can make the necessary adjustments.
- e) If you usually celebrate more than one service on Sunday, please consider arranging a compromise time so all the people of God can gather with their bishop at one service. If there are special circumstances, we can have a conversation about alternatives.
- f) I would like to see the Order of Worship ahead of time. Please send a draft (by e-mail) at least one week in advance and before copies are printed.
- g) Since it's hard to talk about the visitation details during the hustle and bustle right before the service, it is helpful for me to talk with you a day or two before the visit. Please be in touch with Barb to schedule a mutually convenient time for us to chat.
- h) Please don't assume I remember your worship customs or space. I'd much prefer too much information than too little.

Part 4: Worship

- a) It's time to expand our liturgical vocabulary. Unless we've made advance arrangements, the liturgy will follow the Alternative Services of the Episcopal Church (*Enriching Our Worship*). The appointed Scripture readings are those of the day from *The Revised Common Lectionary*. I'm also willing to work with you crafting a special or original service for the occasion based on *An Order for Celebrating the Holy Eucharist* (BCP, 400). If you would like to create a liturgy for the occasion, please be in touch.
- b) At least one hymn must be from a source other than the Hymnal 1982.
- c) Please keep in mind that the Order of Service changes when Baptism or Confirmation is celebrated. **When the bishop visits, the Renewal of Baptismal Vows (p.292, BCP) always replaces the Creed even if there are no baptisms or confirmations. This may include Thanksgiving over the water (p. 306, BCP) and/or sprinkling the congregation with baptismal water (asperges).**
- d) Liturgical colors:
 - ✚ White: for Baptism/Confirmation/Reception/Reaffirmation
 - ✚ Red: if a major Sunday feast (ex: Palm Sunday or Pentecost)
 - ✚ Seasonal
 - ✚ Festal: for special occasions or celebrations
- e) I will always preach on the appointed texts for the day or the occasion. The sermon is a liturgical element and is about preaching the Gospel. Other matters are best covered in settings where conversation and dialogue can happen, e.g., at coffee hour or a separate event.
- f) The Lord's Prayer will be the Contemporary version.
- g) Priests and deacons share in the bishop's ministry and should assist with the celebration of the Eucharist according to their order of ministry.
- h) It is important that the liturgical ministry of the laity be upheld ~ lay persons should serve in their usual manner. The priest may assist distributing the bread.
- i) It is helpful for the bishop to have a chaplain, even if there is a deacon present. This should be someone with no competing responsibilities (choir, lector, etc.), and who is able to help with the graceful juggling of books, the Order of Worship, oil stock, crozier and mitre during the liturgy. The chaplain needs to be able to endure prolonged standing, and should plan to spend time with me before the service. The

chaplain should also think about where things will go during the service ~ out of the way but readily accessible, and not on the altar or table.

- j) All pre-service conversations (chaplain, confirmands and others, sponsors) should be concluded at least fifteen minutes before the service begins
- k) If it can easily be arranged, I would like access to a glass of water during the liturgy.
- l) Snapping photos during the liturgy detracts from worship and should be discouraged, but I have no objection to inconspicuous video or picture taking with no floodlights or flashes. I will be available for photos with confirmands or others after the service.

Part 5: Confirmation

- a) I want to move most confirmations to Regional Confirmation events. Regional confirmations give the Candidates opportunity to experience being part of a larger church and allow us to focus on Confirmation as the sole item of business. Such events have the added benefit of separating Confirmation from Visitation, thus freeing up Visitation time for other things, and providing you with greater worship flexibility. If you would like to host a Regional Confirmation event, there are 2017 calendar opportunities available. Please be in touch with Barbara for more information.
- b) I like to meet with those being baptized, being confirmed/received or reaffirming their Baptismal Vows and their sponsors before the service. Unless there are a large number of people, 30 minutes is sufficient. I want to talk to folks about their spiritual journeys and their experience of the process of preparation.
- c) Please take the time to help your people understand what will happen in the Confirmation liturgy. A rehearsal or walk through prior to the service helps to reduce their anxiety, and I appreciate your doing the lion's share of the liturgical prep ahead of time.
- d) I would like each person to be presented by name by either the priest or his/her sponsors. Depending on the space available, it may be easier for the candidates and their supporters to stand in place at the time of presentation. **Please designate a "chief presenter" for each candidate to help start the presentation sentence.**

- e) Candidates should be prepared to answer the examination questions in a firm voice and in unison. Practice will help them know what to expect.
- f) If they have not come forward for the presentation, candidates and sponsors will come forward after the Prayer for the Candidates and arrange themselves along the front of the church leaving enough space for the congregation to have good sight lines to the center.
- g) Candidates may come to the center with their sponsors/supporters in any order and sponsors/supporters may join the prayer by laying their hands on the shoulders of the candidate. **I stand for the laying on of hands and so should the candidates.**
- h) Each candidate should wear a nametag or remind me of his/her first name and what he/she is expecting (confirmation, reception, or reaffirmation).
- i) Certificates (Baptism/Confirmation/Reception/Reaffirmation) will be completed by my office based on the information you provide on the visitation worksheet.

Part 6: Ministry Conversation with Leaders

- a) I plan on spending some good social time after the liturgy to meet the members of the congregation. I usually prefer to meet with folks rather than to eat so a “stand-up” reception is fine for most occasions. I am open to sit-down events that fit best with your congregation’s customs. **(I cannot eat onions, garlic or mushrooms in any form, and am lactose intolerant and can’t eat milk-based soups, sauces, etc. I can eat hard cheeses.)**
- b) **It is my firm policy that alcohol should not be served at church events where children/youth are present or when people gather for decision-making, educational or spiritual growth. No exceptions!** At social events where alcohol is served, an equally attractive and accessible alternative must be available. Churches which serve alcohol are responsible for providing alternative transportation for people whose driving may be impaired. (See attached alcohol use policy.)
- c) Time to meet with the Vestry or Bishop’s Committee is an integral part of a Visitation. It is important for me to meet the leadership of the diocese and to hear about the ministry of the congregation (see “Notes for Vestry Visit”). A meeting of about an hour should suffice. However, if I am arriving the evening before, I’d be happy to meet with the vestry and/or congregational leadership over a simple or potluck supper and followed by compline.

Part 7: Practical Matters

- a) Gretchen, my wife, sometimes attends Visitations ~ thank you for your awareness that she is with me. She is quite self-sufficient and willing to help out in the kitchen or sing in the choir. If you would like her to sing, she appreciates a copy of the music in advance (send to Barb).
 - b) Let me know what time you would like me to arrive ~ this time frame should include not only time with my chaplain, the confirmands and sponsors, but also an opportunity to consult with you about last minute details, and a minute or two to pray together before we process.
 - c) An important part of the visitation is spending some private, pastoral time with the clergy and their family. This can be difficult to arrange around all the other expectations and is often left out. I am happy to take you and your spouse to lunch, and if we cannot meet on the same day, I would like to arrange an alternate time. Barbara can facilitate arrangements.
 - d) The “Record of Official Acts” is an important section of the visitation worksheet and contains all the information necessary for my office to compile “Bishop’s Official Acts” report published in the Diocesan journal.
 - e) The offering to the Bishop’s Discretionary Fund (BDF) is made up of the loose offering and any other donations designated to “BDF”. The BDF meets a number of urgent pastoral needs throughout our diocese and is always in need of support. If helpful, I am happy to talk with the congregations about the kinds of needs that BDF supports.
- Many treasurers have questions about “best practices” in regard to BDF donations. Generally:
- ✚ It is helpful to advise the congregation about this offering several weeks in advance of my visit so they know what to expect and can be prepared.
 - ✚ Personal checks should be made payable to the church (not to the diocese or to me) and labeled “BDF” in the memo line.
 - ✚ Please do not include my gift to you in the BDF donation.
 - ✚ Please combine all cash and check donations into one check from your church, made payable to the Diocese of Maine, with “BDF” written in the memo line.
 - ✚ A self-addressed, stamped envelope is provided for your convenience.

