

Bishop Thomas James Brown, Tenth Bishop of Maine

*Visitation Customary*

**Why the Bishop Visits**

Because the bishop is the chief priest and pastor, it’s both his responsibility and privilege to be with you and your faith community. He happily accepts invitations from you for a variety of occasions: to share in the joys and sorrows of the community, to offer pastoral care during crisis, to join you during times of leadership transition, and to celebrate anniversaries and special liturgies. There will be occasions, however, when as much as he would like to be present, he will need to ask a member of the diocesan staff to represent him; we are a team and when one of them comes to you she/he/they represent the Office of the Bishop. Another important reason for the bishop to join you is canonical: The Episcopal Church requires the bishop to visit each church at least once every three years. When this occurs, it’s referred to as an “episcopal visitation”—and these are distinct from the other occasions described above when I am with your faith community. What follows describes the various parts of an episcopal visitation:

**Worship**

When Bishop Brown joins you for an episcopal visitation he will preside and preach at the Holy Eucharist. He trusts the liturgical decision-making of clergy and communities and promises to have a conversation with you if he has questions or concerns.

**Conversation**

The bishop hopes that conversations will be abundant symbols of every episcopal visitation. He’s eager to hear from and talk to the primary leaders of the congregation (usually this is the rector, vicar, or priest-in-charge), the vestry or the bishop’s committee, and with parishioners. The conversations can take whatever form you think best. He wants to hear from the congregation their stories of faith, as well as to listen to descriptions about what’s currently sparking joy. Of course, he wants also to know what’s challenging, and to offer support and that of the diocesan staff. Questions about the Diocese of Maine or the Episcopal Church are welcomed. In turn, you can expect him to elicit stories about the relationship between the clergy and the congregation. In the ministry settings where a clergy person is receiving compensation, hearing about the details of the compensation, and if necessary, in advocating for the support of clergy and their families, is always good.

**Records of the Church**

Please have the official records of the church ready for the bishop. The Record of Services, the Parish Register, and Safe Church Certificates and a list of those who hold lay licenses in the congregation (name and ministry) should be ready for me to see; the bishop will sign and date the back cover of the official records.

**Making Plans**

* It’s a lot of extra work to have an episcopal visitation. An Episcopal Visitation generates and requires a lot of energy! At the same time, it can be a time for connection and celebration. All shall be well!
* When it’s possible, and helpful to the mission of the faith community, the bishop welcomes episcopal visitations that span the weekend; he can arrive on Friday and remain until Sunday afternoon.
* One or two liturgies? This is entirely up to the clergy person and the congregation. Bishop Brown is always happy to preach and preside at all the weekend worship services.
* Please think about the planning process to be about a month-long project. The actual tasks are relatively easy to accomplish, but the development of a worship leaflet, and any conversations between us will require more lead time than that of a typical Sunday. We have included a Visitation Worksheet. Please email it to Bishop Brown at tbrown@episcopalmaine.org; at least two weeks before the episcopal visitation. Changes are expected; just let Bishop Brown know.
* In the planning process please feel free to email or call with questions or concerns. For liturgical matters please text Bishop Brown at 207.653.1796.
* On the Thursday or Friday before the episcopal visitation, at a time that’s convenient for you, a short conversation is helpful; a quick check-in to make sure everything is ready.

**Liturgical Guidelines**

* The Episcopal Church authorizes the Revised Common Lectionary. Unless the Sunday falls on a day when a Feast of our Lord can be transferred, please keep the propers for the Lord’s Day.
* Be creative! There are many Anglican resources available to use. However, please make sure that anything not from the Book of Common Prayer or The Hymnal 1982 is noted. It’s helpful to Bishop Brown to have a heads-up if the texts or music are unfamiliar to your congregation; sometimes he will make brief catechetical remarks.
* Special observances: feel free to craft the liturgy to integrate anniversaries, and blessings of new space or furnishings. There is one caution to this invitation: please make sure the liturgy doesn’t become what the bishop calls, “liturgy by the yard.” Sometimes more is more, and sometimes less is more; use your judgment and wisdom.
* You may choose to use the Nicene Creed, or the Renewal of Baptismal Promises (BCP p. 292). If we renew baptismal promises, the bishop prefers to do this at the font, and to join the rector or priest in charge in sprinkling the congregation with the water of baptism. If moving to the font is awkward, or complicates matters, please plan things in whatever way makes best liturgical sense.
* Vestments: Bishop Brown is happy to wear the parish’s vestments, or to bring his own. The white, green, and red sets have a cope and a deacon’s stole. Deacons should plan to wear the matching stole. When he wears a cope, the bishop will put the chasuble on at the offertory.
* Liturgical color: White is generally used for Baptisms. Either white or red may be used for Confirmations, Receptions, or Reaffirmations. Please indicate your choice on the planning sheet.
* Whenever possible the bishop prefers to pray with the choir, acolytes, and clergy before the entrance procession.
* Sermon: the bishop preaches on the appointed texts for the day or the occasion.
* The Lord’s Prayer: choose the version that makes most sense in your context.
* When desired, the Pontifical Blessing may be used at the conclusion of the liturgy
(BCP p 523) beginning at "Our help is in the Name of the Lord." Music for the blessing, when it is sung, is to be found in the Hymnal (S-173). When the Pontifical Blessing is used, it is important that the versicles and responses by readily available to the people and the choir.

**Other ministers:**

*Deacons, Priests, and Lay People*—please model all orders of ministry, as well as our collegiality. If there is sufficient space, the bishop prefers to have all four represented behind the altar: the bishop, the rector or priest in charge, the deacon, and a lay person.

**Priests** At the Great Thanksgiving, it is appropriate that the priests of the community stand with the bishop at the altar. The practice of other presbyters sharing in the manual acts (so-called “concelebration”) is problematic in most Anglican contexts; further, because of our ongoing emphasis on the ministry of the baptized, these added gestures can send an unintended sign of clericalism. Please refrain from doing this.

**Deacons** A deacon will elevate the chalice at the words of invitation. Deacons may go to the bishop for a “sending prayer” before proclaiming the gospel, or not. There are good reasons for doing so, and equally good reasons for not doing so. If the congregation has a deacon, the deacon will serve in his or her customary roles in the liturgy. If the congregation does not have a deacon, the bishop may bring a deacon to serve with him. The visiting deacon will perform the usual diaconal functions. The visiting deacon will also be available after the service to speak with individuals who are interested in the diaconate, as well as the discernment and ordination process in this diocese.

*Bishop’s Chaplain*—A deacon, lay eucharistic minister, acolyte, or priest can easily be assigned by you to help me juggle the miter, crosier, and my prayer book & hymnal. This person can also serve as Greeter & Helper (below)

*Greeter & Helper*— it’s helpful to have an adult or senior high teen who greets the bishop and helps to carry things into the church. Setting up the crosier and getting the vestments organized isn’t an onerous task, but the bishop would rather visit with people. This person has the advantage of knowing your space. The Bishop’s chaplain can serve in this capacity, however, in many of our congregations separating the roles, and recruiting a second person, is an occasion for you to connect pastorally with somebody whose leadership you want to foster.

* The bishop prefers to conclude all rehearsal-related conversations, including conversation with confirmands, at least 15 minutes before the liturgy. This is especially important if those conversations occur in the space where we’ll celebrate the Holy Eucharist.
* Liturgical leadership and teaching: if there are a liturgical change you would like to introduce, discuss whether and how the bishop might be helpful to you.
* Photography during the liturgy detracts from worship and should be discouraged. However, inconspicuous video or picture taking is encouraged. The bishop will be available for photos after the service; please ask someone to be the organizer of photography. After the service, please send several photographs of your choosing to Barbara for possible inclusion in our electronic portfolio.

**Confirmation**

Celebrating the Rite(s) of Confirmation in regional gatherings, especially during the Great 50 Days of Easter, is a strong preference. When we gather regionally, candidates have the opportunity to be part of a larger community of faith, and importantly, such liturgies give us a primary focus that’s not possible to uphold when Confirmation is integrated with an episcopal visitation. If you would like to host a regional Confirmation, please contact Barbara Martin.

If Confirmation/Reception/Reaffirmation will occur during an episcopal visitation, please refer to the separate document “Notes about Confirmation” and use the electronic form indicated on the Visitation Worksheet to record the Official Acts.

**After the Liturgy**

* The bishop prefers to visit with people, rather than to eat, so a stand-up reception or coffee house where he can answer questions works best. If a sit-down event is better for your context, let’s discuss how best to facilitate the conversation.
* Please decide whether you want the bishop to greet the worshiping assembly at the back of the church or go directly to the coffee hour. It’s not necessary to wait for the bishop before eating.
* Alcohol during an episcopal visitation is inappropriate. For evening social events alcohol can be served, along with an equally attractive and accessible alternative, but please schedule a time for us to have a conversation about this decision; it really should be exceptional. We adhere to the diocesan policy regarding alcohol (attached at the end of this document).
* Conversation with the Vestry or Bishop’s Committee is a requirement of every episcopal visitation. Please refer to the document “Notes for Vestry Visit.” Usually, an hour is sufficient. However, if the bishop arrives the evening before, he is happy to meet with the vestry and/or congregational leadership over a simple or potluck supper, followed by Compline.
* The bishop is happy to make pastoral calls; this is especially suitable for the times when he is with you for the entire weekend.

**Practical Details**

* Unless we have made different arrangements please expect the bishop to arrive between 30 and 45 minutes beforehand.
* The Reverend Tom Mousin, the bishop’s spouse, sometimes accompanies him on episcopal visitations. Tom is always happy to help in whatever way is helpful. He’s willing to help in the kitchen, enjoys singing in choirs, and is also happy to stay out of people’s way.
* Please let the bishop know what title to use when he addresses you in public. To address him formally please say “Bishop Brown.”
* An important part of the visitation is spending time with clergy and their family. The bishop enjoys hosting you and your spouse or partner to lunch. If that is not possible on the day of the visitation please arrange an alternate time. Please note your preference on the Planning Worksheet.
* 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, the bishop is happy to talk with the congregations about the kinds of needs that BDF supports. Here are a few details:
* It’s helpful to advise the congregation about this offering several weeks in advance of the 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 the bishop) and labeled “BDF” in the memo line.
* The bishop makes a personal contribution to your church; please don’t include this in your parish’s contribution to the Bishop’s Discretionary Fund.
* 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 and mail to:

The Episcopal Diocese of Maine

Attn: Bishop Thomas Brown

PO Box 4036

Portland, ME 04101

**ALCOHOL POLICY OF THE DIOCESE OF MAINE**

Resolved, that this 196th Convention of The Episcopal Diocese of Maine affirm and adopt the alcohol use policy adopted by the 78th General Convention of The Episcopal Church, as follows:

Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, that the 78th General Convention acknowledge The Episcopal Church's long-standing tolerance for the use of alcohol which, in some cases, has contributed to its misuse, and has undermined a climate of wholeness and holiness for all; that our Church culture too often avoids hard conversations about alcohol use, and the role of forgiveness and compassion in healing and recovery; and that The Episcopal Church now commits to create a new normal in our relationship with alcohol. We aspire to be a place in which conversations about alcohol, substance misuse, or addiction are not simply about treatment but about renewal, justice, wholeness, and healing. We affirm that Recovery Ministries of The Episcopal Church has long been and continues to be a valuable resource for this work; and be it further

Resolved, that the 78th Convention adopt the following policy on alcohol and other substance misuse and encourage dioceses, congregations, seminaries, schools, young adult ministries, and affiliated institutions to update their policies on the use of alcohol and other substances with the potential for misuse. These policies should consider the following:

1. The Church must provide a safe and welcoming environment for all people, including people in recovery.

1. All applicable federal, state and local laws should be obeyed, including those governing the serving of alcoholic beverages to minors.

1. Some dioceses and congregations may decide not to serve alcohol at events or gatherings. Others may decide to permit a limited use of alcoholic beverages at church-sponsored events. Both can be appropriate if approached mindfully.

1. When alcohol is served, it must be monitored and those showing signs of intoxication must not be served. Whenever alcohol is served, the rector, vicar, or priest-in-charge must appoint an adult to oversee its serving. That adult must not drink alcoholic beverages during the time of his or her execution of his or her responsibilities. If hard liquor is served, a certified server is required.

1. Serving alcoholic beverages at congregational events where minors are present is strongly discouraged. If minors are present, alcohol must be served at a separate station that is monitored at all times to prevent underage drinking.

1. Alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages must be clearly labeled as such. Food prepared with alcohol does not need to be labeled provided the alcohol is completely evaporated by the cooking process; however, it is recommended that even in this case the use of alcohol in cooking be noted on a label.

1. Whenever alcohol is served, appealing non-alcoholic alternatives must always be offered with equal prominence and accessibility.

1. The serving of alcoholic beverages at church events should not be publicized as an attraction of the event, e.g., "wine and cheese reception," "cocktail party," and "beer and wine tasting."

1. Ministries inside or outside of congregations will make certain that alcohol consumption is not the focus of the ministry, and that drinking alcohol is not an exclusively normative activity.

1. Food must be served when alcohol is present.
2. The groups or organizations sponsoring the activity or event at which alcoholic beverages are served must have permission from the clergy or the vestry. Such groups or organizations must also assume responsibility for those persons who might become intoxicated and must provide alternative transportation for anyone whose capacity to drive may be impaired. Consulting with liability insurance carriers is advised.

1. Recognizing the effects of alcohol as a mood-altering drug, alcoholic beverages shall not be served when the business of the Church is being conducted.

1. Clergy shall consecrate an appropriate amount of wine when celebrating the Eucharist and perform ablutions in a way that does not foster or model misuse.

1. We encourage clergy to acknowledge the efficacy of receiving the sacrament in one kind and consider providing non-alcoholic wine; And be it further **Resolved**, that, mindful of the emerging legalization of other addictive substances and the increasing rise of addiction, the Executive Council of The Episcopal Church provide for the ready availability, implementation, and continuing development of this policy church-wide, in consultation and coordination with Recovery Ministries of The Episcopal Church.

And be it further **Resolved** that this policy supersede, and render moot all previous alcohol use policies in the Diocese of Maine, and be it further

**Resolved**, that this policy be commended for consideration to every Vestry and Bishop's Committee of The Diocese of Maine.