

EPISCOPAL VISITS

The following guidelines are intended to help congregations prepare ahead of time for Bishop's visit. The four main parts of the visit include: worship services, oversight meetings, record review, and pastoral visits or gatherings. Each of these areas is described below.

In addition, we have included excerpts from an article, *The Role and Qualities of a Bishop*, by The Rt. Reginald Hollis, former bishop of Montreal. We hope it will give church leaders a deeper appreciation of how a bishop brings the universal Church to local communities, and then connects individual parishes to the diocese and the Church universal.

Worship

1. The most important part of the visit is to worship God and to engage the Gospel as disciples of Jesus in a sacred circle.
2. The Bishop will normally preside at the Holy Eucharist as principal celebrant and preacher. The rector/vicar or priest in charge will concelebrate along with other clergy who serve or are related to the congregation.
3. As the prayer book recommends, the Bishops visit is a time for Baptisms.
4. Baptism and/or confirmation will be combined with the Eucharist when there are candidates.
5. The propers of the day, with the 3 appointed Scripture lessons and Psalms, will normally be used.
6. If there is a Baptism, the Bishop will preside, and will perform the baptism with the local priest.

When adult candidates or older children are presented for Baptism, they will be baptized, receive the laying on of hands and signation with chrism, be presented with a cross, and receive their first communion at the visitation service.

Oversight Meetings

During a normal visitation, the bishop wants to meet with as many church leaders and members as possible, including the following:

1. With the clergy or lay person in charge (rector, vicar or warden), other clergy related to the congregation, Vestry or Church Committee, delegates to Diocesan Convention and General Convention, and when possible

members of the Society of St. Simeon & St. Anna.

2. Christian Education Leaders. Clergy and lay leaders should be prepared to report on Christian education activities and plans for all ages. When convenient (with advance planning) the Bishop would enjoy visiting, observing, or teaching in a class or other education program. This report should include information on congregation's stewardship education program in the light of the church's teaching that the Biblical tithe is the minimum standard of giving for members of the Episcopal Church.
3. Those preparing for Confirmation and those recently confirmed. (See confirmation guidelines) Special meetings, pastoral visits and blessings may be arranged.

Records

The Bishop will want to review at the meeting the congregation's official records:

1. Service book.
2. Parish register. (record of baptism, confirmation, marriage, burial and membership record)
3. Vestry or Church Committee minutes for meetings since last visitation.
4. Financial reports and records and current audit for most recent year.
5. Budget for current year.
6. Report and minutes for last annual meeting.
7. Parochial reports.

Pastoral

1. The Bishop welcomes an opportunity to meet the general congregation at a coffee hour, potluck or other occasion. Time should be allowed for the Bishop to speak informally on matters of current concern and respond to questions.
2. As time allows, the Bishop will visit the sick and shut-in and do house blessings and other blessings.
3. The Bishop is pleased to meet local public officials and the clergy and lay leaders of other denominations.

Note: The Bishop may designate a staff member or other persons to perform any and all of the functions (Other than Confirmation) mentioned above.



Bishop's Visitation Worksheet

Please complete this worksheet and submit it by email, fax, or mail to the Bishop's Assistant. The Bishop will return this form when he arrives for his scheduled visitation. Please keep this form on file at your Parish office. It will be reviewed by the Bishop during subsequent visitations.

Date of Visitation: _____ Arrival Time: _____ Departure Time: _____

Parish: _____ Rector or Person in Charge: _____

Email: _____ Telephone (_____) _____

Address: _____

Worship Schedule (please include hour and type of worship)

(examples are: 8am Holy Eucharist II; 11am Holy Baptism or 9am Confirmation)

Readings: _____

Confirmations:

<u>Full Name & Family Name</u>	<u>Date of Birth</u>	<u>Church of Baptism</u>	<u>Date of Baptism</u>
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_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Receptions:

<u>Full Name</u>	<u>Date of Birth</u>	<u>Previous Church</u>	<u>Date of Baptism</u>
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_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Baptisms:

<u>Full Name</u>	<u>Date of Birth</u>	<u>Place of Birth</u>	<u>Previous Church</u>
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_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Bishop's Visitation Worksheet continued. . . .

Parish Record review *(completed by the Bishop):*

Names of Vestry Members and Parish Leaders meeting with the Bishop:

Spiritual & Temporal State of the Congregation:

(the following questions are offered as a way to prepare or organize your thoughts).

1. Describe the worship, prayer and fellowship of your congregation:
2. In what ways does your congregation proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?
3. How are you serving Christ in your community? How do you express the love of Christ?
4. In what ways are you involved in the work of peace and justice. How does your community respect human dignity?
5. What is your congregation's Stewardship plan? How do you encourage and invite your people to give generously of their time, talent and treasure for the ministry of the church?

Questions for the Bishop: