



# EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN CONNECTICUT

PARTICIPATING IN GOD'S MISSION

## THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN CONNECTICUT

### Bishops' Customary for Pastoral Visitations

#### INTRODUCTION

The regular pastoral visitation of all parishes and worshipping communities of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut is one of the principal responsibilities of our ministry among you. It is also one of the great delights of the episcopal office.

It is our desire for the pastoral visitation to be at once both *business as usual* and a *special occasion* in the life of the parish. In a liturgical-sacramental church such as ours, these are not competing interests. Our visitations ought not to be "unusual" no matter how infrequent. The central act of every visitation is the preaching of God's Word and the celebration of the Holy Eucharist with the clergy and people of the parish. All other aspects of the visitation should not overshadow this central purpose.

Although we will do confirmations, receptions and reaffirmations during visitations, these rites are not the principal reason for the Bishops' Pastoral Visitation. The availability of persons for confirmation or reception need not play any part in the scheduling of the visitation.

#### SCHEDULING

Pastoral visitations will be scheduled in such a way as to balance the following priorities:

- the length of time since the last pastoral visitation;
- particular pastoral needs of the parish;
- the celebration of the feast of the church's patron or title;
- the celebration of significant events in the life of the parish such as the celebration of major parish anniversaries, dedications of new buildings, groundbreakings, etc. (Some of these will of necessity be scheduled on days other than Sunday)

The scheduling of visitations is initiated out of the office of the episcopate. If there is a special request for a visit such as a feast of the Dedication of a Church or a major parish anniversary, these may be initiated by the Rector or Priest in Charge of the parish. Requests should be made to the Bishop Diocesan's assistant, Alison Hollo [ahollo@episcopalct.org](mailto:ahollo@episcopalct.org)

As a general rule, we do not return to a parish for a regular pastoral visitation until all other parishes in the diocese have been visited.



In order to facilitate planning, the visitation schedule is created to cover the upcoming 36 months. 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 our visitation schedules, 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. It is our commitment that such changes will be kept to a minimum, but from time to time they will occur.

If the date you have been given does not work with the life of your parish, please feel free to contact another parish on the schedule to make a switch. Then notify the office of the episcopate and the administrative assistant of the bishop(s) assigned to the visits.

*Please schedule an appointment either by phone or in person with the bishop doing the visitation in the month prior to the visit to review the day. This is an excellent chance to connect pastorally with your bishop. The bishop should have a copy of the order of service to review with you during this conversation. Please let the bishop know of preferred vestments as well as any particular customs or practices such as singing of the service or preferred language for celebration. This conversation should include outlining the events of the day of the visit.*

## **THE DAY OF THE VISIT**

We will make every effort to arrive no less than 30 minutes before the first service the Bishop is scheduled to attend. Please save a parking space for the bishop near the entrance to the church.

In many of our parishes it is necessary to have multiple services in order to accommodate the congregation. Please be in conversation with the bishop as to how he or she can have an opportunity to worship with as many parishioners as possible.

We would like to meet with parishioners during an education hour/coffee hour to talk about our passion for God' Mission. Speaking from our personal experiences of how we see our ministries serving God's Mission, as well as the ministries of the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion is particularly important to us.

We would also like to meet with members of the Vestry for at least an hour and a half on the day of the visitation. If this cannot be accommodated on the day of the visit, the rector is asked to work with the visiting bishop's assistant to schedule another time for this meeting. Along with this customary is an outline for our conversation with the vestry.



## THE LITURGY OF THE DAY

We anticipate that all visitations will be celebrations of the Holy Eucharist. On Sunday morning visitations, it is our expectation that the Eucharistic Prayers will be chosen from the options in the Book of Common Prayer. You may choose other authorized rites for Celebrations of New Ministry or other special services.

*When there are no baptisms, confirmations, or receptions, the liturgy on the day of the bishop's visitation should include the renewal of baptismal vows. This should be substituted for the Nicene Creed at all services. We suggest using the format on page 292 of the Book of Common Prayer, including the final collect.*

The Proper of the Day will be used, even when initiation rites are to take place, and normally the liturgical color will be that of the day.

*The Revised Common Lectionary* (Episcopal Edition) is the norm in the Episcopal Church in Connecticut. If it seems appropriate to use other readings, this must be cleared with the bishop well in advance of the visitation.

Because every liturgical space has its own challenges, we will generally preside from the place/chair from which it is normally done. If there is to be a service of confirmation or reception, please consult with the visiting bishop as to the location of the bishop's chair.

If the parish has a deacon, they should be prepared to assist the bishop. In the absence of a deacon, these duties may be performed by a Bishops Chaplain chosen by the Rector. We suggest a young adult in the parish.

The Rector or Priest-in-Charge should make the necessary parish announcements. While it is always pleasant to be greeted, it is our preference that you not use the language of "welcome." We are not guests, but integral parts of every congregation of the diocese. If the announcements are made prior to the offertory sentence, the Rector should include the offertory sentence at the end of the announcements.

*It is important to remind the congregation that the undesignated offering goes to the bishop's discretionary fund for support of emergencies and non-budgeted ministries that arise in the course of the year.*

We will resume the presidency of the liturgy after the offertory sentence.



## **WHEN THERE ARE BAPTISMS**

The Book of Common Prayer notes that a Bishop's Visitation is one of the especially appropriate times for holy baptism and every effort should be made to make the visitation a baptismal feast. The rubrics on page 298 of the Book of Common Prayer clearly outline the roles of the Bishop and the Priests during a service of baptism. Please refer to these rubrics for the service.

Please notify us *in advance* if chrism is required. Otherwise, we will anticipate the parish has an adequate supply.

## **WHEN THERE ARE CONFIRMATIONS, RECEPTIONS AND/OR REAFFIRMATIONS**

We will continue to schedule diocesan-wide liturgies for confirmation and reception. These liturgies will be scheduled no less than four times a year. One will be at Christ Church Cathedral at the Easter Vigil. Others will be scheduled throughout the diocese on the eve of Pentecost, the eve of All Saints and the eve of the Baptism of our Lord.

- Confirmation is for teenagers and young adults who were baptized in the Episcopal Church or who came to this church with their families before making a "mature commitment;"
- Confirmation is also appropriate for those of any age who are making a mature commitment for the first time

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.

When there is to be confirmation, reception or reaffirmation at a parish visitation, candidates may come in the most convenient order. Name tags or a card to identify the names of candidates is at the preference of the confirming bishop. We would like to meet with those being confirmed prior to the service to discuss the importance of a life of faith and witness. This should be scheduled keeping in mind that we also request a parish-wide conversation and a meeting with the vestry.

## **ADDITIONAL NOTES**

It is also required by Canon that the Bishop review the Parish Register during the visitation. Please have the appropriate registers available for the Bishop to review.