



The Episcopal Diocese of Kansas

Customary for Episcopal Visitations

This document is designed to help you and your parish prepare for the bishop's official visitation. We hope this guide will get many of the details out of the way in advance of the visit, so that on the day itself everyone is as free as possible to be fully present in celebrating the life, mission and ministry of your parish.

Introduction: What is a Bishop?

In the early church, a bishop was the leader of the one congregation in a locale, functioning similarly to a rector in a parish. As the number of Christians grew, cities began to need more than one church, and bishops began to appoint priests to act on the bishop's behalf in additional churches. The ministry of these priests was an extension of the ministry of the bishop, which is to proclaim the gospel, "provide for the administration of the sacraments" and "guard the faith, unity, and discipline of the Church." (*Book of Common Prayer*)

In the Episcopal Church of our times, a bishop leads a diocese, with the priests and deacons still deriving their ministries from the bishop's. They act on the bishop's behalf, and the bishop authorizes and supports their ministries. Our Episcopal Church culture tends to emphasize the autonomy of parishes, but in fact there is a vital link between the life of a parish and the ministry of the bishop. This is a good thing. The presence of the bishop reminds Christians that they are part of a larger whole, linked to others in their diocese and in the larger world. The office of the bishop provides important resources to parishes – for instance, in times of transition or conflict.

Bishop Wolfe's Ministry of Teaching

Bishop Wolfe looks forward to spending time with the people of your church. He especially hopes that the schedule will allow him to exercise his ministry of teaching. An adult forum or coffee gathering, for instance, would allow him to talk about a theological issue or a matter of interest to the Episcopal Church.

In advance

Jeanne Atha, the bishop's Executive Assistant, will contact you approximately three weeks before the scheduled visitation to begin arranging the schedule and other details for the day. She also will ask you to email a draft service bulletin to her at least one week before the visitation.

The bishop generally will be available between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. for parish activities on the day of his visit. Plans always should include a meeting with confirmands (preferably before the service) and a meeting with the Vestry (preferably after the service). Meetings with other parish groups may be scheduled as time permits. A final schedule for the day will be provided to you no later than one week prior to the visitation.

Liturgical colors, appointed readings and vestments

For Confirmation, the color will be red; for Holy Baptism with Confirmation, the color will be white; for a visitation without either Confirmation or Holy Baptism, the color will be that of the season. The bishop normally will vest in alb, stole, cope and mitre. He normally will vest in a chasuble for the Liturgy of the Table.

Assisting priests and deacons should vest in alb (or cassock and surplice) and stole.

The readings should always be those appointed for the day, using the Revised Common Lectionary.

Prior to the liturgy

As a general rule, the bishop and bishop's chaplain will arrive at the church one hour prior to the scheduled start of the liturgy. Approximately 45 minutes before the liturgy, there will be a walk-through with the bishop's chaplain and the rector (or another person from the parish appointed to coordinate the liturgy). The specific times for the walk-through, the bishop's meeting with the confirmands, and the time for the altar party to gather in the vesting area for prayer, will be coordinated in the pre-visitation correspondence with the bishop's Executive Assistant.

The bishop's chaplain

Normally the bishop's chaplain will be one of the Archdeacons. In the absence of an Archdeacon, it may be the Canon to the Ordinary, or a deacon of the parish or other person appointed. The chaplain's main liturgical responsibility will be to assist the bishop. The chaplain never will displace any other liturgical minister, lay or ordained, from their regular ministry. The bishop's chaplain will fill other liturgical roles, suitable to their office, only when there is not a member of the parish clergy or laity appointed to do so.

Order of procession

Normally, the order of procession should be:

Crucifer and Torch Bearers

Choir

[Second Crucifer]

Assisting deacons

Assisting priests

Rector of the parish

Gospeller

Bishop's chaplain

Bishop

The bishop's chair

Where possible, the bishop's chair should be placed in the center of the chancel, and from there the bishop will preside at the Liturgy of the Word. At the Peace, someone moves the bishop's chair back to its original location for the Liturgy of the Table. As the worship space permits, the bishop's chaplain should be seated as close to the bishop as possible during the Liturgy of the Word.

At Confirmation

When there are confirmations, receptions and renewals, each confirmand should have a 3-by-5 inch card, with the candidate's name and action (confirmation, reception, renewal) printed legibly, and he or she will hand it to the bishop's chaplain at the time of confirmation. The appropriate time to present gift Prayer Books (to be given by the rector or other person appointed) is after each candidate receives the sacrament. Book plates signed by the bishop are available upon request from the bishop's office prior to the visitation.

People receive **confirmation** if they are baptized members of the Episcopal Church and many Protestant churches. The bishop **receives** people if they have been previously confirmed in the Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox Churches or in one of our full communion partners: the Moravian Church, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) or the Old Catholics of the Union of Utrecht. **Reaffirmation of baptismal vows** is appropriate for “those baptized as adults, unless baptized with laying on of hands by a bishop.” These persons “make a public affirmation of their faith and commitment to the responsibilities of their Baptism” and “receive the laying on of hands.” (*Book of Common Prayer*, page 412).

At the Liturgy of the Table

The table should be prepared with only the missal, the principal chalice and paten, and a cruet or flagon for additional wine. Extra chalices should be brought to the altar immediately following the fraction.

During the Liturgy of the Table, the bishop’s chaplain ordinarily will point the missal and stand at the bishop’s left. The rector will stand to the bishop’s right, and other clergy will stand at or near the altar as space permits.

After communion, the altar should be cleared of everything except the missal.

After the liturgy

After the dismissal, the bishop will greet parishioners as they leave the church. If your parish wants to take a photo of the bishop with the newly confirmed and/or baptized, please plan to do so at the front of the church after most people have left.

Normally the bishop will be available briefly before the start of the Vestry meeting for fellowship at a reception planned in honor of the newly confirmed and baptized.

Meeting with the Vestry

During his meeting with the Vestry, the bishop will discuss the vision, mission and goals of the parish. If there are specific issues in the life of the parish that the rector and Vestry would like to discuss with the bishop, these should be communicated to the diocesan office at least a week prior to the meeting so any helpful information can be prepared for the discussion.

The Vestry meeting is also a time to ask any questions of the bishop about the diocese and the wider church, and to explore how the bishop and diocesan staff might better assist and support the ministry of your parish.

Loose Plate Offering

The bishop requests that the loose plate offering for the day be designated for the Bishop’s Discretionary Fund. The diocesan office will mail envelopes for this purpose the week before the visitation. The treasurer should send a check to the diocesan office the week following the visitation in the amount of the loose plate offering, made payable to “The Episcopal Diocese of Kansas” with “Bishop’s Discretionary Fund” in the memo line.

Bishop Wolfe Appreciates:

At announcement time, being “greeted” rather than “welcomed,” since the bishop is the chief pastor of all of the parishes.

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