



Bishop's Visitation Customary *Diocese of Olympia*

The Most Rev. Melissa M Skelton
Bishop Provisional of Olympia
The Episcopal Diocese of Olympia
The Episcopal Church of Western Washington

I am looking forward to my visitation with you and the good people of your congregation. This letter and the attachments explain some of my hopes and expectations regarding the visitation. The intent of the document is to facilitate this process for all of us.

It is very important that you read the Visitation Customary thoroughly. This document contains an overview of my expectations for the day, explains roles, and details the documentation that should be sent to my office prior to the visit. It is very important to me that you fill out the Bishop's Visit Planning form in its entirety. Please be sure to list all the required contact information and the fully written readings. It is best if we have an actual copy of the readings from the version you are using. I know this causes some added work but I believe we can reduce the stress of the day by taking these steps ahead of time.

**Please email the required documents to my Executive Assistant at exec-asst@ecww.org
or mail them to the Diocesan House at 1551 Tenth Ave E, Seattle, WA 98102
at least one month in advance of the visitation.**

If you have any questions about the visitation, the form, or any required documents you can email Tonja or speak with her directly by calling 206.325.4200 ext. 2010. You may also email me about any questions you have about the liturgy at mskelton@ecww.org.

Upon receipt of these materials, my office will send you Bishop's Discretionary Fund envelopes to be inserted into the bulletins. Tonja will also confirm with you anyone who may be accompanying me on my visitation—you can typically expect one or two deacons, and other visitors from the Board of Directors, Diocesan Council and Standing Committee. My partner, Eric, may or may not be accompanying me on the visitation, but no special arrangements need to be made either way, unless you hear from our office otherwise. I will bring confirmation and reception cards the morning of my visit.

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Melissa M. Skelton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

The Most Rev. Melissa M Skelton
Bishop Provisional of Olympia

It is important that you read this document thoroughly as it is constantly being updated and the information contained herein is crucial to a successful visitation.

This customary is designed to help you plan for the Bishop's visit. If you have any questions or special requests, don't hesitate to write or call. The Bishop's Office is your resource. We are here to help you and your congregation. The wish is for the visitation to be as useful and productive as possible. Please let us know your questions or concerns as early as possible so we can best assist you in preparing for your visitation.

The regular pastoral visitation of all parishes and worshipping communities of the diocese is among the principal responsibilities of the bishop's ministry. It is also one of the great delights of the episcopal office!

While a fully comprehensive pastoral visitation is expected to be, at once, both business as usual and a special occasion in the life of the parish, the central act of every visitation is the preaching of God's Word and the joint celebration of the Holy Eucharist with the clergy and people of the parish. In a liturgical-sacramental church such as ours, these are not competing interests, however we should let those business aspects of the visit remain auxiliary as to avoid overshadowing our central purpose. Our visitations ought not be "unusual" no matter how infrequent.

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

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Our Time with You

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

- The length of time since the last pastoral visitation;
- The need to schedule episcopal rites, major parish anniversaries, dedications of new buildings, groundbreaking, etc. If needed, some of these will be scheduled on days other than Sunday;
- Pastoral needs of the parish;
- The celebration of the Feast of Title or other significant event in the life of the parish.

The scheduling of visitations may be initiated by the Rector/ Vicar of the parish, or the Bishop's Office. As a general rule, we do not return to a parish for a regular pastoral visitation until all other parishes have been visited.

We will make every effort to arrive no less than 30 minutes before the first service. Generally, the Bishop and other diocesan visitors would like to offer themselves to be with you for Sunday visitations for about 6 hours, usually 8:00 am to 2:00 pm, but this can be adjusted to meet your local schedule. We will do everything in our power to accommodate your interests during our visit. We very much like to do early services, and follow your normal Sunday schedule as much as possible. We can often come earlier and leave later, or vice versa. Please be in contact with us as soon as possible.

Order of Service & Readings

Please send a copy of your Order of Service at least one month in advance. Please advise which lectionary you will use and include a separate document with the full readings.

Meeting with the Vestry

The Bishops expect a meeting with the Vestry which would include vision, mission, and goals for the congregation. We would love for you to take the initiative and share the project or ministry that you most want to discuss. We would love to see you and hear about one area of focus in depth. You may also choose to review your challenges and accomplishments. While any time is the right time to ask for advice or discussion, visitations provide a great opportunity for the Bishop and other visitors to respond to congregational questions face-to-face. Ask for ways the Diocese can be more helpful to you in accomplishing your mission prior to your scheduled visit if possible.

Liturgical Readings and Colors

The readings should always be those appointed for the day - do not use the Confirmation readings except for a weekday visitation which is not a Holy Day. This will offer some variety for us in preaching as well. For Confirmation, the color should be red; for Baptism with Confirmation, the color should be white; for visitation by the Bishop without either Baptism or Confirmation, the color should be that of the season. For ordinations, the color is red.

The Liturgy of the Day

We anticipate that all visitations will be celebrations of the Holy Eucharist. When there are no baptisms, confirmations, or receptions, the liturgy on the day should include the Renewal of Baptismal Vows, in the form found on page 292 of the Book of Common Prayer (BCP). This should be substituted for the Nicene Creed at all services, even those that are otherwise Rite I. When there are Confirmations, Baptisms, or Receptions, there is no need to renew Baptismal vows, since this is done as part of that service.

Please follow the prayer book liturgy for each sacramental service. For instance, if there are confirmations and/or receptions without baptism please use the service found on page 413 of the BCP. If Baptisms will be part of the service, the service for Holy Baptism always takes precedent, so we follow the liturgy on page 299 of the BCP. If there are no confirmations, receptions, reaffirmation or baptisms, then follow the procedure above by putting in the Renewal of Baptismal Vows in the form found on page 292 of the BCP, IN PLACE OF THE NICENE CREED. It is advisable and admissible not to do the Prayers of the People when doing Confirmations or Baptisms, but if these are to be added, please put them, as per the rubric, after the Peace, and before the Eucharist. The sequence should be, Peace, Announcements if you do them here, Prayers of the People, Offertory Sentence, Prepare the Table, Eucharist.

We are always happy to sing as much of the service as you desire. For chanting any part, the Bishops prefer Solemn tone. Please get this information to us well in advance. Should you choose to hold services in Spanish, please use Eucharistic Prayer A. To emphasize our pastoral relationship, we very much like wearing the vestments of the parish. We will bring a plain alb, mitre, and pastoral staff. If you want or need us to bring other vestments, please specifically make this request.

We prefer to wear the chasuble for the entire liturgy. If you prefer the cope and mitre please let us know. For liturgies where we will be preaching or performing duties beyond presiding at the Eucharist, we can either wear the cope and mitre or rochet and chimere. The Rector/Vicar or usual Vestry appointee should make the necessary parish announcements. We will resume the presidency of the liturgy with the offertory sentence.

Baptisms

The Pastoral Visitation of the Bishop is one of the principal times for Baptism. By contrast to an occasion for Confirmations and Reception, every effort should be made to make the visitation a Baptismal feast. In this service, we prefer the presbyters do the water bath, and we, the Bishops, will do the chrismation.

Confirmation Record Form

If there are confirmations during the visitation, please follow directions on the attached document BV4.

Signing Prayer Books and Certificates

If you desire that the Bishop sign Prayer Books and certificates please have these ready and available before the service if at all possible or planned into the schedule for the remainder of the day.

Meeting with Those to be Confirmed or Received

The Bishop would very much like to meet with those to be Confirmed, Received, those reaffirming their faith for at least 15 minutes prior to the service, so please plan accordingly for this step ahead of time.

At least one month before we arrive, or earlier, we would like to receive a letter from each person requesting Baptism, Confirmation, Reception, or Reaffirmation of vows. Please refer to the description for details of this letter in the attached document BV2. We have tried to make this something you can give to each person.

Confirmations, Receptions, Reaffirmations

Sometimes there are questions about who should be Confirmed, who should be Received, and who should be Reaffirmed. Changes made to the canons with respect to church membership by the General Convention of 1985, and refined in 1988, have simplified this process in practical application:

- Confirmation is for children 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.

Reception is for those who have previously made a mature commitment in any other Christian Church, regardless of the pedigree of the minister.

- Receiving Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christian and Confirming everyone else no longer applies. The requirement of Called to Common Mission, that we receive ELCA Lutheran and not Confirm them, is consistent with it.

The previous practice of the canons require that all persons come “under the hands” of the Bishop, therefore 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 any order. Name tags are preferable to cards to identify the name of the candidates.

In order to comply with the changes in the canons on church membership, the laying on of hands will be used for Reception and Reaffirmation as well as Confirmation. Our canons made provision some time ago to receive far more adult persons than we are currently. If you have any questions about this, please let us know.

Parking

If the bishop is arriving early and should not have a problem getting a parking space relatively close, there is no need to reserve a spot. However, if you feel the lot may be full, or has limited spots, or it is a special service where many may be coming, and the bishop may be arriving later, it is probably advisable to reserve a spot as near to where the bishop will vest as possible.

Guidelines for Bishop's Chaplains

The Bishop's goal is to have a Deacon to serve at any visitation; however, this may not always be possible. When there is no Deacon assigned, having a Bishop's Chaplain assigned will be even more crucial. Even with a Deacon, it is a good practice to assign a person to act as the Chaplain during their visit. Assignment of a Chaplain for the service is done as a courtesy to the Bishop, in order to make it practical to focus on the liturgy and the congregation, without having to worry about local variations in liturgical custom, and help with juggling books, miter, crosier and pew sheets. Whether or not the Chaplain carries the crosier in procession, they process immediately before the Bishop.

The Bishop and Rector/Vicar will outline the Chaplain's duties and review the order of service in advance, so that the Chaplain will be more confident in the assistance to be given to the Bishop. The Chaplain may assist the Rector/Vicar and others in greeting the Bishop upon arrival, taking the Bishop's equipment to the sacristy or other room appointed, checking that there are prayer books/hymnals at the Bishop's seat, and providing whatever books/service leaflets are necessary for the entrance procession ready in the sacristy. In its most basic explanation, the Chaplain becomes extra hands for the Bishop in accomplishing the various liturgical functions.

The person assigned as Bishop's Chaplain for the day should have no other duties or jobs in the liturgy or outside of it while serving in this capacity. They cannot sing in the choir, they cannot be one of those assisting the Rector and/or Altar Party with any other thing, they can't bear a chalice or carry the Gospel book. For this to work they have to be exclusively assigned to the Bishop.

We thank you for providing this very important assistance.

Discretionary Fund Checks

Canon 15: Section 2 states, "Any loose offering of the people at such services shall be designated for the Bishop's Discretionary Fund." The Bishop's Discretionary Fund is used for many benevolent purposes throughout the year and the support of the fund is crucial.

It is preferable that the congregation have a choice as to where their offering goes, so we will provide envelopes to be included in the bulletins and distributed in any way you deem appropriate. This allows parishioners to offer cash/check to the Bishop's Discretionary fund, while allowing your parish to retain the loose offering.

If you have not received Bishop's Discretionary Fund Envelopes within 10 days of your visitation, please notify our office immediately.

Checks may be made payable to: Diocese of Olympia. Note/memo: Bishop's Discretionary Fund.

Questions and Additional Information

Please contact my Acting Executive Assistant, Tonja May, who will be happy to assist you.

Email: tmay@ecww.org

Phone: 206-325-4200 x. 2010

Mailing: 1551 Tenth Ave E, Seattle, WA 98102