

Parish Visitation Information

Revised September 2011

The Right Reverend Eugene Taylor Sutton
Bishop of Maryland

The Right Reverend Joe Goodwin Burnett
Assistant Bishop of Maryland

Prologue

For some time the visitation policy of the Diocese of Maryland has provided that the visiting bishop will celebrate and preach at all services. This practice has enabled the bishops to experience the variety of worshiping communities and liturgical styles that are often part of the life of parishes of all sizes. In turn it has enabled parishioners to engage and enjoy the bishop's presence without surrendering the familiarity of their normal Sunday liturgy.

Going forward we are making changes that will enable both the bishops, and the parishes and clergy, to honor the primacy of Sundays by having, if possible, **one combined service** on the occasion of the bishop's visitation. In addition we will seek at each visitation to schedule an opportunity for the visiting bishop to have conversations with the vestry/advisory board as a body, and with the wider congregation (see details below). We believe gathering together in this way will exemplify the unity of the church, and will join as one the many dimensions of the parish's life that are otherwise often experienced only in differing ways and at differing service times.

We trust that this practice will bring about a deeper sense of our common bonds in the Body of Christ, and, in particular, will promote the greatest possible participation on the part of all members in affirming and supporting those who are baptized, confirmed, received and/or reaffirmed when the bishop comes.

Though we strongly commend this new plan to all, we recognize that there may be situations due to the size or circumstances of a given parish when having one combined service may not be feasible. In those instances it will be good for the clergy to consult with the visiting bishop well in advance of the scheduled visitation to discuss other options. Please also note that these guidelines apply to a scheduled Sunday visit by the canon to the ordinary as well.

Basic Customary for all Episcopal Visitations

At least three weeks prior to a scheduled visitation it is expected that the rector/vicar (or the warden, if there is no priest) will arrange an appointment with the visiting bishop to discuss specific plans for the visitation.

At the time of the visitation the bishop would like to have an informal meeting, lasting approximately 45 minutes, with the rector/vicar and vestry/advisory board prior to the morning's principal service. This will be a time for sharing information, hopes, and dreams regarding the various programs and ministry of the parish and diocese. This should be scheduled so as to leave sufficient time to have a short visit and walk-through with candidates for confirmation, reception and/or reaffirmation prior to the time of the service.

Following the service, it is especially appropriate to have a reception or luncheon at which time the visiting bishop may meet and greet members of the congregation. If desired this could include time for the bishop to offer any thoughts or reflections, as well as to respond to questions that parishioners may have.

Unless it is a patronal feast, the propers should be those appointed for the Sunday, and should be taken from the Revised Common Lectionary. When there are choices, or if one of the bishops has a specific lesson requests, that will be communicated to you in advance.

Further Instructions and Expectations for Bishop Sutton's Visitations

I will plan to arrive 15 minutes prior to the first event.

If there are to be confirmations, I am comfortable with either sitting in my chair while confirming, or standing at the altar rail while confirming, whichever is more suitable for the liturgical space and needs of the confirmands.

I am usually accompanied by one of our diocesan archdeacons, either the Ven. Lauren Welch or the Ven. Kerry Smith, who serve as my chaplains. They normally read the Gospel lesson, help prepare the altar, and give the dismissal. Let me know if you prefer to use them differently during the service.

I will preside for the entire service, and wish to have the clergy of the church stand with me at the altar.

As to vestments, I usually wear cope and miter. I have my own vestments, but let me know if you would prefer that I wear the church's chausible during the Holy Communion.

Here are some of my liturgical preferences:

The chaplain precedes me in procession, and places my miter and crozier on the altar at the appropriate time.

If the service is a major feast of the church or major saint's day, I do not wish to have a confession.

If there is baptism, I prefer to have the clergy of the congregation do the water, and I will do the chrism.

At the time of the announcements, I will make a greeting to the church.

I do prefer to use a lavabo.

If it is the custom of the church, I am prepared to chant those parts of the service that are appropriate.

From Easter Day through the Day of Pentecost, I do **not** want the Agnus Dei to be read.

In Lent, I will begin the service with the Penitential Order.

Please have your service book and books of records available for me to see and sign.

Please remind the congregation that the loose plate offering goes to the Bishop's Discretionary Fund. Please do not give me cash but send a check to my attention at 4 E. University Parkway, Baltimore, MD 21218.

Note: I am allergic to shellfish; you may have it for others, but please be sure I know which dishes contain shellfish.

Further Instructions and Expectations for Bishop Burnett's Visitations

I will plan to arrive 15 minutes prior to the first event.

If there are to be confirmations I prefer to stand for the laying on of hands immediately in front of my chair, or—if it is more suitable for the liturgical space—at the altar rail. I also prefer that the candidates stand rather than kneel.

It is both appropriate and helpful to have a deacon, if one is present, or a capable lay liturgical minister to serve as my chaplain. I can give them instructions prior to the service concerning their primary responsibilities.

I will preside for the entire service, and when space permits, I am pleased to have the clergy of the church stand with me at the altar.

I am always happy to wear cope and miter. However, my vestment set is primarily appropriate for festival occasions when the liturgical color is red or white. At other times I expect to wear the church's chausible throughout the service.

Here are some of my liturgical preferences:

The chaplain precedes me in procession, and places my miter and crozier on the altar at the appropriate time. I prefer also to have and hold the staff during the reading of the Gospel, as well as for the absolution (if there is one) and for the final blessing.

In Lent, I will begin the service with the Penitential Order.

If the service is during the Great 50 Days of Easter, or on a major feast or major saint's day, it is preferable to omit the confession of sin.

If there is baptism, I prefer to have the clergy of the congregation administer the water rite, and I will anoint with chrism.

At the time of the announcements, I will make a greeting to the church.

I am happy to use a lavabo, except when it is not part of the parish's normal liturgical practice.

If it is the custom of the church, I am eager and willing to chant those parts of the service that are appropriate.

From Easter Day through the Day of Pentecost, I strongly prefer that the Agnus Dei not be used, but only fraction anthems appropriate to the Great 50 Days.

Also, noting the rubrics in the *BCP* on p. 340 and p. 366, it is only from the Easter Vigil through the Day of Pentecost that “Alleluia, alleluia” be added to any of the dismissals.

Please have your service book and books of records available for me to see and sign.

Please remind the congregation that the loose plate offering goes to the Bishop’s Discretionary Fund. Please do not give cash, but send a check to my attention at 4 E. University Parkway, Baltimore, MD 21218.

Note: I am not allergic to any foods, and I happen to love shellfish of any and all kinds!

Further Instructions and Expectations for Canon Slater’s Visits

I will plan to arrive 15 minutes prior to the first event.

I will preside for the entire service unless the rector/vicar wishes to share in leading the Liturgy of the Word, at which point I would lead the absolution and all following. When space permits, I am pleased to have the clergy of the church stand with me at the altar.

I travel with an alb, which I prefer, but also have a cassock and surplice. I prefer to wear your stole and chasuble (if you have them) for the entire service (unless it is warm in the church).

At the time of the announcements, I will make a greeting to the church.

I am happy to use a lavabo, but it is not my personal custom.

If it is the custom of the church, I am willing and able to chant those parts of the service that are appropriate.

I am prone to overheating in church, so having a glass of water available would be most appreciated.

Since I cannot perform confirmations, it is appropriate, when you have confirmands to present during the year of my scheduled visit, to contact the bishops’ office about scheduling a regional confirmation or participating in an Eastertide confirmation service at the Cathedral of the Incarnation, Baltimore (which is always an option).

I prefer vegetarian fare, though I am not strict about it.

I do not maintain a discretionary fund, so it is neither necessary nor appropriate to send the loose plate collection to me for that purpose.



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MARYLAND

Minds to think, hearts to love, hands to serve