



# The Episcopal Diocese of Long Island

## **CUSTOMARY for EPISCOPAL VISITATIONS**

### **What Is An Episcopal Visitation?**

The regular pastoral visitation of all congregations and worshiping communities in the Diocese of Long Island is among the principal responsibilities of a bishop. While the pastoral visitation is technically a canonical requirement (checking worship and sacramental registries, inspecting buildings etc.), it is mostly an opportunity for the bishop to celebrate ministry happening in local church communities. The pastoral visitation provides the bishop with an opportunity to preach and teach, share in the sacramental life of the church (sometimes including baptism and confirmation) and to build relationships through fellowship and collaboration. **It** is always the bishop's hope that conversations with parish leaders will be grace-filled and honest and that the bishop would have an opportunity lend pastoral support and encouragement to the local mission of the church.

### **How Are Visitations Scheduled?**

Visitations are scheduled balancing 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. (Some of these will of necessity be scheduled on days other than Sunday);
- particular pastoral needs of the parish; - the celebration of the feast of title or other significant event in the life of the parish;

The bishop's office schedules pastoral visitations up to 12 months in advance. However, rectors or vicars of congregations may also call to schedule a pastoral visitation. As a general rule, the bishop does not return to a parish for a regular pastoral visitation until all other parishes have been visited.

### **When will the clergy and lay leaders have an opportunity to meet with the bishop?**

The bishop will want to meet with the parish clergy and vestry/bishop's committee on the day of the pastoral visitation before or after the liturgy or some instances, on a weeknight prior to the visitation. A member of the bishop's staff may join him depending upon the particular needs, concerns or aspirations of the congregation. If the bishop comes on a weeknight, please be sure to secure him a parking spot.

During the meeting the bishop will want to hear about the mission and ministry of the congregation, their acts of caring and sharing with each other, purpose in the community

beyond their doors, missionary endeavors, collaborative ministry in which they are engaged with neighboring parishes and involvement in the deanery/neighborhood. He will want to hear about any particular vision, hopes or concerns before the congregation and will want to explore these together.

During this meeting, the bishop will want to have in hand for his review the Sacramental Registry and Worship Register and will request a tour of the parish facilities.

A Safe Church Audit must be completed prior to each Canonical Visitation. The audit form is found on the diocesan website.

If the meeting happens well in advance of the Sunday liturgy, the bishop will ask you if there is any particular message or word that would be helpful for him to share with the congregation during his sermon on Sunday Morning.

### **What to Expect on the Day of the Pastoral Visitation?**

The bishop will make every effort to arrive at the parish no less than 30 minutes before the liturgy. Please be sure to reserve two parking spots: one for the bishop, and the other for the deacon who will be assisting the bishop during the visitation.

The bishop anticipates that all visitations will be celebrations of the Holy Eucharist, Rite II and that the propers of the Sunday are observed. The scripture readings should be drawn from the *Revised Common Lectionary*. He will generally wear the local parish vestments, wearing a chasuble for the entire liturgy. The bishop is always pleased to sing as much of the liturgy as desired.

The bishop generally does not prepare a children's sermon. However, he is always happy to spend time with the children in the parish during the liturgy and in other contexts. If necessary, he is also willing to spend time prior to the liturgy with confirmands or those about to be received into the Episcopal Church.

The open plate offering shall be designated the *Bishop's Discretionary Fund*. The bishop would prefer that you send one offering for the sum of the loose plate in the form of a check payable to the Diocese of Long Island. In the memo line please write Bishop's Discretionary Fund and mail to the Office of Finance, Episcopal Diocese of Long Island, 36 Cathedral Avenue, Garden City, NY 11530. However, if it is necessary for you to send the actual loose offering, be sure that any checks are payable to the Diocese of Long Island.

The Rector, Vicar, or Priest-in-Charge should make the necessary parish announcements.

### **When There Are Baptisms, Confirmations, Receptions and Reaffirmations**

The bishop is always happy to preside at the sacraments of initiation during my pastoral visitation. Should there be baptisms, please know that he will be inviting the local clergy to participate, usually in the water baptism. The bishop will do the chrismation with oil. On this front, please be sure that Chrism be available in some sort of oil stock.

Please be aware that adults having been baptized do NOT then proceed to the celebration of Confirmation. They have already made an adult affirmation in their baptismal vows and

have been sealed with the power of the Spirit through the anointing with Sacred Chrism.

Though the bishop celebrates regional Confirmations throughout the year across the diocese, he is also happy to do so when he visits local congregations except during Lent.

In fact, he would ask that you NOT forward candidates to the regional confirmation liturgy during the year that he is scheduled to be at your congregation for a pastoral visitation. Again, please ensure that Chrism is available for the bishop in some sort of an oil stock.

The question of who should be confirmed, who should be received, and who should be reaffirmed is not as complicated as it once was. Changes made in the Canons with respect to church membership by the General Convention of 1985, and refined in 1988, have made this fairly simple 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 having been previously baptized 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*.

When there is to be confirmation, reception, or reaffirmation at a parish visitation, candidates may come in the most convenient order. Index cards with the names of candidates clearly printed are preferable to names tags. However, the bishop prefers that the name of the confirmand be simply spoken clearly to the bishop at the time of presentation.

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.