



## Episcopal Diocese of Georgia BISHOP'S CUSTOMARY

*In effect beginning with visitations in Fall 2023*

It is a joy and delight as your chief pastor to have the opportunity to lead worship in the churches of the Diocese. My visitation schedule includes 71 visits within 18 months.

In a liturgical church such as ours the bishop's visitation should be both a typical expression of your usual worship life and a special occasion, so that the the liturgy used for the day should be quite familiar.

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. Confirmations, receptions, and reaffirmations may also take place during visitations but these important sacramental rites are not the principal reasons for the Bishop's Visitation. Therefore, the availability of persons for confirmation or reception need not play any part in the scheduling of the visitation.

### SCHEDULING A VISITATION

Scheduling visitations is initiated by the Bishop's Office through an annual schedule, but you may request a given season or date. As a general rule, a parish will not receive a second regular pastoral visitation until all other parishes have been visited. As we have 67 congregations (plus campus ministries and a school) and roughly 44 Sundays a year can be given to this schedule, everyone cannot have a Sunday visit. For this reason, congregations having a Celebration of New Ministry or the ordination of a person the congregation raised up for Holy Orders *may* not get an additional visit in those 12 months. Congregations that wish to facilitate a visit sooner, can suggest mid-week evenings for a visitation.

I balance the following priorities in scheduling Episcopal visitations:

- the length of time since the last Episcopal visitation.

- a significant event in the life of the parish, including episcopal rights including the dedication of new buildings, groundbreakings, etc. (Some of these will be scheduled on days other than Sunday).
- addressing particular pastoral needs of the parish.

Even with great care given to my visitation schedule, 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 my commitment that such changes will be kept to an absolute minimum, but from time to time they will occur. The calendar of visitations will be published on the diocesan website and shared each week in *From the Field*.

Four weeks before the visit:

- return the completed visitation form to Maggie Lyons. I know a key problem in getting this in centers on who will be confirmed and received and I understand how that information may take longer. It is more helpful to me if you get the form in on time and those details can follow via email.
- let me know when you wish I would arrive, and if there will be meetings with confirmands, vestry, etc. Please do not confirm these meetings with others until we set the schedule together.
- let me know if there is anything significant that I should be aware of, or something specific you'd wish me to address during my visit.

## THE TYPICAL VISITATION

### **Vestry Meeting**

While meeting with the vestry is not required by the canons of the Episcopal Church or those of the Diocese, it is usually helpful to make these meetings a part of the visit. Having that meeting on Sunday morning has proven problematic. My preferred time to meet with the vestry for a Sunday visitation is at 4 pm on Saturday. This gives us time for me to hear from the vestry and to spend time in conversation.

With all of this being true, there is a different pattern that can work if the conversation I would have with vestry includes the whole parish. Speaking with everyone after the service or between services has also worked at congregations of every size and is especially effective at smaller churches. If that might work for you, let's talk about it.

If distance, travel or scheduling issue prevents meeting on that day, special arrangements for meeting a weekday meeting before or after the visitation should be made with my office.

### **Arrival and the flow of the visit**

I will usually arrive no less than 45 minutes before the first service.

In general, it is my desire to maintain the Sunday morning schedule of the parish and attend the liturgies as commonly experienced, noting that you may make a change if you feel that is pastorally the best use of our time together to be in one liturgy. This also means there is more

time to be flexible with adult forums, and meetings with youth and children, etc. If a worship time change for the visitation is desired that should be made known well in advance.

I am happy to meet with any configuration of parishioners during the education hour. We can have an open forum; I can do a presentation on a number of subjects; and I can also simply use the time to enjoy fellowship with members of the parish.

#### WHEN THERE ARE INITIATION RITES

The Bishop's Chair should be placed in the center either on the nave level or in the chancel depending on the architecture of the church. I will preside from there until we go to the altar for the Liturgy of the Holy Communion. I will have a stand to use in keeping the crozier alongside the chair and then near the altar. Please provide a small table next to my chair (or behind it if there is not a lot of room) appropriate for my mitre and prayer book. Before the Offertory, the Chair and table can be moved to its regular location.

The Book of Common Prayer notes that a Bishop's Visitation is one of the especially appropriate times for Holy Baptism. 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. If baptism is scheduled I would prefer that the priest, when present, do the actual baptism. I am happy to do the chrismation of youth and adults. If you do not let me know in advance to bring chrism, I will assume that you have an adequate supply.

When there is to be confirmation, reception or reaffirmation at a parish visitation, candidates may come in the most convenient order. Please use name tags or a card to identify the names and preferred pronouns of candidates. It is my preference to have clergy and the candidate's family and friends stand around and lay hands (when possible) on the candidate's shoulder as I pray for the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. I do not follow the older tradition of a ritual slap as part of confirmation as it does not fit the understanding of baptism as a full initiation rite that undergirds the Book of Common Prayer.

Questions will naturally arise as to who should be confirmed, received, or reaffirmed, but the answer is straightforward.

- **Confirmation** is for people who have received Trinitarian baptism, but who have never made a public, mature commitment to the Christian faith.
- **Reception** is for those who have previously made a public, mature commitment in another Christian church.
- **Reaffirmation** is for those who have been confirmed in the Episcopal Church, but would like to reaffirm their commitment to Christ and his Church.

***Please note:*** 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. If, for pastoral reasons, it is important to a candidate that I receive rather than confirm them, because of a prior mature commitment in another tradition, then just ask me to receive that person.

If at all possible, I would like to meet with those being confirmed, received, or who are reaffirming their baptismal vows prior to the service, typically 30 minutes before the liturgy.

#### THE LITURGY OF THE DAY

All visitations will be celebrations of the Holy Eucharist. The Eucharistic Prayers may be chosen from the options in the Book of Common Prayer or from other sources approved by General Convention, including the 1928 Prayer Book in congregations where that liturgy is in regular use. I invite you to sustain the rhythm of Eucharistic Prayer you are using for the season, not making any change for the visitation.

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. I suggest that we use the format on page 292 of the Book of Common Prayer, including the final collect, even those that are otherwise Rite I.

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. There are times in the life of the congregation, such as when the visit marks an anniversary or when there have been no initiation rites for some years, where it can help to mark the uniqueness of the day by using white as the liturgical color. Any departure from this should be discussed before the day of the visitation to assure that I bring what I need for the liturgy. For visitation during "ordinary time" that will include one or more of the rites of initiation, any of the following texts may be substituted for the second (epistle) reading: Romans 6:3-5 (6-11); Romans 8:14-17; Romans 12:1-8; Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 4:7, 11-16.

The Revised Common Lectionary (Episcopal Edition) is the norm in the Diocese of Georgia. If it seems appropriate to use other readings, please clear it with me well in advance of the visitation.

To emphasize my pastoral relationship, I typically prefer to wear the vestments of the parish. I will bring a plain cassock alb, mitre, and crozier and will wear the chasuble for the entire liturgy. Yet, when there is a desire to mark the day as special (such as noted above), let me know and I am happy to bring vestments that will be appropriate to the day.

Because liturgical spaces differ, and to accommodate your well-trained liturgical ministers, I will generally preside from the place and in the manner in which it is normally done to the degree possible. So a walk through to remind me of how the liturgy is celebrated in your congregation is helpful. If there is a deacon in the congregation, that person will read the gospel, prepare the table, and give the dismissal. In the absence of a deacon, the priest should plan to do these parts of the liturgy. Lay leaders should serve as they do in the liturgy on week's when I am not making a visitation.

During the liturgy I would welcome the liturgical assistance of a deacon, and if none is present I invite a deacon from another congregation.

The Rector or Priest in Charge shall offer the announcements, during which time she or he can remind the congregation that the undesignated offering goes to the Bishop's Fund. That fund offers support in emergencies as well as handling non-budgeted items that arise in the course of the year. Following announcements, I will greet the congregation and say the offertory sentence.

#### EXAMINING RECORDS

The Canons which describe a visitation require that the I examine the parish records in Canon III.12.3(a)1: "At every such visitation the visiting Bishop shall preside at the Holy Eucharist and at the Initiatory Rites, as required, preach the Word, examine the records of the Congregation required by Canon III.9.6.(b)5, and examine the life and ministry of the Clergy and Congregation according to Canon III.9.6."

In order to facilitate this, please have

- the parish records (Burials, Baptisms, Confirmations, Marriages) available along with a copy of your most recent parochial and annual report.
- entering the names of people confirmed and received that day can be done in advance if you feel sure that all will be present for the liturgy, but I can also sign the appropriate lines with information to follow.

#### A FEW OTHER ITEMS TO NOTE

If an overnight stay is involved, the congregation is not expected to cover the cost of lodging, or any other travel costs.

Use of social media to communicate about the visitation is encouraged. Please tag me on Facebook (@frankslogue), Instagram (@bishoplogue), or Twitter (@franklogue) in any photos or announcements that include me on those social media sites. This has yet to occur on any visit, but I have seen how it assists some of my bishop colleagues to connect further with parishioners on their visits. I am happy to share any photos I take directly with the person who handles your social media. Let me know who it is and how to get it to them. Usually handling this while at the church using Airdrop for iPhones and texting for other works best.

I take quite seriously the phrase in the Examination during the ordination rite for a bishop, "will you sustain your fellow presbyters and take counsel with them." This designation of fellow presbyters is a quite intentional statement on the relationship between a bishop and the clergy and I apply that same courtesy to the lay leadership of our congregations. It is therefore my hope as bishop that you will continue to call me by my Christian name, Frank. Of course, you should refer to me as Bishop Logue as is appropriate, but continue to address me as Frank. We all understand the office of bishop and the authority that comes with this call. I trust we also understand that authority is primarily relational, touching only on canonical authority as necessitated by circumstances.

Some may have a personal preference to address me as Bishop Logue or Bishop Frank. After a single reminder, I will endeavor to recall this preference and to not offer correction. I intend to likewise call deacons and priests by their Christian name and to refer to you as "the Reverend" adding your first and last name. When I am with you in your congregation, please let me know

how you are typically addressed by your parishioners. I will follow that practice trusting that women and men clergy serving in your church share equal forms of address as is essential.

It is my hope that these details answer the general questions you may have—if not, please do be in touch. I am game for most anything that will assist you in your ministry and support the congregation you serve, so if you wonder if something is possible, please ask. My great hope and desire are that the visitation will be a wonderful occasion in the life of the congregation that supports your ongoing ministry in your community.

Pax et Bonum,

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The Rt. Rev. Frank Logue  
Bishop of Georgia