

CUSTOMARY FOR EPISCOPAL VISITATIONS and OTHER OCCASIONS
in
THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF TEXAS NORTH REGION

- A. In the Episcopal Diocese of Texas North Region, the assistant bishop will make every effort to visit the congregations within the region at least once a year. Requests for special dates or additional visits should be submitted to the assistant bishop's office well in advance of the desired date. (Canon III.12.3(a) requires that the bishop visit congregations within the diocese at least once in three years.)
- B. At every visitation, the bishop shall preside at the Holy Eucharist and at initiatory rites as requested (baptism, confirmation, reception, and reaffirmation), preach the Word, and review the records of the congregation, as well as engage the lay and ordained leadership of the congregation in conversation regarding their life and ministry. (Canons III.12.3 and Canon 11.9.5 describe the canonical requirements of a visitation.)
- C. An opportunity should be provided for the bishop to meet with the vestry/bishop's committee during the course of his visitation.
- D. A Visitation Planning Form will be emailed to the rector/priest-in-charge well in advance of the bishop's visitation. The completed Visitation Planning Form should be sent to the North Region office at P.O. Box 8695, Fort Worth, TX 76124 at least 10 days prior to the visitation. The service bulletin should be sent to the North Region office at least one week prior to the visitation. Completed information sheets for all those being baptized, received, and confirmed should also be sent to the North Region office at least one week prior to the visitation. All of these pieces of information should be sent via email to Janet.waggoner@ecntx.org and copied to katie.sherrod@ecntx.org. Following the visitation, completed forms should be emailed to jroberts@epicenter.org and copied to kdunn@episcenter.org.
- E. When the bishop arrives for the visitation, please have completed, signed certificates ready for the bishop to sign. It is the responsibility of each congregation to prepare and fill out the certificates.
- F. The Parish Register and the Register of Services, as well as all other parish record books must be available for the bishop's review.
- G. The loose offering from all worship services during the visitation is designated for the bishop's discretionary fund and should be sent to the bishop's office as soon as possible after the visitation. Notice that the offering is designated for the bishop's discretionary fund is to be printed in the bulletin and announced prior to the offertory.
- H. In the case of baptisms, confirmations, weddings, or burial services, the festal white/gold will be the color for the day. In the case of ordinations, red will be the color for the day. Otherwise the color of the season or feast will be used.
- I. The bishop would like to wear the vestments preferred by the rector/congregation. The options are cope and mitre or rochet and chimere. Please indicate on the Visitation Planning Form which vestments are preferred. Please consider rochet and chimere for services in the warmest months of the year. The bishop will carry his crozier in the procession.

J. A bishop's chaplain should be available to assist the bishop during the liturgy to hold the bishop's crozier as directed, and to assist the bishop in other ways, as directed.

K. A deacon, when present for the visitation, will read the gospel, prepare and clear the eucharistic table, and pronounce the dismissal. If there is no deacon present, the rector or priest-in-charge is responsible for seeing that there is someone available to perform these tasks.

L. The fullest possible use should be made of the Liturgy of the Word: all three lessons, when appointed, and the psalm are to be used. The psalm may be sung or read.

M. If the rite of baptism is to be celebrated, the bishop is to be the celebrant for the baptism as well as the Eucharist, unless by prior arrangement with the bishop. The bishop will preside over all parts of the liturgy up to and including the Thanksgiving over the Water, and to have the rector/priest-in-charge administer the water to the candidate(s). The bishop will use chrism to mark the forehead of the baptized and with the sign of the cross.

N. If confirmation is celebrated in addition to baptism, care should be taken to fit the confirmation rite smoothly into the baptismal rite. Note especially the presentation of the candidates. The bishop will confirm while standing in the chancel. Candidates should come before the bishop one at a time, and the presenter should identify each person by full name and should specify whether he/she is being presented for confirmation, reception, or reaffirmation. It is permissible for the congregation to be seated for confirmation itself so that the candidates may be seen.

Sponsors, family members and those who are part of the confirmand's spiritual journey will be invited to come forward at the time of confirmation to join with the bishop in prayer and laying on of hands depending on local custom.

O. Prior to baptism/confirmation/reception/reaffirmation, the bishop would like to meet with those who will be baptized/confirmed/received/reaffirm their vows. Please indicate on the Visitation Planning Form when this meeting will occur.

P. If the services of a bishop are required or desired for a particular sacrament and/or other event, please contact Katie Sherrod katie.sherrod@ecntx.org or 817-909-0070. If the assistant bishop is unavailable, another bishop may serve at the invitation of the assistant bishop. All arrangements for the services of the assistant bishop are also made through Katie Sherrod.

Q. For events which are not official visitations (e.g. when the bishop has already been present for official visitation but has been invited to preside over baptisms, confirmations, ordinations, etc.), the bishop is willing to preach, but is glad to entertain requests for another person to preach.

R. When possible, a North Region staff photographer will be available to take photos of the event. Those who are being baptized/confirmed/received and/or who are reaffirming their vows are requested to remain in the sanctuary briefly following the service for pictures with the bishop.

If a North Region staff photographer is not available, the rector/priest-in-charge is asked to make arrangements for photos to be taken and to be submitted, with names of those in the photos with the bishop, to Katie.sherrod@ecntx.org.

S. The North Region communications staff is available to assist with publicity of special events in our congregations and throughout our diocese both prior to and following the events. Please contact Katie Sherrod, Communications, (katie.sherrod@ecntx.org or 817-909-0070) for assistance.

Thank you so much for your partnership in making the visitations of the bishop possible throughout the region.