



“Customary” for Episcopal Visitations & Confirmations

Revised: December 9, 2025

This document is designed to help you and your parish prepare for official visitations. It will hopefully answer many of the questions about details in advance of the visit, so that, on the day of the visitation, everyone is as free as possible to be fully present in celebrating the life, mission, and ministry of your congregation.

General Planning Considerations for Visitations

About Sunday Visitations ...

For Sunday visitations, I am available for all regular congregational activities. Please complete the online visitation form as soon as possible so the bishop’s executive assistant can make appropriate calendar adjustments. In addition, if you would like me to attend Saturday services/events before the Sunday visitation, the bishop’s executive assistant must be notified at least nine months prior to the visitation date. It is possible I will be attending a diocesan event, traveling or have a family commitment. The sooner you get your event on the calendar, the more likely I will be able to attend.

The sacrament and liturgy of Holy Baptism *may* be celebrated along with Confirmations, Receptions, and Reaffirmations. You will find more information regarding baptism later in this customary.

Sunday Visitations may also include receptions, a "Question & Answer Time" with the congregation, and/or time with the leadership (Vestry, Bishop’s Committee, etc.). Please let me know what is decided during our “pre-visititation meeting.”

It is customary that the loose offering collected at services the day of the bishop’s visitation be designated to the “Bishop’s Discretionary Fund.” Your Treasurer should then collect and deposit all contributions in the parish’s or congregation’s account and remit a single check for the total to The Diocese of West Missouri, with “Bishop’s Discretionary Fund” written in the memo.

Planning and Visitation Timeline:

- **Reminder:** 4-6 weeks prior to the visitation, the bishop's executive assistant will send a visitation reminder email. This email will include:
 - A link to the online visitation form (due three weeks prior to visitation)
 - A link to the pre-visitation conversation (approximately 10 days prior to the visitation, held via Zoom)
 - A link to the post-visitation form (due immediately following the visitation if baptisms, confirmations, reaffirmations or receptions take place)
- **Visitation Form** due three weeks prior to visitation
- **Pre-Visitation Conversation** takes place via Zoom (unless other arrangements have been made) approximately 10 days prior to visitation
- **Visitation Day** Bishop visits based on details outlined in the visitation form
- **Visitation Finalization** the week following your visitation, send offerings collected for the bishop's discretionary fund and complete post-visitation form to report baptisms, confirmations, reaffirmations or receptions performed

Specific Planning Considerations

Dealing with Congregational Problems:

If there are negative situations (e.g. strife, anger, dysfunction, etc.) in the life of the congregation, please don't save these issues for your visitation. Please contact the bishop's executive assistant to schedule a visit at another time for conferences with clergy, lay leadership, or both to engage these matters.

Multiple Services:

I am happy to attend all services that are desired or regular for the congregation. In addition, I am happy to preach and preside at all services. What matters most is that I have all the services where I'm expected to attend on my calendar as soon as possible.

When My Family Accompanies Me:

It is rare that my family will travel with me; however, if they do, they do not expect any special attention or have any particular needs.

Accommodations:

When overnight accommodation is necessary, these will be coordinated by my office. Please **do not** make accommodation arrangements unless requested to do so.

Considerations for Planning the Liturgy

Which Liturgy?

There are several liturgies in the BCP relating to rites of initiation: baptism, confirmation, reception, and reaffirmation.

Baptism always comes prior to confirmation, receptions, and reaffirmations. Baptismal candidates will be presented first, then others. We will all renew our baptismal covenant. This is followed with the *Thanksgiving over the water* and baptism. Next comes confirmations, etc. Holy Communion follows with either Rite I or II.

Liturgical Colors:

Except in the very distinctive seasons of Advent and Lent, on Major Feasts, or on Feasts of Our Lord that take precedence over a Sunday, the liturgical colors shall be:

Holy Baptism: white

Confirmation: red

All other occasions: seasonal color

For any Major Feast or Feast of Our Lord that takes precedence over a Sunday, the color will be the color of the Feast (e.g. Easter = white; Pentecost = red; Trinity Sunday = white; All Saints' Day (when falling on a Sunday or when observed on the Sunday after Nov. 1) = white, etc.). Call for assistance if needed.

Lectioinary:

Unless otherwise planned in consultation with me, the psalm and lessons will be from the Revised Common Lectionary using the appointed propers for the day in question. For a Major Feast or a Feast of Our Lord that takes precedence over a Sunday, use the propers appointed to the Feast in question. (See page 16 in the BCP).

Preaching:

Unless otherwise planned in consultation with me, I shall preach at the services I attend during an official visitation.

Eucharistic Texts:

In designing the liturgy, clergy and liturgical planners may make use of any of the Great Thanksgivings from the Book of Common Prayer, Enriching our Worship, and expansive language versions of the Rite II eucharistic prayers.

Vestments:

I will plan to wear alb, chasuble, and mitre for any Eucharistic service. If there is a daily office, then I will wear a rochet and chimere. However, if your preference is I wear the rochet and chimere for a Eucharistic service or for no vestments, please let me know using the planning sheet or when we meet.

I will bring my own chasuble and stole. However, if the congregation's vestments fit me, then I will joyfully wear those.

If it is your practice to wear copes, I will happily bring mine or wear the congregations.

Presiding at the Baptismal Rite:

When there are baptisms, I strongly lean toward having the local presbyter do the baptizing. That, therefore, is the norm. However, for good cause, I will deviate from this norm and perform baptisms personally.

My reasoning? I recognize that I am not going to walk with these families in the day-to-day that is to come; local priests are. To me, it makes more sense for the priest who will provide ongoing pastoral care to do the baptizing of those with whom they

will be in close relationship. While some families may see it as a novelty or somehow "special" for the baptism to be done by the Bishop, doing so, of course, has no greater spiritual effect than a baptism performed by a presbyter (or deacon). There are no "super baptisms", and baptism by a bishop is the same baptism as all baptisms.

On the other hand, it is also true that other families will *not* want the bishop to baptize, preferring instead the one who has prepared them for baptism, the one who will continue as their spiritual leader after baptism. I fully endorse supporting this request and/or desire.

Remember, if an adult is chrismated by the bishop at their baptism, they do not need to be confirmed.

Catechumenate:

If your congregation uses the catechumenate process, you may find the Bishop's visitation a useful time to enroll catechumens. If this fits your plans or desires, please consult with me about appropriate ways to make this part of the liturgy.

Elements of Communion:

I prefer to use whatever bread is common and normal for the community. Wine can be either red or white. I have no preference, though some altar guilds do!

I expect the common cup for distribution of wine. In addition, if there's an intinction cup, please let me know how it will be used.

Deacon's and/or The Bishop's Chaplain:

If there is not a deacon currently serving in your community, I may invite one to join us. The deacon will serve by reading the Gospel, preparing the altar, and performing ablutions. In addition, they will be available to assist me as an "extra set of hands." It is also possible for someone from the congregation to serve as my Chaplain. This may be a priest, deacon, or lay person. The chaplain's main responsibility will be to assist me, mainly as an extra set of hands, but this person may also fulfill other, appropriate liturgical functions if there is no conflict.

The Cathedra (Bishop's Chair):

I will occupy the seat normally occupied by the person presiding, or (since some churches have a dedicated chair that represents the bishop's cathedra) I will occupy the bishop's chair. From there, I will preside at the Liturgy of the Word. As the worship space allows, the Bishop's Chaplain should be seated as close to me as possible.

On Visitation Day - Executing the Liturgical Plan:

My Arrival and Walkthrough:

If there is nothing preceding the liturgy (i.e. Sunday school), I will arrive an hour to 45 minutes before the scheduled start of the first liturgy in which I am involved. Approximately 30 minutes before that liturgy, I would appreciate a walk-through

with the Rector (or a person from the congregation appointed to coordinate liturgies) and the person serving as my chaplain.

Order of Procession:

Normally the order of procession will be:

Cross bearer & torch bearers

[Choir]

[Second Cross Bearer (optional)]

Assisting lay ministers [EMs, Lectors if vested, Intercessor(s) if vested, etc.]

Assisting deacons

Assisting priests

Rector/Priest-in-Charge

Gospeller (optional, but with Gospel Book)

Bishop's chaplain

Bishop

At Baptism:

Though I will not normally baptize, I shall lead all the parts of the service up to the actual administration of baptism - meaning, I will lead the Presentation of Candidates, the Examination, the Baptismal Covenant, and the blessing of the water. I may also administer the Oil of Chrism, with the accompanying sealing of the Holy Spirit, which follows the baptism.

A deacon or lay person (especially a family member of a candidate) should always be appointed to lead the Prayers for the Candidates.

At the Altar:

A deacon, if present, will prepare the altar. In the absence of a deacon, a local presbyter shall perform this function. In the absence of all other clerical orders, I will prepare the table.

The "deacon of the altar" shall stand at my left hand during the Great Thanksgiving and be ready to "point" the missal. If no deacon is present, the Rector/Priest-in-Charge may stand on my left or right. Other clergy should also join around the altar as space allows. Presbyters may participate in the manual gestures of co-celebration.

"Priest craft" and ritual at the altar varies from congregation to congregation and from presbyter to presbyter. I am comfortable in a wide variety of ritual usages, from "high church" to "low church" and "broad church" in between. Gestures, ritual acts, etc. shall follow the custom of the congregation. Please advise me ahead if it is customary for the Presider to bless the water before some is poured into the wine, and when that is done; if it is customary to wash the Presider's hands and when; to genuflect and when; to bow and when; if *Sanctus* bells will be rung and when; etc. Think about what you do and be ready to give me instructions on your usual customs. There are very few customs I will not gladly follow, though I do reserve the right to choose.

If possible, the Gifts of Eucharist, the bread and the wine, should be brought forward with the offerings of the people, and it's especially apropos for someone newly baptized or the family of the newly baptized to bring forward these gifts.

Please discuss with me any problems these preferences might cause in your worship setting.

After the Liturgy:

After the dismissal, I will greet parishioners as they leave the Nave. The newly baptized, confirmed, etc. and their families/sponsors/friends should remain for pictures, if they wish.

After picture taking is complete, we will adjourn to whatever reception, fellowship, or festivity has been planned. Receptions should honor the newly baptized, confirmed, etc.

Concluding Paperwork:

Make sure the Register of Services is available and accessible for my signature. I will also want to view your Marriage, Baptism, and Burial ledgers and books. I will sign these books and the official record before leaving.