

September 2019

Dear Companions in Ministry,

The most joyous part of my role, weekly visitations, is also my chief responsibility. Regular visitation of our parishes is more than a duty, it is vital component of our common life. Week by week, one parish at a time, we are drawn together as the diocese through worship, conversation, and a renewal of relationship as followers of Jesus. This first round visitation also establishes a relationship between congregation and the new bishop.

Preparations for the visit are simple and meant to ensure that our time is rich with worship, fellowship, learning more about each other, and discerning the call God is giving us as individuals, church, and diocese.

Pre-visit preparation:

- 1) Teach your congregation about the diocese and the Bishop's staff.** When announcing the visit, please invite your congregation to explore the diocesan website (<https://dioceseofnewark.org>), read our diocesan newsletters (<https://dioceseofnewark.org/e-news>), and to listen to (or read) my vlog posts (<https://dioceseofnewark.org/bishops-vlog>). At almost every visit I am asked about diocesan-wide ministry and how it supports parishes, much of which is reported every two weeks in the diocesan newsletter. Many people ask for my thoughts on subjects that are publicly posted on my vlog. Our conversations will be enhanced with exposure to diocesan communications.
- 2) Preparatory telephone discussion.** A phone call with the priest in charge or warden will be scheduled by Kay Lark, Bishop's Executive Assistant, in advance of the visit. Please plan on sharing a brief update about the parish. I will want to know:
 - the length of your tenure
 - the spiritual needs of your congregation
 - the blessings and challenges of your parish
 - an overview of community involvement
 - how the episcopal visit can support the parish's ministry.
- 3) Liturgy Planning.** Liturgical texts authorized by the Episcopal Church should be used in the service(s) during the visit. These include the *1979 Book of Common Prayer, Enriching Our Worship*, and the inclusive language Rite II text authorized in 2018. Please contact the Bishop's office if you have questions or need information.
- 4) Please email the following to Kay Lark (klark@dioceseofnewark.org)** in advance of the call:
 - Service Bulletin(s) for the visitation day
 - A schedule including arrival time, parking information, service times, congregational meeting, vestry meeting.
 - A copy of the most recent Annual Parish Meeting Report
 - Links to your church website and any church social media

- Any other written material that you think is important for me to know

During the phone call, we will look at the bulletin, discuss any particularities of worship in your parish, and finalize the timing for the visit.

- 5) Parish Vestments.** As a symbol of my pastoral role and relationship with every congregation, I will wear the vestments of your parish for the service. I will arrive with an alb, crozier, and mitre. Please have a stole and chasuble ready for my use. I will wear the chasuble for the entirety of the service.
- 6) Arrival time.** I will do my best to arrive 30 minutes before the first scheduled event. After my gear is stowed away in the church, we will take a brief walk on the block of your church, to help me become familiar with your setting and to hear about how your parish fits in the landscape of the community physically and as a spiritual presence. If members of your vestry are available, please have them join us.
- 7) Bishop's chaplain.** I will need a chaplain to assist during worship and will meet with them to go over their duties before the service. A deacon or sr. acolyte can serve in this role.
Chaplain's duties:
- Hold mitre and crozier before the service until needed.
 - Carry my bulletin and prayerbook/hymnal in the procession
 - Precede me in the procession
 - Take the mitre and crozier after the collect of the day
 - Return the mitre and crozier to me for the reading of the Gospel.
 - Be prepared to take the crozier and mitre from me during the children's sermon.
 - Return the crozier and mitre to me for the blessing after communion.
 - After the service, if I remain in a receiving line, take the mitre and crozier to the sacristy.

Day of the visit:

Parking: Please be sure to email parking instructions to Kay Lark. She will enter them into my calendar so that I have them the morning of the visit. While we may discuss it during our call, I will not remember verbal instructions in the crush of Sunday morning. I will rely on what is in my calendar.

Schedule: I will arrive 30 minutes before the first scheduled event. My husband does not attend visitations. Plan for me to be at your church for up to five (5) hours.

When putting the schedule together it is helpful to remember that I am not a guest for the day, but rather, the chief pastor of the diocese preaching, celebrating, and pastoring the people of our diocese.

While I am willing to serve at two services on visitation Sunday, if space allows, I encourage you to combine services. The gathering of the full community is an especially important aspect of our faith and a much-needed connection across the services.

In addition to the worship schedule, please include the congregational meeting, Vestry lunch and meeting, closing reflection, and my arrival/departure times.

I will need 50 minutes to meet with the congregation for a “town hall” style meeting. I will ask questions and listen to the congregation’s answers. This is a vital part of the visit as it gives both parishioners and me the chance to get to know each other. Please invite everyone to get a beverage/snack and take a seat in the parish hall after the service, so that the conversation can begin. This is not a class or forum. Flip charts, markers, or dry erase boards are not needed. It is a conversation between bishop and congregation.

The meeting with the Vestry usually takes place after the congregational meeting. There is no preparatory work for this meeting. It is helpful for the Vestry to attend the congregation meeting before meeting with me, but even if that is not possible, please schedule the Vestry to meet with me for an hour at whatever time works best that day. If there has not been something substantial served at coffee hour, it is best to have the Vestry meeting include lunch.

A schedule with one service might look like the following:

9:30 Arrival, tour of church campus and block, line up and pray with worship team.
10:00 Worship
11:30 Coffee and snacks
11:40 Congregational meeting
12:30 Vestry lunch and meeting
1:30 Reflection with clergy
1:45 Depart

Worship:

- Five minutes before the service I will gather with the worship team and choir for prayer before the procession.
- During the procession, I will follow the chaplain.
- I will preach and celebrate. It is important to note that I will not be chanting at the service and that I will usually preach the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL) Gospel lesson. If for some reason you are not using the RCL, you will need to email the gospel reading to Kay Lark two weeks before the visitation.
- Another ordained person, deacon or priest, will need to read the Gospel. I will bless the reader if that person presents themselves to me. This is not necessary or required, but it is offered if desired.
- I will preach from the broad step. If a microphone is needed, we will need to test it beforehand. I am prepared to give a children’s sermon; we can discuss the best place for that message during the call.
- The Nicene Creed will be replaced by Renewal of Baptismal Vows at all services.
- The priest in charge or warden will lead announcements as usual. If there are prayers or blessings for anniversaries, the priest will offer those. I will resume the service with the Offertory Sentence.

- The loose plate offering will be directed to the Alleluia Fund for Outreach. A check for funds collected (payable to "Diocese of Newark") may be mailed to my office (31 Mulberry St., Newark, 07102), with "Alleluia Fund" written on the memo line. Please insert the following in the Sunday bulletin:

At the Bishop's request, the loose plate offering will be directed to the Alleluia Fund for Outreach, a diocesan-wide effort that supports ministries addressing food, shelter, education and international outreach. Grants are awarded annually to congregation-based or -affiliated programs – shelters welcoming, helping, and housing neighbors, food ministries striving to meet the ever-growing need, after-school and summer programs educating and nurturing at-risk children, and international programs promoting health, fighting disease, and responding to disasters. For more information, please visit the diocese's website, www.dioceseofnewark.org/alleluia.

- The deacon or priest will set the table
- The Service Book will need to be opened to the Sursum Corda. Please mark all page turns with ribbon or tape flag. While I do not typically need pointing, please be at the ready in the event I lose my place.
- The priest and/or deacon will elevate the chalice(s) as I elevate the bread.
- I will give communion to the people standing at the altar with me. After they have received bread and wine, the priest will give communion to me. We will then follow your normal practice for communion.

After the service:

I will greet people in the church.

After the final service, I will look at your parish registers.

Congregational Meeting

Vestry Meeting

One final thing:

Reflection: the priest and I will have a short meeting to reflect on the day's joys, learnings, and opportunities. We will ask ourselves two questions:

How did we see God in our midst? How is God calling this congregation to ministry?

This will be a short discussion and we will close with a prayer.

Thank you in advance for the extra effort that you and key members of your congregation will make to prepare for this visit. I look forward to our time together.

Grace and peace,

+Bishop Hughes