

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.

I first wrote this customary in September 2019. And then COVID-19 came our way in March 2020. As a result, I will hold online visitations until further notice and this customary has been tailored to that plan.

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(s) 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) Please email the following to Kay Lark (klark@dioceseofnewark.org) in advance of the call:**
 - Service Bulletin for the visitation day.
 - The Bishop's office will supply a service template for your use if you deem it helpful – please request of Kay Lark if needed.

The loose plate offering will be directed to the Bishop's Discretionary Fund (BDF). During the food emergency caused by the pandemic, the funds collected will be given to the food ministries profiled in *The VOICE Online* newsletter. A check for funds collected (payable to "Diocese of Newark") may be mailed to my office (31 Mulberry St., Newark, 07102), with "BDF – Food Ministry" 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 Bishop's Discretionary Fund. During the food emergency caused by the pandemic, the funds collected will be given to

the food ministries profiled in *The VOICE Online* newsletter. In addition, those interested in donating online in support of diocesan food ministries may click on the DONATE button at the top of the diocesan website home page and choose **Area of Greatest Need: Food Pantries.** *For more information about the increased need our parish food ministries are meeting, please see current and past issues of The VOICE Online. <https://dioceseofnewark.org/publications/voice-online-archive>.*

- 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 and discuss how this visit will unfold.

4) Here is how this online visitation will be structured:

- **ALL online visitation services will begin at 10:00am (with a few exceptions for afternoon visitations scheduled by this office)** – this is necessary to accommodate the technical and personnel requirements for these services. Please emphasize this in advance if 10:00am is not your regular service time (announcements, newsletters and emails, church website, etc.).
- There will be one **Ante-Communion service, which is the Liturgy of the Word**, using Rite I or Rite II based on what is most familiar to your congregation. The gathering of the full community is an especially important aspect of our faith and a much-needed connection.
- I will be speaking from my home, wearing my clerical collar and a stole. The stole is the only liturgical vestment I will wear. It is important to note that I will usually preach the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL) Gospel lesson.
- Clergy of the church (where present) have the choice of location from which to participate during the service (home, church nave, etc.).
- The entire service will be broadcast live:
 - The congregation will enter the service through an invitation to a Zoom “meeting” provided by the Bishop’s office. You as the church will distribute this invitation **only** to your parishioners. They will remain in this Zoom meeting throughout the entire visitation.
 - The Zoom meeting will also be transmitted over the diocese’s YouTube live-streaming channel. This means that anyone who wants to witness the service is welcome to join on YouTube at this link: <https://youtube.com/c/dionewark>. **This link may be published in your church newsletter and/or on your website.**
- My sermon will be part-sermon, part-conversation with the congregation.
 - Because of this “Zoom to YouTube” technology, your congregation will be able to speak online during the service when invited to do so.
 - Those watching on YouTube will NOT be able to speak during the service.
- The entire service will run approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes.
- We will take a short break and, at that time, the YouTube broadcast will end. Your congregation will stay on Zoom because ...
- We will then move into a 55-minute Zoom “coffee hour” which will be attended only by your congregants. This time together will be a guided conversation; this is a vital part of the visit as it gives both parishioners and me the chance to get to know each other. This will not be a class or forum -- it is a conversation between bishop and congregation. I will close the coffee hour portion with a prayer/blessing.
- Then the clergy (where present) and vestry will be prompted on the screen to join a “break out room,” moving from the larger Zoom call into a smaller “room” for a one-hour meeting with me. (Please see

below for instructions on making this meeting technically possible.) There is no preparatory work for this meeting.

- At the close of the vestry meeting, I will excuse everyone but the clergy (where present or the warden/s if no clergy present) and we 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.

5) Here is how the technical portion of the visitation will work:

- ✓ Kay Lark will email to you a Zoom invitation for your visitation.
- ✓ That invitation will be sent by you/your staff via email directly to your members, folks who will be on the Zoom call as described above.
 - In this way we will minimize the chance of "Zoom-bombing" of extraneous material by strangers, something that has happened when Zoom information was posted on public websites. **The Zoom info for this call is NOT to be posted on your website, included in an online newsletter or distributed outside of your membership list.**
- ✓ The definition of *extra content* for this service: live music, pre-recorded music, shared screens of any kind including announcements, etc.
 - If there is any *extra content*, it must be transmitting from a device that can join the Zoom call.
 - As a side note, there is not much point in having a camera focused on an empty altar/empty church if nobody will be speaking from that location. All to say it will not appear on the screen if there is no sound coming from that location!
- ✓ You are asked to designate someone from the parish to act as "tech coordinator" for this visitation. This person will work with John King (or another "virtual verger") who will be running the technical portion of the visitation on the day, making sure that those who need to be seen are seen and also including in the broadcast any *extra content* (see above).
- ✓ John has requested that you **email to Kay** (klark@dioceseofnewark.org) **the list** of all those participating in the service (clergy, lectors, reader of announcements, anyone providing *extra content* and a description of content, etc.)
 - John King will need the name of all participants and their function (first lector, etc.).
 - For service participants joining online (preferred method), their Zoom photo screen must display their name (not a nickname) so he can find the person in all those little photos!
 - For service participants joining by phone, John will need to know their area code and the last 4 digits of their phone number so he can find and unmute them.
- ✓ For the most part, parishioners in the Zoom will be muted automatically to avoid confusion and distracting background sound. The Virtual Verger will unmute service participants during their presentation time and will announce in the moment how the "conversation" portions of the service will be accomplished.
- ✓ Church members who are watching on Zoom are advised to set their screen on "speaker view" during the service so that anyone speaking is featured, not tiny! (Found in the top right corner of your Zoom screen.)
- ✓ For the coffee hour, church members who are watching on Zoom are advised to set their screen on "gallery view" in order to see a larger number of people (also top right corner of the Zoom screen.)
- ✓ John King also requests that you **email to Kay the list** of those who should be included in the vestry meeting so that the "break-out room" of Zoom can be properly set up.

- ✓ If the tech coordinator for this service would like to have a pre-visit call with John King, please email him at jking@dioceseofnewark.org to set up a call.
- ✓ Should the tech coordinator or anyone on church staff for this visitation need to reach John by phone before or during the service, he can be reached at 973-430-9919.

My review of parish registers will occur at another time to be determined.

One final thing:

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

Customary 2020-2021 online Visitations. REVISED.7.30.20