

October 2022

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 a vital component of our common life. Week by week, we are drawn together as the diocese through worship, conversation, and a renewal of relationship as followers of Jesus.

One important note: in order to visit each church every three years (ideally in person) and to accommodate my post-surgery recovery, there will be a few services that involve more than one congregation. As a result, you will see below references to “host” and “co-host” churches. Here are some specifics:

- This customary is written for the occasions when more than one congregation will be worshipping at a host church. Those preparing for visitations involving one church at a service will please simply follow the instructions for “host church”.
- The host church will complete all the pre-visit preparation steps listed below and I will have the pre-visit call with the clergy/wardens of the host church.
- The co-host church(es) will complete the “co-host” portions of Steps 1, 3 and 4 as listed below.
- It is my hope that, for these services, the co-host church(es) will work with the host church to design the service and provide service participants.
- Any online components of an in-person visitation (live streaming, recording, online bulletins, etc.) are part of your congregation's ongoing responsibility to provide an online worship presence and would be managed by your church for this service.
- Should a visitation be held entirely online (if risk levels increase, for example), then diocesan staff would assist in providing support.
- After the service, there will be a post-service congregational meeting with both host and co-host congregations.
- After the congregational meeting, the on-site Vestry meeting will be with the host church's clergy and Vestry.
- The Vestry meeting for the co-host church(es) will take place via Zoom at another time that will be scheduled in advance.

### **COVID Considerations:**

Please note that all visitations are expected to comply with diocesan guidelines for the risk level of your county, as described on [covidactnow.org](https://covidactnow.org) and in the Journey Forward guidelines ([dioceseofnewark.org/covid-19/journey-forward](https://dioceseofnewark.org/covid-19/journey-forward)). In-person visitations at Medium Risk (Yellow) or Low Risk (Green) will proceed as described in this customary. If risk levels reach High (Orange), additional consultation will be needed with the congregation to determine whether

an in-person visit is possible, due to space and safety considerations.

**Pre-visit preparation:**

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.

- 1) Teach your congregation about the diocese and the Bishop's staff (host and co-host churches).** 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, The VOICE. 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 **host** church clergy-in-charge or wardens will be scheduled by Chloe Caprice, Bishop's Executive Assistant, in advance of the visit. **A schedule for these preparatory phone calls is included in the email** 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 during the visit. These include the *1979 Book of Common Prayer, Enriching Our Worship*, and the inclusive language Rite II text authorized in 2018. I hope that all **co-host** congregations will work with the **host** church to create the service bulletin and provide service participants. Please contact the Bishop's office if you have questions or need information.
- 4) Please email the following to Chloe Caprice ([ccaprice@dioceseofnewark.org](mailto:ccaprice@dioceseofnewark.org)) one week in advance of the call:**
  - Service Bulletin for the visitation day (final version from the **host** church)
  - A schedule including arrival time, parking information, service time, congregational meeting, and vestry meeting (final version from the **host** church).

- A copy of the most recent Annual Parish Meeting Report (**host and co-host** churches)
- Links to your church website and any church social media (**host and co-host** churches)
- Any other written material that you think is important for me to know (**host and co-host** churches)

During the pre-visit 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, I will wear the vestments of the **host** 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 scheduled service time.
- 7) Bishop's chaplain.** If your county's COVID risk levels are at Medium (Yellow) or Low (Green) on [covidactnow.org](https://www.covidactnow.org), I will need a chaplain from the **host** church to meet me upon arrival, to direct me within the church and to assist during worship; I will meet with them to go over their duties before the service. A deacon or senior acolyte can serve in this role. If COVID risk levels are High (Orange) or higher, a Bishop's chaplain will not be used.

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 Chloe Caprice. 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 rush 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.

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.

For this program year, I will not be able to offer serving at two services on a visitation Sunday. I encourage you to combine services as 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 times for the congregational meeting, Vestry meeting, closing reflection, and my arrival/departure times.

I will need 50 minutes to meet with the congregation(s) for a “town hall” style meeting. I will ask questions and listen to the parishioners’ 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 coffee, if available, or a water bottle and take a seat in the parish hall/gathering area after the service, so that the conversation can begin after I take a short break - This is not a class or forum. Flip charts, markers, or dry erase boards are not needed. It is a conversation between bishop and parishioners.

The meeting with the host church clergy and Vestry will take place after the congregational meeting. There is no preparatory work for this meeting. It is helpful for the Vestry to attend the congregational meeting before meeting with me, but even if that is not possible, please schedule the Vestry to meet with me for an hour.

The meeting with the co-host churches’ clergy and Vestries will take place via Zoom at another time that will be scheduled in advance.

*A schedule might look like the following:*

- **9:30:** Arrival, meet the worship team, line up and pray with worship team.
- **10:00:** Worship (On Sundays with one Visitation service, a 10am service time is preferred but I can also start at your regular time if requested).
- **11:30:** Parishioners move to parish hall/gathering area while I have a snack I will supply, in the pastor’s office
- **11:40:** Congregational meeting with host and co-host parishioners
- **12:30:** Host church Vestry meeting
- **1:30:** Reflection with host church 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 Chloe Caprice two weeks before the visitation.
- Another ordained person, deacon or priest, will read the Gospel (if available). 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 (BCP 292) at all services.
- The clergy-in-charge or warden will lead announcements as usual. If there are prayers or blessings for anniversaries, the clergy 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](http://www.dioceseofnewark.org/alleluia).*

- The deacon or priest will set the table, when available.
- 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 as I elevate the bread.
- I will give communion to the people standing at the altar with me. After they have received communion, 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 service, I will look at the parish registers of congregations present.
- Congregational Meeting with host and co-host congregations
- Vestry Meeting for the host church

**One final thing:**

Reflection: the priest of the host church 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.

A time of reflection with the clergyperson of the co-host church will take place at the end of the co-host Vestry meeting, using these same questions.

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*