



# The Episcopal Diocese of Newark

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*Equipping congregations... Empowering people... Engaging the world... with the hope and justice of Jesus.*

As of November 4, 2016

## CUSTOMARY FOR EPISCOPAL VISITATIONS

Dear colleague in ministry,

I am excited about the prospect of my upcoming visit with you. While there are many details in this customary, the main purpose of the Episcopal visit is to help the congregation claim its mission and identity as a unique part of the body of Christ. To that end, there will be several parts of the visit which will serve to reinforce our growing commitment to Joining God in Shaping our Future. Please read through the following guidelines, created to help me (and you) prepare for the upcoming Episcopal visit with intention and clarity.

Two highlights:

1. **Renewal of Baptismal Vows.** This will occur just before the Peace, which means that the Prayers of the People will follow the sermon. If there is a Confession and Absolution, it will take place after the Prayers and before the Renewal of Vows. Since the Renewal is based on the Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creed will be omitted.

You may use the Renewal of Baptismal Vows (BCP page 292) or the rite that is included in this customary.

As the congregation prepares for the episcopal visit, I would ask the rector to invite all members to ponder and pray about their own unique Christian mission – be it in the church, in their family or in the world. After the words are spoken in the rite, I will invite people to come forward and asperge them in order to empower their mission and ministry. The exact details of all this will be worked out in the phone conversation prior to the visit. Please provide water, a container and an aspergillum or its equivalent. I have found that it is helpful for the musician to play music that will cover the action.

2. To symbolize engaging the world, I normally arrive 20 minutes ahead of the first event of the day in order to take a walk outside. We will at least walk to the edge of the property – or in some cases, around the block. The purpose is to see the church in its neighborhood – and to reflect on how the neighborhood helps to shape or inhibit the congregation's mission. Clergy, Wardens and vestry will accompany me as available. Again, the exact details of all this will be worked out in the phone conversation prior to the visit. It may be necessary to have the walk at another time during the visit.

### **Schedule during the visit**

During my time with the congregation, I expect to lead and preach at least one service, host a forum and have a meeting with the Vestry. (I am willing to lead a 9 a.m. service, if you have one. If you have a large 8 am congregation, I am willing to consider leading it). Those three things, plus a coffee hour or meal, usually take up all of the available time.

### **Phone conversations**

I would like to have a one-half hour phone conversation before the visit, and another half-hour phone conversation after the visit. The first is to prepare for the day; the second is to debrief it.

In advance of the first conversation, please mail or email the following to my office:

- a copy of the Sunday service bulletin for the visitation date
- a schedule for the visitation – which includes worship, forum, time with vestry – and any other event, dedication or expectation
- a copy of the most recent annual parish meeting report
- any other written material/information that you would like for me to know

For the post-visit conversation, we will share our experience of the visit. I will also relate some of the things I saw and felt during my time with you. I will also invite you to relate any observations you may have during the visit, including suggestions for what I might do to improve the episcopal visitation.

### **Forum**

**NOTE: May I please have an easel with newsprint and marker(s) set up for use during the Forum time?** I have learned that the forum works best if it happens after the main service. That said, my desire is to best accommodate the congregation's schedule. At the forum, I will ask the ordained leader to introduce the event, indicate when it will conclude and bring the forum to a close. I have found it best to give people the opportunity to be seated. I will talk about the Gospel Challenge to engage in God's mission – and will spend some didactic time drawing the connection between the diocese's mission and the congregation's mission. After my presentation (usually about 20 minutes), I will invite responses to the presentation – or entertain questions about what is on people's hearts and minds.

### **The Worship Service**

#### **Children**

At some point during the service, I will want to offer a short homily to the children. This can come at the very beginning of the service, right after the reading of the Gospel or after the exchange of the Peace. I will invite the children to come up to the front of the church -- and sit down facing me. The children's homily will take about five minutes.

At the end of the children's homily, I will give each child either a cross or a laminated picture of Jesus.

### **Before the service**

1. As indicated, I normally will arrive at least twenty minutes before the first event of the visit. If parking is hard to come by in your community, I would appreciate it if you could identify one parking space. My wife normally does not accompany me, but if she does, I will let you know.
2. I would like to be introduced to the bishop's chaplain, so that we can familiarize one another with the space. The chaplain and I will figure out where to put the bishop's crozier and miter when it is not being used.
3. I will be vested in chasuble and miter. I normally wear a chasuble and matching miter that depict a recent trip to Israel, but I am happy to wear the church's chasuble and stole to match the season or the altar hangings. I have a white miter which I will wear in Lent, and when it better matches the parish chasuble.
4. I will gladly use incense if that is the congregation's practice. I will need to know when I am expected to cense the altar (some congregations just use it at the beginning of the service, and others use it at the beginning and the offertory.) I just need to know the expectation.

### **Ministry of the Word**

1. I usually gather with the worship participants and offer a prayer before the procession.
2. During the procession, I follow the chaplain. We are the last two in line during the procession.
3. After the opening acclamation and collect for purity, I will hand my crozier and miter to the chaplain.
4. Someone besides me will read the Gospel. I will bless the reader of the Gospel if that person presents her/himself to me. It is not necessary to do this. During the Gospel procession, the chaplain provides me with the crozier, so I can hold it during the reading of the Gospel. I will not be reading the Gospel. After the Gospel procession, I will hand the crozier back to the chaplain.
5. I normally will preach at the crossing without crozier or miter.
6. If the Prayers of the People require a Celebrant's collect at the end, I will offer that.
7. If there is a Confession, I will introduce and lead it – unless it is the local practice to have someone else start it. The chaplain will provide me with the crozier and miter for me to offer the absolution.
8. I will introduce and lead the Renewal of Baptismal Vows (or its equivalent) – which will include my invitation to members of the congregation to come forward for an asperging (details to be worked out with the clergy).
9. Please include the following prayer in the liturgy around the Renewal of Baptismal Vows. You still have the choice of the form of the vows (the version attached to your email OR BCP) but I am requesting that everyone please use this prayer from the Michno book for the blessing of the water:  
“Almighty God, who through the water of baptism has raised us from sin into new life and by the power of your life-giving Spirit ever cleanses and sanctifies your people: *+Bless, we pray you, this water for the service of your holy Church; and*

*grant that it may be a sign of the cleansing and refreshment of your grace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”*

10. I will introduce the Peace – and then hand the crozier and miter to the chaplain.
11. If there are altar rail blessings for birthdays or anniversaries, I prefer that the priest lead them.
12. For years, it has been the custom in the diocese - and throughout the Episcopal Church, that the loose plate offering on the day of the Bishop's visit be directed to the Bishop's Discretionary Fund. I am making a change to that custom; I am asking that the loose plate offering be directed to the Alleluia Fund for Outreach. A check for funds collected may be mailed to my office, payable to the Diocese of Newark, with "Alleluia Fund" written on the memo line. I would also ask that you put 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 Holy Eucharist**

1. I will sit in the bishop's chair in the sanctuary during any announcements and the Offertory. A priest or deacon will set the table.
2. If offered, I will cense the altar.
3. If offered, I will receive the ablutions. I prefer not to bless the water cruet.
4. I will gladly sing the Sursum Corda and the Proper Preface. I prefer to sing the Simple Tone. I can find my own note to begin the singing.
5. It is most helpful to me if the altar book is set to the Proper Preface (skipping the Sursum Corda; I remember the words).
6. It is most helpful to me to **not** have someone point the words or turn the pages. I find that to be distracting.
7. At the elevation, I will hand a chalice to the priest – while I hold up the bread. If there are other filled vessels on the altar, I will give them to people at the altar to hold aloft as well.
8. For the initial distribution of communion, I will give bread and wine to the one, two or three people with me at the altar. I would like for the priest to serve me the bread and the wine. After that, I will serve bread to the other sacred ministers – and then begin serving bread to those coming to communion. I will gladly share the serving of bread with another priest or deacon. If the custom of the parish is to have the sacred ministers serve themselves at the end, I will gladly follow this practice.
9. After Communion, I will put my paten on the altar, and wait at my chair until the altar is cleared – and it is time for the postcommunion prayer.
10. I will lead the postcommunion prayer from behind the altar.

11. After the postcommunion prayer, the chaplain will provide me with my miter first (so I can get it on) and crozier second. I will offer the blessing from the sanctuary entrance – or from the top of the chancel steps.
12. I will (usually) carry my crozier and follow the chaplain at the end of the procession.
13. Someone besides me will offer the dismissal.

#### **After the service**

1. I would like to greet people leaving the church. I would like to do that inside the church (as opposed to the parish hall, or outside) and it will be necessary for the rector to tell me where I should do that.
2. I will give my miter, crozier and prayer book to the chaplain, who will bring them to the place where I was vested for the service.
3. I would like to have a look at your parish registers (I am canonically bound to do this). After looking at them, I will initial each with the date of my visit.

#### **Meeting with the Vestry**

I would like to have the opportunity to meet with the Vestry and clergy-in-charge. This usually happens after the coffee hour/forum time, but I am willing to adjust to whatever schedule works best for the congregation and its leaders. I would also like for the Deputies to Diocesan Convention be included at this meeting. At the beginning of our meeting, I will get us to agree on a time when we will conclude. The time together has never been more than an hour. Any longer than that becomes counterproductive.

In the course of our time together, I will ask four questions, to be answered one at a time. The questions are designed to help leaders focus on mission and vision. I have found that they help to both frame the conversation and give some direction and energy for the future. The four questions are:

1. What do you do as a congregation that Jesus would recognize and love?
2. What is your congregation's purpose?
3. What are your challenges? What gets in the way of living out your mission?
4. What would you like to ask me or want me to know so that the Diocese can be of assistance in supporting your mission and ministry?

I know this is a long list, but I wanted to be as clear as possible about the many elements of the day. We can adjust them, if need be. Thank you for your attention to the many details of this important ministry that we share together. I look forward to my visit.

In peace,

*Mark M. Beckwith*

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