

CUSTOMARY FOR EPISCOPAL VISITATIONS

Diocese of Northern Indiana

- Preparation: Please call me two or three weeks before the visitation. That will give us an opportunity to go over liturgical points and look at the design of the visitation as a whole (see the bullet point labeled “Visitation events”). It’s also helpful if you will fax, e-mail, or snail-mail me a rough draft of the bulletin prior to our conversation. That helps me to ask intelligent questions!
- Celebrant: If you have one Sunday Eucharist, I will celebrate and preach. If you have two, the rector or priest-in-charge is welcome to celebrate the early liturgy. In that case, I’ll preach and pronounce the absolution and blessing.
- Vestments: When I am the celebrant, I will wear your chasuble (color of the day) with my mitre. When the rector or priest-in-charge is the celebrant for an early Eucharist, I will wear alb and stole with zucchetto.
- Ceremonial: My own ceremonial is fairly simple, relatively “standard brand” and, I hope, not especially idiosyncratic. I realize that there’s a good deal of ceremonial variety throughout the diocese. I’m happy to make adjustments according to local custom; but it’s important that I be given notice and directions.
- Chaplain: Please appoint a chaplain to assist with the crozier, to hold the book and oils during confirmation, and to be available for other logistical/ceremonial tasks. The chaplain can be an assisting priest, a lay person, or a deacon. (Note, however, that one of the chaplain’s jobs is to bring me the crozier just before the Gospel. Depending upon your custom, it can be awkward for a deacon to do this while he or she is preparing for a Gospel procession.) If the chaplain is an acolyte or young person, he or she should be old enough to understand liturgical instructions (such as, “Bring me the crozier for the absolution, please”).
- Deacons: When a deacon is present, he or she should fulfill all rubrical functions prescribed by the Prayer Book. The deacon should stand with me at the altar for the Great Thanksgiving, and hold the chalice during the invitation.
- No chair necessary! My custom is to stand for confirmation; so no central chair is necessary. During the ministry of the word, I will preside from the customary place; and then, after the sermon, will move to the center for the presentations.
- Altar book: Please have the altar book in the sacristy prior to the liturgy so that I can set up the ribbons. A previously-marked book (with the celebrant oriented to ribbon placement) helps avoid long pauses as I look for the proper text. I prefer to lay the altar book flat on the altar rather than place it on a missal stand. The reason is entirely practical: with my “progressive” lenses, I can see the text more clearly when the book is not elevated.

- Chanting: I prefer to sing the *simple* tone of the preface, the result of more than a third of a century's habit. I'm also happy to chant the doxology of the Great Thanksgiving and the introduction to the Lord's Prayer, if that is your custom. If there is anything else for me to sing, please let me know when we hold our initial pre-visitation conversation so that I can do some practicing.
- Name tags: If the visitation includes confirmation, please write the name by which the candidate wishes to be confirmed in clear, block letters on his or her name tag. Name tags should be on the right side of the candidate, and easily visible as I lay on hands. Somewhere on the name tag, please designate with a single letter as follows: C – confirmation; R – reception; A = reaffirmation.
- Who should be confirmed? People who have not yet been confirmed by a bishop in the historic succession.
- Who should be received? People who have already been confirmed by a bishop in the historic succession (for example, former Roman Catholics) and who are seeking to become members of the Episcopal Church. I am happy to make an exception to this, however, when communicants of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America wish to become members of the Episcopal Church. Because we are in full communion with the ELCA and our clergy are interchangeable, those persons may be either confirmed or received; the choice is theirs.
- Who is eligible for reaffirmation? People who have already been confirmed or received in the Episcopal Church, and who wish to make a public reaffirmation of their commitment to Jesus Christ.
- What about Holy Communion? The canons of the church – and universal Christian practice – specify that only baptized persons are eligible to receive Holy Communion. When the Sunday bulletin or verbal announcement invites persons to the altar, this canonical stipulation should be included. It is often helpful for the announcement also to include an appropriate alternative for those not yet baptized (or for baptized visitors who do not wish to receive the Sacrament) – such as, “You may come to the altar rail and cross your arms, and the priest will be happy to pray a prayer of blessing.”
- Baptism: When the liturgy includes baptism, I will receive the presentations, lead the baptismal vows and the baptismal covenant, bless the water, and seal the candidates. The rector or priest-in-charge will baptize, since he or she has the ongoing pastoral relationship with the candidate.
- Proper: For Sunday visits, please use the proper of the day. For weekday visitations, call me, and we'll discuss what proper would be best for the occasion.

- Revised Common Lectionary: The General Convention of the Episcopal Church has adopted the RCL as the official lectionary of the church, effective the first Sunday of Advent 2007. The enabling resolution says that parishes should begin using that lectionary on that date, though they may continue to use the current Prayer Book lectionary until the first Sunday of Advent 2010, with the permission of the diocesan bishop. I do indeed give that permission; but we are now in a period in which I will not automatically know what lectionary you are using when I come for a visit. So, in our pre-visit conversation, be sure to tell me if you're reading from the BCP lectionary or the RCL. During Ordinary Time – the long “green” season after Pentecost – the RCL offers two tracks for the Old Testament lesson. Track 1 provides semi-continuous readings, while Track 2 includes OT lections that match the Gospel in theme, similar to the practice in the BCP lectionary. You should choose one track or the other at the beginning of Ordinary Time, and stick with it throughout. Be sure to let me know, when my visit comes in Ordinary Time, which track you've chosen.
- Certificates, Prayer Books, and Bibles: I am happy to sign these. Be sure to have them in a convenient place before or after the liturgy. A crowded sacristy immediately before the liturgy can be an awkward time for signing (I'm easily distracted!). So it's helpful to think creatively about a place where I can sign books and certificates with a certain degree of concentration. My secretary, Jon Adamson, can provide certificates for confirmation and reception; call him if you would like her to do this.
- Parish registers: Please have the parish registers ready for the canonically required inspection. This will include the service register as well as baptism, confirmation, communicant, marriage, and burial records.
- The Bishop's Discretionary Fund: Using envelopes provided by the diocese, an offering is taken for this fund. The total contribution should be mailed to Sharon Katona, diocesan treasurer, marked “Bishop's Discretionary Fund”. If you need envelopes, contact Jon Adamson.
- Overnight accommodations: When I stay overnight in a community – typically that occurs in conjunction with a Saturday event or an early liturgy on Sunday at a far distance from South Bend – my secretary takes care of hotel reservations. He maintains a list of hotels in communities where I often require overnight housing, and makes the reservations in my behalf well in advance of the visit. The cost is covered by the diocese.
- Visitation events: In addition to the liturgies, I am delighted to be involved in any way that would encourage you and your congregation. This might include some of the following possibilities:
 - Speak at an adult forum
 - Meet with confirmation or baptismal candidates
 - Visit Sunday School classes

Meet with wardens and/or vestry
Enjoy a reception or luncheon with the congregation
Make a shut-in or hospital call with you
Take you and your spouse to lunch or dinner

Sometimes the visitation includes a Saturday component, and on other occasions involves only Sunday. As we design the visitation, we can decide on the pattern that will work best and the elements that we will include.

- Sunday supply: Occasionally, especially in the summer, I have free Sundays and am available for supply work. When I come in this capacity, I simply vest in chasuble (with zucchetto) and avoid complex episcopal ceremonial.
- Weekday confirmations: Sometimes my Sunday visitation comes at a time of year that's not convenient for preparing people for confirmation. If so, I'm happy to make an additional, weekday visit at a more appropriate season, in order to celebrate confirmation. Please contact me if you wish to schedule such a visit.
- What do you do with a bishop in the pew? On rare occasions, I have a Sunday with no assignment at all. In that case, I sometimes just turn up and sit in the congregation. When a bishop's in the pew, he or she is part of the worshipping community – a member of the people of God – and does not need to be invited to give the absolution or blessing. (I'm physically but not liturgically present!) You're welcome to greet me during announcement time; but no other fuss need be made.