



SUNDAY MORNING PASTORAL BISHOP VISITS

Guidelines for Congregations of the Diocese of East Carolina

The Episcopal Diocese of East Carolina
P. O. Box 1336 Kinston, NC 28503-1336
(252) 522-0885

FAX: (252) 523-5272

Email: officeofbp@diocese-eastcarolina.org

INTRODUCTION

These guidelines have been prepared with Sunday morning pastoral visits in mind but can be adapted and used for visits at other times in the week. As you make your plans, please direct all communications and/or questions to the Office of the Bishop. At present, emails should be sent directly to Bishop Skirving at rskirving@diocese-eastcarolina.org. Once Bishop Skirving has announced the hiring of an administrative assistant, please contact that person directly by email or by telephone at (252) 522-0885.

FOUR STEPS TO FOLLOW

1. Confirm Your Visit

Clergy and/or churchwardens should check the attached Sunday morning visitation schedule to see if the Bishop plans to visit your congregation in the coming year. If you are scheduled for a visit and have not already done so, please email the Bishop to confirm the date that has been assigned for your visit. This should be done as quickly as possible. Congregations not confirming their scheduled date may have their visit postponed until the next cycle.

If the assigned date will not work for your congregation, please email the Bishop as quickly as possible to see whether an alternative date might be possible.

2. Plan For Your Visit

Normally, the Bishop will only plan to be present for the chief Sunday morning liturgy, and for any reception or coffee hour that follows. That said, don't be afraid to be a little creative in your planning. You may invite the Bishop to also be present for other Sunday liturgies, or you may consider inviting the Bishop to be present before or after worship for such things as Christian formation classes, congregational Q&A sessions or meetings with the Vestry.

When it is desired that the Bishop be present for more than one liturgy on a Sunday morning, or for additional events beyond worship, please request this by email as soon in advance as possible. The Bishop's ability to accept invitations to additional Sunday liturgies or events will depend on such things as travel times and commitments in other places, before or after Sunday morning visits.

As scheduling permits, the Bishop will also be willing to visit with a congregation at a time other than Sunday morning, whether for worship, for a meeting with the Vestry, or for some other purpose. Simply call or email the Bishop to arrange for an extra visit.

Please do not announce to the congregation that the Bishop will be present for gatherings beyond the chief Sunday morning liturgy until your request has been confirmed!

Please complete the form titled "Preparing for the Bishop's Visit" as soon as possible and at least one month before the Bishop's scheduled visit. Once this form has been received, the Bishop may schedule a telephone call with the person who completed the document.

This call will provide the Bishop with the opportunity to confirm any details of the visit and to learn more about the current health and vitality of the congregation. Congregations not submitting this form at least one month ahead of the scheduled visit may have that visit postponed until the next cycle.

3. Requesting Certificates for Confirmation and/or Reception

If confirmation and/or reception will be a part of liturgy on the day of the Bishop's visit, and if your congregation would like the Bishop's office staff to prepare certificates, please use the "Requesting Certificates" form to provide us with names of those to be confirmed or received. **This form should be received two weeks or more before the scheduled visit,** with care taken to ensure that all names are spelled correctly.

4. Post-Visit Report

Please complete and return the "Official Record of the Bishop's Visit" to Diocesan House during the week following the visit, even if you did not have anyone confirmed or received. This document is available on the diocesan website, along with the visitation schedule and other documents.

LITURGICAL NOTES

- Normally, the Bishop will be celebrant and preacher when making Sunday morning pastoral visits to congregations of the diocese. Clergy of the congregation, both deacons and priests, will be expected to serve in their normal liturgical roles.
- All liturgies must be planned using texts from the Book of Common Prayer, Enriching Our Worship, or other authorized sources. Any alternative texts must be approved in advance by the Bishop.
- When there will be no baptisms, confirmations, receptions, or reaffirmations, please include the Renewal of Baptismal Vows in place of the Nicene Creed. The form of this renewal found on page 292 of the Book of Common Prayer works well.
- The assigned collect and readings for the day are to be used unless alternatives have been approved in advance by the Bishop.
- When the full text of the liturgy is to be printed for the congregation, the Bishop would appreciate receiving a copy in advance. On the day of worship, a copy of the liturgy should be available to the Bishop in large print, similar in size to the print in the missal.
- The liturgical color for the Bishop's visit should be the color of the day, according to the liturgical calendar. When a different choice is preferred, please indicate accordingly on the "Preparing for the Bishop's Visit" form.
- In advance of the Bishop's visit, please inform the congregation that all loose offerings on that day will be given to the Bishop's Discretionary Fund to be used for needs of the Church not covered by diocesan budget. Please do not give the offering to the Bishop during his visit, but have it counted and sent by check to Diocesan House at P.O. Box 1336, Kinston, NC 28503.

When the Liturgy Includes Confirmation, Reception, and/or the Reaffirmation of Baptismal Vows

- Candidates for confirmation, reception and/or reaffirmation of baptismal vows may remain in place or may be invited forward as a group when they are to be presented. This is a choice of the congregation.
- Bishop Skirving prefers to stand for this liturgy, and so a chair will not be needed.
- As the candidates come forward to be confirmed, received, or to reaffirm their baptismal vows, they should do so individually and will normally stand. Presenters or sponsors may stand with the candidate but should not join the Bishop in the laying on of hands during prayer.
- Please provide a clear way for the Bishop to know the names of the candidates as they come forward, whether by the use of name tags or by speaking their names.
- Please make plans for a group photograph, during or immediately after the liturgy.
- Please have the parish registers ready for the Bishop to sign ahead of the service, along with any certificates or prayer books. If you would prefer for your certificates to be prepared by Diocesan House staff, please send the necessary details to the Office of the Bishop at least two weeks before the service.

A Note about Confirmation, Reception, and/or the Reaffirmation of Baptismal Vows

- While the primary purpose of the Bishop's Sunday morning visit is pastoral, it is always acceptable to celebrate confirmation, reception and the reaffirmation of baptismal vows within the liturgy.
- Outside of a Sunday morning visit in their own congregation, candidates for confirmation, reception and the reaffirmation of baptismal vows may also be presented to the Bishop on a number of other occasions:
 - When a neighboring congregation is hosting the Bishop's visit, and is willing to have your candidates join theirs. Besides coordinating this with the leadership of the neighboring congregation, please confirm this plan with the Bishop well in advance of the visit.
 - At a deanery or regional celebration which may be scheduled from time to time. Dates and locations will be established well in advance.
 - At a specially planned "extra" liturgy to be hosted by the congregation, outside of their regularly planned Sunday morning pastoral visit. Such "extra" liturgies must be planned in consultation with the Bishop.

Questions?

Please contact the Office of the Bishop by email at officeofbp@diocese-eastcarolina.org or by telephone phone at 252-522-0885