

# Sunday Morning Pastoral Visits with Bishop Skirving

## Guidelines for the Congregations of the Diocese of East Carolina Updated – May 2024

### Introduction

Please receive these guidelines in the spirit with which they have been prepared, as a beginning point for making plans for Bishop Skirving's visit with your congregation, but not as a detailed set of rules that must be followed to the letter. 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](mailto:rskirving@diocese-eastcarolina.org). Once Bishop Skirving has an administrative assistant in place, please contact that person directly, by email or by telephone at (252) 522-0885.

### Getting Started

Clergy and/or churchwardens should check the Sunday morning visitation schedule for the coming year as soon as it has been distributed and confirm with the Office of the Bishop by email that the congregation is willing and able to welcome the bishop on the date listed. If for any reason your scheduled date will not work for your congregation, contact the Office of the Bishop as soon as possible, as sometimes there can be the flexibility to reschedule.

In planning for the bishop's visit, don't be afraid to be a little creative. You may invite the bishop to be present for more than one service on a Sunday morning, 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.

**Requesting an Additional Sunday Service:** Most weeks, the bishop will be present with a congregation for only their chief Sunday morning liturgy. When it is desired that the bishop be present for more than one liturgy on a Sunday morning, please request this as soon in advance as possible. The bishop's ability to accept invitations to additional Sunday liturgies will normally depend on such things as travel times and commitments in other places, before or after Sunday morning visits.

**Requesting Additional Sunday Events:** These events should always be planned around any receptions or meals that are open to the whole congregation, so that the bishop has the chance to greet as many people as possible. If there is a good reason for the bishop to come on a Saturday or to stay through Sunday afternoon, he will do his best to accept such invitations. The bishop will also be willing to visit congregations or their vestries at times other than on Sundays when it would be helpful and as scheduling permits.

**Note:** Please contact the Office of the Bishop as quickly as possible with invitations to additional Sunday liturgies or weekend events. And please, do not announce to the

congregation that the bishop will be present for these additional gatherings until your request has been confirmed!

## **About Two Months Prior to the Bishop's Visit**

As the time of the bishop's visit draws closer, the Rector, or Priest-in-Charge, or the Senior Warden when there is not a resident priest, should complete the form titled "Preparing for the Bishop's Visit" that can be found with the visitation schedule on the diocesan website. This form is to be used in making preliminary plans for the visit and is to be completed and returned to the Office of the Bishop at least one month prior to the visit. Once this form has been received, a telephone call will be scheduled for the bishop and the person who has 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.

### **In planning worship for the bishop's visit, please note the following:**

- 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. Alternatives must be approved by the bishop ahead of time.
- When there will be no baptisms, confirmations, receptions, or reaffirmations, please use the Renewal of Baptismal Vows on page 292 of the *Book of Common Prayer* in place of the Nicene Creed.
- The assigned collect and readings for the day are to be used unless alternatives have been approved by the bishop in advance.
- 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 confirm this with the bishop during your telephone conversation with him.
- Well 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 Bishop's visit includes Confirmation, Reception, or the Reaffirmation of Baptismal Vows:**

-Candidates for confirmation, reception and/or reaffirmation of baptismal vows should normally come forward to the bishop one at a time. Bishop Skirving prefers to stand for these prayers, and so a chair will not be needed. As they come forward, candidates will normally stand. Please provide a clear way for the bishop to know the names of the candidates as they come forward, whether through 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 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 may be planned in consultation with the bishop.

## **After the Bishop's Visit**

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 will be available on the diocesan website, along with the visitation schedule and other documents.

### **Questions?**

*Please contact the Office of the Bishop by email  
or by telephone phone at 252-522-0885*