

The Episcopal Diocese of Maryland

Congregation Visitation Information

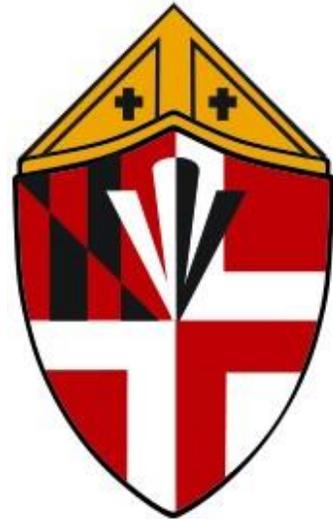
Revised September 2020

The Right Reverend Eugene Taylor Sutton

Bishop of Maryland

The Right Reverend Robert W. Ihloff

Assisting Bishop of Maryland



Basic Customary for All Episcopal Visitations

The Diocesan Regathering Guidelines must be followed for all in-person visits by the bishops.

At least three weeks before a scheduled visitation, we expect the rector/vicar/priest-in-charge (or wardens, if no priest) to arrange an appointment either in-person or virtually with the visiting bishop to discuss specific plans for the visitation.

Whenever possible, there should be **one combined service**. We recognize there may be situations due to congregational size or circumstances when having one combined service may not be feasible. In those instances, clergy should consult with the visiting bishop well in advance to discuss other options.

Before the principal service, the bishops would like to have an informal meeting with the vestry/advisory board either virtually or in-person. This 30-45 minute meeting will be an opportunity to share information, hopes, and dreams about programs and ministries. The clergy are not included in this meeting. Please schedule this to also allow time for a brief visit and walk-through with candidates for confirmation, reception and/or reaffirmation before worship.

Currently the Regathering Guidelines do not allow for a reception/luncheon following the service. The bishops would like some time after the service to speak with the congregation and offer their thoughts and answer questions, either in-person, socially distancing, or virtually.

Unless it's a patronal feast, the propers should be those appointed for the Sunday and taken from the *Revised Common Lectionary*. When there are choices, or if one of the bishops has a specific lesson request, that will be communicated in advance.

The bishop will not usually be accompanied by a diocesan archdeacon or deacon during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Further Instructions and Expectations

Many of the liturgical practices have changed during this time, please be sure to check with the bishops at the pre-visitation meeting.

- The bishop will arrive 15 minutes before the first event.
- If there are confirmations, the bishop will stand at the altar rail, or wherever works best for the liturgical space and needs of confirmands.
- Each bishop will preside for the entire service and prefers clergy of the church to stand together at the altar for the prayer of consecration.
- As to vestments, the bishops usually wear cope and miter. They have their own vestments, but let them know if you'd prefer them to wear the church's chasuble during the Holy Communion.

Some Liturgical Preferences

- A chaplain/deacon precedes a bishop in procession, and places the miter and crozier on the altar at the appropriate time.
- If the service is a major feast of the church or major saint's day, the bishops prefer to have a general confession.
- If there is a baptism, the bishops prefer the clergy of the congregation to do the water, and the bishops will do the chrismation.
- The bishops will bring greetings to the congregation during announcements.
- The bishops prefer to use a lavabo, if available.
- The bishops are prepared to chant the parts of the service if that is the custom of the church.
- From Easter Day through the Day of Pentecost, the bishops do **not** want the Agnus Dei read.
- During Lent, the bishops will begin the service with the Penitential Order. Confirmations/Receptions may take place during Lent.
- Please have your service book and books of records available for the bishops to see and sign.
- Please remind the congregation that the loose plate offering goes to one of the bishop's Discretionary Fund. *Please do not give the bishops cash* but send a check made out to the Bishop's Discretionary Fund to 4 East University Parkway, Baltimore, MD 21218.