



EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF OKLAHOMA

Bishop's Visitation Customary

(Updated January 2024)

The regular pastoral visitation of all parishes, missions and worshipping communities of the diocese is among the principal responsibilities of the ministry of the Bishop.

The following guidelines are designed to assist in the preparation and planning for the visitation of The Rt. Rev. Poulson Reed, Bishop of Oklahoma, and to provide an environment for opportunities for personal interaction between the Bishop and the congregation.

The Bishop's visitations will be scheduled in such a way as to balance the following priorities: the length of time since the last visitation; the need to schedule Episcopal rites; major parish anniversaries, dedications of new buildings, groundbreakings, particular pastoral needs of the parish, and the celebration of the feast of title or other significant event in the life of the parish (Some of these will out of necessity be scheduled on days other than Sunday).

Bishop Poulson may be able to celebrate and preach at an earlier service, if there is one, and if his schedule permits. However, all confirmations should take place at a single service (typically the later one). It is the desire of the Bishop to meet with the Vestry or Bishop's Committee if possible. This can be either before or after the main Sunday worship service. This time is intended for a meaningful exchange on the life and ministry of the congregation.

Prior to the visitation

1. To assist in the preparation of the Bishop's visit, the completed Bishop's Visitation Worksheet form should be sent to the Bishop's Administrative Assistant at least thirty (30) days prior to the date of the visitation. This will allow for proper coordination of the visit between the congregation and the Bishop's Office. It is important that specific expectations and objectives for the Bishop and the visit be described on the completed form. The final draft of the schedule of activities for the visit should be sent to the Bishop's Administrative Assistant no later than 2 weeks prior to the visit.
2. If required, overnight accommodations for the Bishop will be handled by the Bishop's Office.

During the visitation

1. The visitation is not intended to be disruptive to the life of the congregation and its worship schedule. The Bishop will preside and preach as provided for in *The Book of Common Prayer* at Holy Baptism, Confirmation, and the Holy Eucharist. On Sundays, the Propers from the Revised Common Lectionary appointed for the day and color of the day should be used. The Bishop will follow the order of worship normally used by the congregation. Typically, the Bishop wears the congregation's stole and chasuble (in the color of the day). Please let him know if he needs to bring vestments.

Please be sure your worship is consistent with the rubrics and language of the Book of Common Prayer, and with the Canons of the Episcopal Church. If you are not sure if something is allowed, please ask. Let the Bishop know if you do not have Chrism for the confirmations and need him to bring some. For a service with confirmation, the *Gloria* is omitted. During the Prayers of the People, please use "Bishop Poulson" when praying for the Bishop. (During services with confirmation, the Prayers of the People are usually omitted and the Prayers for the Candidates, BCP page 305, are used.)

When there are no baptisms, confirmations, or receptions, the liturgy on the day of the Bishop's visit may include the renewal of baptismal vows immediately following the sermon. The Bishop is glad to sing part of the liturgy and or to use incense, if those are part of the tradition of your congregation.

The Rector, Vicar, or Priest-in-Charge should make the usual parish announcements, then the Bishop will make any further announcements, and give the offertory sentence. It is important to explain to the congregation that the undesignated, non-pledged plate offering, or checks designated to the Bishop's discretionary fund, are vital to the ministry of the Bishop. These funds allow the Bishop to provide much needed assistance to people throughout the diocese and beyond.

If the Canon to the Ordinary accompanies the Bishop during the visitation, they will serve as the Bishop's Chaplain. If the Canon is not in attendance, a priest, deacon or other person may be asked to serve as Chaplain.

2. The Bishop's visit should allow opportunities for the members of the congregation to interact with the Bishop to share about the life and ministry of the congregation. It is helpful when members of the congregation are encouraged to wear nametags.

In addition to the coffee hour and/or reception, the following activities should be part of the visitation schedule:

- a. A meeting with the candidates for baptism, confirmation, reception, and reaffirmation, and their sponsors 30 minutes prior to the service. In addition, the candidates should wear name tags for the service.
 - b. A meeting with the Vestry/Bishop's Committee, to discuss the life and ministry of the Congregation.
 - c. Bishop Poulson enjoys having a teaching opportunity or Q&A session of 30-45 minutes available to the whole congregation, if the schedule permits.
3. During the visitation, congregational records and documents, including the Church and Service Registers should be available for review by the Bishop prior to the first service. The Bishop is available for photos if desired and to sign Prayer Books as requested.
 4. Bishop's Discretionary Fund contributions should be mailed to the Diocesan Office the week following the visit.

Documents required prior to visitation

1. Bishop's Visitation Worksheet, which may be found on the Diocesan website under the tab entitled, "*Resources.*"

Documents required during the visitation

1. Church and Service Registers for review.

After the visitation

1. The confirmation record is signed by the clergy and returned to the Bishop's Office.
2. Contributions to the Bishop's Discretionary Fund are sent to the Bishop's Office (Checks should be made payable to the "Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma," with the notation, "Bishop's Discretionary Fund.")

If you have questions about a visitation, please contact Ms. Lesli Graft in the Bishop's Office, at 405-437-0482 or by email, lgraft@epiok.org

Please fill in and return documents to the Bishop's Office at least two weeks prior to the visitation by email to lgraft@epiok.org.

