**Bishop's Visitation**

**Guidelines**

The Bishop's visitation is an important event in the life of both the congregation and the diocese.

The norm for every visit is for the Bishop to celebrate the Eucharist, preach, and preside at confirmation. The Bishop strongly encourages baptisms at Episcopal visits as recommended in the *Book of Common Prayer*. While the Bishop will preside, the local clergy will baptize with water and the Bishop will seal the newly baptized. When no baptisms, confirmations, receptions, or reaffirmations are scheduled, the Episcopal visit continues to include the Eucharist and sermon and may include the reaffirmation of baptismal promises by the congregation.

Each visitation by the bishop shall include:

- A visit with the clergy and wardens approximately one month prior to visitation to discuss the state of the congregation, review the service, and plan other events that will occur during the visitation.
- A time for the visitor to meet with the vestry, treasurer, and wardens.
- An opportunity to spend time with clergy and their family (usually over a meal at the bishop's expense).

In addition, with sufficient planning, the visitation may include pastoral visits with homebound members of the congregation, adult or youth classes, or other special events.

For visitations, *please adhere to your regular service schedule*. If a parish has three services, the Bishop will preside at the two primary services. It would be helpful, however, if members were encouraged to attend the primary service.

The loose offering at the time of the visitation is designated for the Bishop's Purse. These monies are used to help various causes in the life of the diocese and sometimes in parishes, to assist people to attend conferences and workshops, to assist our seminarians and people in preparation for ordained ministry, etc. Please send the offering to the diocesan office as soon after the visitation as possible in the form of a check. Prior to the visitation please announce to the congregation this offering and its purpose. The use of special envelopes for this offering is appropriate.

If possible, please reserve and clearly designate a parking space close to the church entrance for the Bishop.

Please send a draft copy of the service bulletin(s) to the Bishop's office ([info@diomil.org](mailto:info@diomil.org) or Barbara Klauber ext.111 or Patty Johnson ext. 156) two weeks prior to the visit. The lessons should be those appointed in the Eucharistic Lectionary. Please indicate which translation of the Bible will be used.

The Liturgy should conform to the Book of Common Prayer; use of other authorized texts must be negotiated with the Bishop. The Bishop prefers Prayer I in Rite I; in Rite II the Bishop prefers **NOT** to use Prayer C.
The administration of communion by licensed Eucharistic Ministers is intended as an aid to the ministry of the ordained. The Bishop expects the parish clergy to assist him with the distribution of Holy Communion. Lay Eucharistic Ministers are to be used only when there are not a sufficient number of ordained persons to administer the sacrament.

While the bishop will make an official visitation to each parish every two years, it is hoped that these times will not be the only interaction between the bishop and congregation. The bishop and the bishop's staff welcome invitations to meet with lay leaders, attend special events, and participate in parish life.

*Updated November, 2005.*