

# THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN MAINE

## A CUSTOMARY FOR EPISCOPAL VISITATIONS



### WHY THE BISHOP VISITS

Because the bishop is the chief priest and pastor, it's both my privilege and honor to be with you and your faith community. I will happily accept invitations from you for a variety of occasions: to share in the joys and sorrows of the community, to offer pastoral care during crises, to join you during times of leadership transition, and to celebrate anniversaries and special liturgies. I will make every effort to be with you. There will be occasions, however, when as much as I would like to be present, I will need to ask a member of the diocesan staff to represent me; we are a team and when one of them comes to you she/he/they represent the Office of the Bishop. Another important reason for the bishop to join you is canonical: The Episcopal Church requires the bishop to visit each church at least once every three years. When this occurs, it's referred to as an "episcopal visitation"—and these are distinct from the other occasions described above when I am with your faith community. What follows describes the various parts of an episcopal visitation:

### WORSHIP

When I join you for an episcopal visitation I will preside and preach at the Holy Eucharist. During this season of our getting acquainted, creating relationships, and learning from one another, it's essential for clergy and lay leaders to help me enter into your pattern and practice of how you praise and worship the living God. I trust your liturgical decision-making and promise to have a conversation with you if I have questions or concerns. I hope you will do likewise.

### CONVERSATION

It's my sincerest hope that conversations will be abundant symbols of every episcopal visitation. I'm eager to hear from and talk to the primary leader of the congregation (usually this is the rector, vicar, or priest-in-charge), the vestry or the bishop's committee, and with parishioners. The conversations can take whatever form you think best. I would like to hear from the congregation their stories of faith, as well as to listen to descriptions about what's currently sparking joy. Of course, I want also to know about what's challenging, and to offer my support and that of the diocesan staff. Questions about the Diocese of Maine or the Episcopal Church are welcomed. In turn, you can expect me to elicit stories about the relationship between the clergy and the congregation. In the ministry settings where a clergy person is receiving compensation, I would appreciate hearing about the details of the compensation, and if necessary, in advocating for the support of clergy and their families. I cherish the one-on-one visits with clergy persons.

## RECORDS OF THE CHURCH

Please have the official records of the church ready for me to peruse. The Record of Services, the Parish Register, and Safe Church Certificates should be ready for me to see; I'll sign and date the back cover of the official records.

## MAKING PLANS

- It's a lot of extra work to have an episcopal visitation. I recognize this reality. At the same time, I sincerely desire to make it a time for connection and celebration. All shall be well!
- When it's possible, and helpful to the mission of the faith community, I welcome episcopal visitations that span the weekend; I can arrive on Friday and remain until Sunday afternoon.
- One or two liturgies? This is entirely up to the clergy person and the congregation. I am always happy to preach and preside at all the weekend worship services; I'm equally willing to join you for a combined liturgy.
- Please think about the planning process to be about a month-long project. The actual tasks are relatively easy to accomplish, but the development of a worship leaflet, and any conversations between us will require more lead time than that of a typical Sunday. We have included a Visitation Worksheet. Please email it to Barbara Martin at [bmartin@episcopalmaine.org](mailto:bmartin@episcopalmaine.org); at least two weeks before the episcopal visitation. Changes are expected. Just let me know by emailing Barbara.
- In the planning process please feel free to email me or call with questions or concerns.
- On the Thursday before the episcopal visitation, at a time that's convenient for you, let's plan to talk on the telephone. This need not be lengthy; just a quick check-in to make sure everything is ready.
- Please don't assume I remember your worship customs or space. I'd much prefer too much information than too little.

## LITURGICAL GUIDELINES

- The Episcopal Church authorizes the Revised Common Lectionary. Unless the Sunday falls on a day when a Feast of our Lord can be transferred, please keep the propers for the Lord's Day.
- Be creative! There are many Anglican resources available to use. However, please make sure that anything not from the Book of Common Prayer or The Hymnal 1982 is noted. It's helpful for me to have a heads-up if the texts or music are unfamiliar to your congregation; sometimes I'll make brief catechetical remarks.
- Special observances: feel free to craft the liturgy to integrate anniversaries, and blessings of new space or furnishings. There is one caution to this invitation: please make sure the liturgy doesn't become what I call "liturgy by the yard." Sometimes more is more, and sometimes less is more; use your judgment and wisdom.

- You may choose to use the Nicene Creed, or the Renewal of Baptismal Promises (BCP p. 292). If we renew baptismal promises it's my preference to do this at the font, and to join you in sprinkling the congregation with the water of baptism. If moving to the font is awkward, or complicates matters, please plan things so that we remain standing wherever makes best liturgical sense.
- Vestments: I am happy to wear the parish's vestments, or to bring my own. The white, green, and red sets have a cope and a deacon's stole. My preference is for the deacon(s) and me to wear matching stoles. If I wear the cope, I'll put the chasuble on at the offertory.
- Liturgical color: White is always used when there are Baptisms, Confirmations, Receptions, or Reaffirmations. Otherwise plan on the color of the day or season.
- Whenever possible it's my preference to pray with the choir, acolytes, and clergy before the entrance procession.
- Sermon: I preach on the appointed texts for the day or the occasion.
- The Lord's Prayer: choose the version that makes most sense in your context.
- When desired, the Pontifical Blessing may be used at the conclusion of the liturgy (BCP p 523) beginning at "Our help is in the Name of the Lord." Music for the blessing, when it is sung, is to be found in the Hymnal (S-173). When the Pontifical Blessing is used, it is important that the versicles and responses be readily available to the people and the choir.
- Other ministers:

*Deacons and Priests*—let's model all three orders of ministry, as well as our collegiality. At the Great Thanksgiving, it is appropriate that the priests of the community stand with the bishop at the altar. It is the ministry of the deacon to elevate the chalice at the concluding doxology of the Eucharistic Prayer. Deacons are encouraged to choose whether to come to me for a "sending prayer" before proclaiming the gospel. There are good reasons for doing so, and equally good reasons for not doing so. If the congregation has a deacon, the deacon will serve in his or her customary roles in the liturgy. If the congregation does not have a deacon, the bishop may bring a deacon to serve with him. The visiting deacon will perform the usual diaconal functions. The visiting deacon will also be available after the service to speak with individuals who are interested in the diaconate, as well as the discernment and ordination process in this diocese.

*Bishop's Chaplain*— A deacon, lay eucharistic minister, acolyte, or priest can easily be assigned by you to help me juggle the miter, crosier, and my prayer book & hymnal. This person can also serve as Greeter & Helper (below)

*Greeter & Helper*— it's helpful to have an adult or senior high teen who greets me and helps me carry things into the church. Setting up the crosier and getting the vestments organized isn't an onerous task, but I'd rather visit with people. This person has the advantage of knowing your space; I don't (yet). The Bishop's chaplain can serve in this capacity, however, in many of our congregations separating the roles, and recruiting a second person, is an occasion for you to connect pastorally with somebody whose leadership you want to foster.

- My preference is to conclude all rehearsal-related conversations, including conversation with confirmands, no fewer than 15 minutes before the liturgy. This is especially important if those conversations occur in the space where we'll celebrate the Holy Eucharist.
- Liturgical leadership and teaching: if there is a liturgical change you would like to introduce, let's discuss whether and how I might be helpful to you.
- Photography during the liturgy detracts from worship and should be discouraged. However, inconspicuous video or picture taking is encouraged. I will be available for photos after the service; please ask someone to be the organizer of photography. After the service, please send several photographs of your choosing to Barbara for possible inclusion in our electronic portfolio.

## CONFIRMATION

- Celebrating the Rite(s) of Confirmation in regional gatherings, especially during the Great 50 Days of Easter, is my strong preference. When we gather regionally, candidates have the opportunity to be part of a larger community of faith, and importantly, such liturgies give us a primary focus that's not possible to uphold when Confirmation is integrated with an episcopal visitation. If you would like to host a regional Confirmation, please contact Barbara Martin.
- If Confirmation/Reception/Reaffirmation will occur during an episcopal visitation, please refer to the separate document "Notes about Confirmation."

## AFTER THE LITURGY

- I prefer to visit with people, rather than to eat, so a stand-up reception or coffee house where I can answer questions works best. If a sit-down event is better for your context, let's discuss how best to facilitate the conversation.
- Please decide whether you want me to greet the worshiping assembly at the back of the church or go directly to the coffee hour. It's not necessary to wait for me before eating.
- Alcohol during an episcopal visitation is inappropriate. For evening social events alcohol can be served, along with an equally attractive and accessible alternative, but please schedule a time for us to have a conversation about this decision; it really should be exceptional. We adhere to the diocesan policy regarding alcohol (attached at the end of this document).
- Conversation with the Vestry or Bishop's Committee is a requirement of every episcopal visitation. Please refer to the document "Notes for Vestry Visit." Usually an hour is sufficient. However, if I am arriving the evening before, I'd be happy to meet with the vestry and/or congregational leadership over a simple or potluck supper, followed by Compline.
- I am happy to make pastoral calls; this is especially suitable for the times when I'm with you for the entire weekend.

## PRACTICAL DETAILS

- Unless we have made different arrangements please expect me to arrive between 30 and 45 minutes beforehand.
- The Reverend Tom Mousin, my spouse, often accompanies me on episcopal visitations. Tom is always happy to help in whatever way is helpful. He's willing to help in the kitchen, enjoys singing in choirs, and is also happy to stay out of people's way.
- Please let me know what title to use when I address you in public. I'm discovering that the Diocese of Maine's custom of addressing clergy runs the gamut. My only preference is to respect your wishes. If people want to know how to address me formally, I prefer "Bishop Brown."
- An important part of the visitation is spending time with clergy and their family. I enjoy hosting you and your spouse or partner to lunch. If we cannot meet on the same day, I would like to arrange an alternate time. Please note your preference on the Planning Worksheet.
- The "Record of Official Acts" is referenced on the Planning Worksheet. We publish this information in the Diocesan Journal.
- The offering to the Bishop's Discretionary Fund (BDF) is made up of the loose offering and any other donations designated to "BDF". The BDF meets a number of urgent pastoral needs throughout our diocese and is always in need of support. If helpful, I am happy to talk with the congregations about the kinds of needs that BDF supports. Here are a few details:
  - ✚ It's helpful to advise the congregation about this offering several weeks in advance of my visit so they know what to expect and can be prepared.
  - ✚ Personal checks should be made payable to the church (not to the diocese or to me) and labeled "BDF" in the memo line.
  - ✚ I will write a check to the parish (as my own offering); please don't include this in your parish's contribution to the Bishop's Discretionary Fund.
  - ✚ Please combine all cash and check donations into one check from your church, made payable to the Diocese of Maine, with "BDF" written in the memo line and mail to:

The Episcopal Church in Maine  
Attn: B. Martin  
143 State Street  
Portland, ME 04101

## ALCOHOL POLICY OF THE DIOCESE OF MAINE

Resolved, that this 196th Convention of The Episcopal Diocese of Maine affirm and adopt the alcohol use policy adopted by the 78th General Convention of The Episcopal Church, as follows:

Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, that the 78th General Convention acknowledge The Episcopal Church's long-standing tolerance for the use of alcohol which, in some cases, has contributed to its misuse, and has undermined a climate of wholeness and holiness for all; that our Church culture too often avoids hard conversations about alcohol use, and the role of forgiveness and compassion in healing and recovery; and that The Episcopal Church now commits to create a new normal in our relationship with alcohol. We aspire to be a place in which conversations about alcohol, substance misuse, or addiction are not simply about treatment but about renewal, justice, wholeness, and healing. We affirm that Recovery Ministries of The Episcopal Church has long been and continues to be a valuable resource for this work; and be it further

Resolved, that the 78th Convention adopt the following policy on alcohol and other substance misuse and encourage dioceses, congregations, seminaries, schools, young adult ministries, and affiliated institutions to update their policies on the use of alcohol and other substances with the potential for misuse. These policies should consider the following:

1. The Church must provide a safe and welcoming environment for all people, including people in recovery.
2. All applicable federal, state and local laws should be obeyed, including those governing the serving of alcoholic beverages to minors.
3. Some dioceses and congregations may decide not to serve alcohol at events or gatherings. Others may decide to permit a limited use of alcoholic beverages at church-sponsored events. Both can be appropriate if approached mindfully.
4. When alcohol is served, it must be monitored and those showing signs of intoxication must not be served. Whenever alcohol is served, the rector, vicar, or priest-in-charge must appoint an adult to oversee its serving. That adult must not drink alcoholic beverages during the time of his or her execution of his or her responsibilities. If hard liquor is served, a certified server is required.

5. Serving alcoholic beverages at congregational events where minors are present is strongly discouraged. If minors are present, alcohol must be served at a separate station that is monitored at all times to prevent underage drinking.
6. Alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages must be clearly labeled as such. Food prepared with alcohol does not need to be labeled provided the alcohol is completely evaporated by the cooking process; however, it is recommended that even in this case the use of alcohol in cooking be noted on a label.
7. Whenever alcohol is served, appealing non-alcoholic alternatives must always be offered with equal prominence and accessibility.
8. The serving of alcoholic beverages at church events should not be publicized as an attraction of the event, e.g. "wine and cheese reception," "cocktail party," and "beer and wine tasting."
9. Ministries inside or outside of congregations will make certain that alcohol consumption is not the focus of the ministry and that drinking alcohol is not an exclusively normative activity.
9. Food must be served when alcohol is present.
10. The groups or organizations sponsoring the activity or event at which alcoholic beverages are served must have permission from the clergy or the vestry. Such groups or organizations must also assume responsibility for those persons who might become intoxicated and must provide alternative transportation for anyone whose capacity to drive may be impaired. Consulting with liability insurance carriers is advised.
11. Recognizing the effects of alcohol as a mood-altering drug, alcoholic beverages shall not be served when the business of the Church is being conducted.
12. Clergy shall consecrate an appropriate amount of wine when celebrating the Eucharist and perform ablutions in a way that does not foster or model misuse.
13. We encourage clergy to acknowledge the efficacy of receiving the sacrament in one kind and consider providing non-alcoholic wine; And be it further **Resolved**, that, mindful of the emerging legalization of other addictive substances and the increasing rise of addiction, the Executive Council of The Episcopal Church provide for the ready availability, implementation,

and continuing development of this policy church-wide, in consultation and coordination with Recovery Ministries of The Episcopal Church.

And be it further **Resolved** that this policy supersede, and render moot all previous alcohol use policies in the Diocese of Maine, and be it further

**Resolved**, that this policy be commended for consideration to every Vestry and Bishop's Committee of The Diocese of Maine.