



**THE EPISCOPAL  
DIOCESE OF  
WEST VIRGINIA**

## Bishop Cowden's Customary

A bishop's customary is a set of guidelines for clergy and vestries to follow when the bishop visits. My Customary includes a description of liturgical planning as well as

social and meeting scheduling. I hope this customary helps to clarify my own hopes and expectations as well as helps to develop our diocesan-wide connections and meets your needs as a congregation of the Episcopal Diocese of West Virginia.

**Official Visitation:** Bishop Visitations are official visits established by Canons and ancient Christian custom. Bishop Visitations are meant to tend to the life and health of the congregation and to strengthen connections with the wider Church. These visitations are a time for the Bishop to provide support and to hear the needs of the congregation; to talk about the spiritual and temporal health of the congregation and assist in future visioning. When possible, sacramental rites reserved to the Bishop take place, including Confirmation and Reception.

### The Liturgy

**The Holy Eucharist** will be the principal service while I am with you. As the Chief Pastor I will be preaching and presiding. If there is no deacon, your Rector or Pastor may offer the Gospel for the occasion, set the Table, and lead other prayers and announcements as is appropriate for his or her leadership. I usually call in advance of my visit and ask what is most needed in the sermon/homily for the congregation to hear. Additionally, please feel free to communicate by phone within the weeks prior to share with me your chief joys and concerns for the congregation and how my visit may be most helpful for building up the life of the Church. I allow the Use and prayers from the Enriching Our Worship series. However, my preference is for the BCP 1979. Please communicate with me well in advance if you are planning on elements from EOW so that I may be prepared for those prayers. In setting the Altar, place the Altar Book on a stand to the left of the Chalice and Paten.

**Holy Baptism, Confirmation, Reception and Reaffirmation** (BCP pp. 301-310) should be offered to the faithful. This is an excellent time for Episcopal Christians to renew their commitment to Christ and their Church, especially in the rite of Reaffirmation. Even if there are no persons for Confirmation or Baptism, the Renewal of Baptismal Vows, according to the BCP p. 292, is always appropriate. Please plan to renew your life in Christ during the liturgy while we are together.

- **Who should be confirmed?** People who have not yet been confirmed by a bishop in the historic succession.
- **Who should be received?** People who have already been confirmed by a bishop in the historic succession (for example, former Roman Catholics) and who are seeking to become members of the Episcopal Church.
- **Who is eligible for reaffirmation?** People who have already been confirmed or received in the Episcopal Church, and who wish to make a public reaffirmation of their commitment to Jesus Christ.

**Singing the service:** Music makes community. As much as you are comfortable with, please include sung or chanted portions of the liturgy. The dialogue before the Eucharistic Prayer (the Sursum Corda), the concluding "Amen" and any other times we might engage in singing our worship and praise together is most welcome.

## Vestry & Social Meeting Scheduling

**Meeting with the Vestry:** I will meet with the Vestry either prior to the liturgy or following, as it is most convenient. This meeting is not purely social but, as an official visitation, is to be centered around the life and ministries of the parish. It may be dinner the night before a visitation, or after a social lunch time during the visitation day, or some other time as is convenient to gather.

**Clergy:** I would like to spend time with the clergy, their spouses and family, if possible, as arranged in advance, lunch, dinner, or other times of fellowship are suggested.

**Other possibilities for participating in the life of your congregation:** I am also happy to speak at an adult forum, meet with confirmation or baptismal candidates, visit Sunday School classes, make a shut-in or hospital call with you.

### Specifics for preparation and additional notes:

- **Pre-Visitation Sheet:** Please send the enclosed Pre-Visitation Sheet to my office as soon as possible prior to the visitation to assure that appropriate certificates can be prepared.
- **Annual Report:** Please send a copy of the church's annual report (including program, financial, etc.) to my Executive Assistant via postal mail or email ([bmarquart@wvdiocese.org](mailto:bmarquart@wvdiocese.org)) prior to my visitation. This is the report handed out by you to your congregation at the annual meeting.
- **Worship Bulletin(s):** Please send a PDF of the Bulletin to the Bishop's Executive Assistant by email ([bmarquart@wvdiocese.org](mailto:bmarquart@wvdiocese.org)) at least 3 days prior to the visitation date.
- **Parish Records** are to be out and available for me to review. These records should include baptismal, confirmation, wedding and burial records, as well as, the parish register.
- **Post Visitation Report:** After the visitation a Report of the Bishop's Visitation should be completed and either mailed or emailed to the Bishop's Executive Assistant ([bmarquart@wvdiocese.org](mailto:bmarquart@wvdiocese.org)), as soon as possible after the visitation.
- **Lay Ministry:** The use of laypersons in the liturgy is to be encouraged. A chaplain or other person would be most appreciated to assist in holding my staff and assist with vestments.
- **Note on Prayers of the People:** During Baptism or Confirmation, the liturgy would not normally include the Prayers of the People (forms 1-VI). Instead, the Prayers for those to be baptized, or those to be confirmed, on page 305 would suffice. If additional intercessions are desired, a free form of intercessions may be inserted at that point, in addition to the prayers for the candidates.
- **Liturgical Color:** The liturgical color shall be that of the day or season, even if baptism or confirmation is to take place.
- **Pictures:** The congregation is encouraged to arrange for a picture of the Bishop with Confirmands and family members. A brief article about the liturgy for publication in the local newspaper would also be good. Prior announcement of the Bishop's visit could be sent to the local paper, thus keeping the church in the public view.
- **Special Offering:** The Annual Convention sets the Episcopal Visitation Offering. The Visitation Offering is the "loose offering" from the Liturgy. This fact should be conveyed to the congregation. The Bishop's office will provide a bulletin insert for copying that explains the offering. The Treasurer of the congregation is asked to send a check, earmarked for this account, to the Bishop's office.

Please email documents to: [bmarquart@wvdiocese.org](mailto:bmarquart@wvdiocese.org)

Or via Postal Mail to: **Beth Marquart, PO Box 5400, Charleston, WV 25361**