



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF THE **Susquehanna**

BISHOPS' CUSTOMARY

Bishop visitations are intended to be a time of celebration for the congregation. We hope that the preparations outlined in this customary do not raise anxiety but rather offers a helpful framework. Visitations to parishes will be scheduled on a two-year rotational cycle for the next two years and shift to a three-year cycle in 2028. The schedule will be posted and kept updated on the diocesan website.

Bishops Scanlan and Nichols will visit across the breadth of the diocese. If a scheduled date does not suit the parish or if a different date is preferred, please make the swap with another parish listed on the sheet and confirm with Executive Assistant to the Bishop Diocesan Nichol Free, nfree@diosusquehanna.org, who will confirm the change in schedule. ***The swap is not confirmed until the bishop has been consulted and the bishop's office has given notice to the parish.***

PLANNING THE VISITATION

The month prior to your visitation, you will receive an email with information and forms to fill out and submit, including a Visitation Worksheet. The bishop will review the worksheet and may request a phone call or Zoom meeting with the clergyperson or lay leader in charge in advance of the visit. If you would like a call and have not been contacted, please contact nfree@diosusquehanna.org (Bishop Scanlan) or smilien@diosusquehanna.org (Bishop Nichols) at least one week before the visitation.

The visitation will focus on worship on Sunday and time spent with the congregation. The visiting bishop will consult with the clergy if there is more than one service on a weekend and determine which service(s) to attend. During the visitation, the clergyperson or lay leader in charge is asked to provide the parish registers for the bishop to sign.

The bishop welcomes the opportunity for conversation and Q&A during the coffee hour following the service.

If the clergy, lay leader, vestry and/or bishop would like a vestry meeting, it will be scheduled to take place in the week before the visitation on Zoom. If you would like to have a vestry meeting on Zoom and have not been contacted, please reach out to nfree@diosusquehanna.org (Bishop Scanlan) or smilien@diosusquehanna.org (Bishop Nichols) and they will find a time.

THE SERVICE

Confirmations, receptions, and reaffirmations are a special part of the visitations. We kindly ask that you closely follow the protocol and guidelines for confirmation, reception and reaffirmation. The Customary for Confirmations (including reception and reaffirmation) is attached at the end of this document.

In the absence of confirmations, receptions, or reaffirmations, a renewal of baptismal vows may be included in place of the Nicene Creed.

Baptisms are not encouraged to take place at visitations, but rather on feast days. If a baptism is scheduled when the bishop is present, the resident clergy person will be asked to lead the administration of the sacrament.

If possible, please provide a chaplain to assist the bishop in the liturgy. This is an ideal role for a young person. It includes holding the bishop's staff and book, vesting, and processing with the bishop. No advance training is required.

The bishop will wear the parish stole and chasuble for services.

Altar and hangings are to be in the color of the season, or red for confirmation.

The loose plate offering on the day of the Episcopal visitation will be for the Bishop's Discretionary Fund and submitted by cheque to: Bishop's Discretionary Fund, The Episcopal Diocese of the Susquehanna, Attn: Paula Lapinski, 321 Wyandotte St., Bethlehem, PA 18015. Please announce this custom at the time of the announcements or in the bulletin. Please make note of the bishop's name in the cheque memo.

CONFIRMATION, RECEPTION, REAFFIRMATION CUSTOMARY

Preparation of Candidates

Preparation for confirmation/reception/reaffirmation is understood to be an active process that includes participation by the candidate, and the rector, priest-in-charge or catechist. We recognize that many congregations need assistance with preparation and encourage congregations to join together in the formation process. It is our hope that candidates are able to demonstrate a willingness to follow Jesus and become an active member of their church. Candidates may be of any age, keeping in mind that confirmation is the liturgical event by which one makes a "mature affirmation of faith." As in all our gatherings, all forms of preparation will follow Safe Church procedures.

Administrative Procedure

Please complete the Confirmation/Reception/Reaffirmation Form listing the names of the candidates one month in advance of the visitation and send to Nichol Free, nfree@diosusquehanna.org

The bishop will gladly sign certificates provided by the parish on the day of the liturgy.

If the parish wishes to bring their candidates to another parish visitation, please contact Nichol Free, nfree@diosusquehanna.org and contact the hosting parish to plan accordingly.

Please note: No other bishop other than the Bishop Diocesan or Assistant Bishop may preside at confirmations/receptions/reaffirmations in the parishes of the Diocese of the Susquehanna without advance permission from the Bishop Diocesan.

It may be possible for a bishop to conduct a service of confirmation, reception, and reaffirmation during the scheduled three-day bishop visitations in our diocese's regions. Please contact the bishop's assistant (Bishop Scanlan: nfree@diosusquehanna.org or Bishop Nichols: smilien@diosusquehanna.org) to see if it is possible to schedule a service.

Before the Service

A brief meeting of the candidates and the bishop in advance of the service is requested in order to review the liturgy and make each other's acquaintance.

The Liturgy

The bishop is the customary officiant, preacher and celebrant at services of confirmation/reception/reaffirmation unless decided otherwise in consultation with the bishop.

The Paschal candle will be lighted and displayed in a prominent place.

The Collect for Purity, *Gloria* (or other song of praise) Prayers of the People, Confession and Nicene Creed are omitted in this service.

The bishop's chair — or another suitable chair — will be placed in front of the altar (or in the logical place for the confirmation/reception/reaffirmation to take place) and will be removed after the confirmation/reception/reaffirmation, just before the Offertory.

The service including confirmation will begin on page 413 of the BCP.

Following the sermon, the candidates will be presented. The candidates should be rehearsed in their responses in the liturgy (BCP pg. 415).

Prayers for the Candidate are found on BCP pg. 305-6. Please appoint an intercessor to do these.

Depending on the space and the bishop's preference, the candidates may stand or kneel. If candidates have difficulty kneeling, standing is an acceptable choice.

The Proper Preface for Baptism is to be used for confirmations, receptions, and reaffirmations.

Photography

Please assign someone from the congregation to take photos and email them to Erin Kamran, Canon for Communications, ekamran@diosusquehanna.org after the service. Photos (if desired) with confirmands/those received/reaffirmed will take place directly after the service in the sanctuary.