



The Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina

900B CentrePark Drive, Asheville, NC 28805 | (828)225-6656 | www.diocesewnc.org

Bishop's Customary for Pastoral Visitations

Introduction

The regular pastoral visitation of all parishes and worshipping communities of the diocese is among the principal responsibilities of the bishop and is frankly the most pleasurable part of this office.

Scheduling

Pastoral visitation will be scheduled in such a way as to balance the following priorities:

- The length of time since the last pastoral visitation
- The need to schedule Episcopal rites; major parish anniversaries, dedications of new buildings, groundbreakings, etc. (Some of these will, of necessity, need to be scheduled on days other than Sunday.)
- Pastoral needs of the parish
- The celebration of the feast of title or other significant events in the life of the parish

The forms to be submitted prior to the bishop's visit include a visitation form and a confirmation form. These forms are all submitted online and can be found on the Bishop Visitation page of our website at www.diocesewnc.org. Once these materials have been received by my office, if there are any questions, my Executive Assistant, Jess Ives, will contact the rector or priest-in-charge. In addition, I request an order of service.

THE ORDER OF SERVICE MUST BE RECEIVED AT LEAST ONE WEEK PRIOR TO THE VISITATION.

Email the Order of Service directly to Jess Ives, jess@diocesewnc.org and copy me at bishopjose@diocesewnc.org.

Submit the completed confirmation certificate after my visit. This form is also found online, and it must be submitted even if you do not have baptisms or confirmations. This is important for record keeping because we publish the list of confirmations following my visit to your parish based on this certificate.

If you need a confirmation form or certificate prior to my visit, please contact Jess Ives at the diocesan office, jess@diocesewnc.org, or 828-225-6656. If there will be any deviations from the normal approved liturgies or from the rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer, please seek prior approval.

The Day of the Visit

I will arrive 30 minutes before my first activity (worship service, Adult Formation, etc.)

A central focus of my visit, beyond worship and any Episcopal functions, is to be with your congregation and your lay leadership/Vestry.

I highly value and enjoy adult formation time where I am available and present for conversation and questions. I request that your Sunday morning service schedule be modified, if necessary, to accommodate time set aside for me to be with your people at an adult forum or extended coffee hour.

If your parish has more than one Sunday morning service, please let me know if you need me to attend all services. My experience in the diocese has shown that parishioners tend to come to the later confirmation service. Earlier service attendance does drop significantly which would be a factor in your decision.

I will need a **copy of a current parish directory** to take with me (pictorial is preferred), as well as a **list of the officers of your parish** if they are not noted in the directory.

Part of my visit is to be available to meet briefly with the vestry as it is important for me to connect with the leaders of the parish. I am always excited to hear about what is going on in your community. I am happy to meet the vestry at a time that works for them as well as for the clergy. This can be before or after the service(s).

The Liturgy of the Day

The Propers should be for the appointed Sunday in the Church Year.

When I visit, I prefer that the whole congregation uses a bulletin containing the full service as an expression of hospitality to the guest among us. When preparing the service bulletin, please include all applicable rubrics.

If there is to be a baptism or confirmation, I would like to have a chair in the center of the Chancel and begin the service from there. The chair can be removed at the Peace. If there is not a baptism or confirmation, a chair is not necessary.

For confirmation and reception, I prefer to confirm or receive one at a time. Couples who wish may be confirmed together.

At Baptism, I, the bishop will baptize unless there are certain pastoral circumstances. I will do the sealing and then follow with the prayer for the gifts of the Spirit. All of this will take place at the font. Please note that if an adult is baptized by the Bishop, this rite is confirmation.

If there is no baptism or confirmation, please use the Reaffirmation of the Baptismal Covenant instead of the Creed.

I will celebrate the liturgy that is customary and normal in your parish, including singing or chanting.

Normally, liturgical colors will be that of the day. You may also use white for baptism or confirmation. Please be sure to indicate your vestment request on the visitation form.

To emphasize my pastoral relationship, I normally wear the chasuble of the parish. The color should be the color of the season, or white if there is a baptism or confirmation. I will bring a plain alb, miter, and my pastoral staff. If you don't have Eucharistic vestments, let me know and I will bring my own.

If a parish has a deacon (or two) they should be prepared to assist me. The details will vary, but will normally include such things as:

- Assist with confirmation/reception/baptisms
- Holding the Prayer Books when my hands need to be free for liturgical gestures;
- Holding the miter during prayers;
- Holding the pastoral staff when we are not in procession

In the absence of a deacon, these duties may be performed by a senior acolyte or assisting lay minister. At times, the archdeacon often assigns a deacon to come with me. The Ven. Brenda Gilbert will inform you if a deacon is scheduled.

The rector, vicar, or priest-in-charge should make the necessary parish announcements.

Please remind your congregation in the service bulletin and announcement time that it is customary that the undesignated offering on the occasion of the Bishop's visit go to the Diocesan Office, made out the Bishop's Discretionary Fund. Please do not give a check or cash to me but mail the funds to Carol Tannenbaum the following week: (Diocese of Western North Carolina, 900B CentrePark Dr., Asheville, NC 28805).

I look forward to being with you as the Holy Spirit brings us more closely together as the Body of Christ and empowers us for service in the world.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "José A. McLoughlin". The signature is stylized and cursive.

The Rt. Rev. José A. McLoughlin
Bishop