



# THE DIOCESE OF SAN DIEGO

## Guidelines for Episcopal Visitations

### 2023

*The Rt. Rev. Dr. Susan Brown Snook*

#### **GENERAL GUIDELINES**

Visitations are an opportunity for your congregation to focus on its mission and ministry, and to strengthen connections with the wider Body of Christ. They are one of the great joys of episcopal ministry, and I look forward to sharing them with you and learning about your congregation and its surrounding community.

During 2022, I focused my visitations on the theme of Revival! If I did not visit your congregation in 2022, and you would like to have a Revival! format visitation in 2023, I encourage you to follow that format for your 2023 visitation. You may find more information about that format in my 2022 Visitation Customary, found [here](#). The major differences between a traditional visitation and a Revival visitation are: (1) inclusion of at least one lay testimony in the service, (2) a time of personal prayer at prayer stations, including the opportunity for personal laying on of hands and prayer from the bishop, and (3) special commissioning of the congregation for lay ministry. I am happy to discuss this format with you to help you decide whether you would like to do this special Revival service. The visitation customary below assumes that you will be doing a more traditional visitation.

#### **BEFORE THE VISITATION**

1. To assist in the preparation of my visit, the completed Bishop's Visitation Worksheet should be sent to my Executive Assistant at least 30 days before the visitation. It is important that specific expectations and objectives for the visit be described on the completed form. The bulletins, worksheet, and final draft of the schedule of activities for the visit should be sent to the Bishop's Executive Assistant three weeks before the visit. You may find the worksheet on our website at [www.edsd.org/bishopvisitations](http://www.edsd.org/bishopvisitations), and you can reach my assistant, Erin McDougal, at [EMcDougal@edsd.org](mailto:EMcDougal@edsd.org).
2. Erin McDougal will arrange for a phone call between your congregation's lead clergy member and me about two weeks before my visit. During this call, we can work out other details of the visitation. I would also like to hear from you about your congregation's ministries and challenges.
3. I would like to attend a Vestry or Bishop's Committee meeting around the time of the visitation. While I prefer to meet with your Vestry/BC in person on Sunday after the service, I am also happy to consider joining a regularly scheduled meeting at another time, either in person or on Zoom, depending on my schedule. The enclosed Vestry Discussion Questionnaire contains several questions I would like your vestry or bishop's committee to discuss.
4. If required, my office will arrange overnight accommodations for me.

## DURING THE VISITATION

1. I will normally preach and preside at each of your weekend liturgies, at Baptism, Confirmation, and the Holy Eucharist. I anticipate that all visitations will be celebrations of the Holy Eucharist.
2. On Sundays, the propers for the day from the Revised Common Lectionary should be used, unless you have received prior permission to use different scriptures. If you are celebrating your patronal feast day and would like to use scriptures for that feast, I am happy to approve that celebration. Normally the liturgical color will be that of the day (or the appropriate color for your patronal feast). I sometimes wear congregational vestments, but I will likely bring vestments of my own.
3. Please schedule the following additional events in connection with my visit:
  - a. A meeting with candidates for Baptism, Confirmation, Reception, and Reaffirmation before the service. Please ensure that the candidates wear name tags.
  - b. A conversational “forum” opportunity, where I may speak about church mission and other issues, and answer questions from the floor.
  - c. A time for a meeting with the Vestry or Bishop’s Committee, on the Sunday of my visitation or in the days or weeks leading up to or following it. During this time, I would like to hear your thoughts on the discussion questions found on the Vestry Preparation Questionnaire. If you are currently in transition between rectors/vicars, please include the search committee in this meeting.
4. The Rector, Vicar, or Priest-in-Charge should make the usual congregational announcements. It is important both to include in the bulletin an announcement, and explain to the congregation verbally, that the loose offering will be designated for the Bishop’s Pastoral Needs Fund, along with any checks designated for that purpose. These funds allow me to make much-needed contributions to assist people throughout the diocese and beyond.
5. If you have congregational traditions such as birthday prayers, prayer quilt blessings, or other pastoral activities during the service, it is appropriate for parish clergy to lead those.
6. A deacon, assigned by the Archdeacon, will accompany me on many visits. If present, the deacon will serve as my chaplain and fulfill deacon’s responsibilities during the service. Please consider whether some members of your congregation may have a call to a particular ministry of service, including ordained ministry as a deacon, and give them opportunities to interact with the deacon who accompanies me. If the Archdeacon is with me, she may give a short 4-minute presentation on the ministry of the diaconate during your announcements time.
7. During the visitation, congregational records and documents, including Church and Service Registers, should be available for inspection before the first service.

## SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS

### **Community Engagement:**

I am particularly interested in how members of your congregation are living out their baptismal ministries in response to and in partnership with others in the local and wider communities. How are you getting to know your neighbors, their needs, hopes, and longings? How are you engaged in God’s mission of evangelism and service in your community? What opportunities for expanding God’s mission through the Episcopal Church have you seen in your local community? How has your community changed in recent years, and how well does your congregation reflect the demographics of your neighborhood? Canon Jason Evans and I would be glad to discuss these matters with you on the telephone, and to address them with the vestry or in the adult forum.

## **Baptism, Confirmation, Reception, and Reaffirmation:**

Baptism is full membership in the body of Christ. Full preparation of sponsors (and parents of children to be baptized), as well as of the mature candidate, is essential. It is appropriate that adults be baptized (and thus confirmed in the same service) by the bishop. I encourage you to hold adult baptism for such visitations.

As with baptism, full preparation of candidates for confirmation, reception, and reaffirmation is expected. Confirmation is appropriate for those who were baptized at an early age and never made an adult affirmation of faith. Reception is appropriate for people who have made an adult affirmation of faith in another Church Communion and now wish to be a part of the Episcopal Church. Reaffirmation is for those who have been confirmed or received at an earlier time in their lives and have now undergone a spiritual transformation that makes a new beginning in faith an appropriate step in their journey.

Please schedule at least a few minutes for me to meet with any candidates before the service.

## **SCHEDULING**

The scheduling of visitations will be coordinated by the Bishop's Office, and you are encouraged to request any particularly desired dates.

## **LITURGICAL GUIDELINES**

I anticipate that all visitations will be celebrations of the Holy Eucharist. The Proper of the Day will be used, even when initiation rites are to take place, and normally the liturgical color will be that of the day. Any departure from this should be discussed with me before the day of the visitation. As required by the Canons, you should be using the Revised Common Lectionary unless I have given you special permission to use a different observance. I will normally be glad to approve requests to use propers for your patronal feast day, if that is being observed on the day of my visitation.

If a children's sermon is your normal practice, please inform me ahead of time, and I will prepare a children's message. If children begin the service in the nave and then are dismissed, I would like to bless the children before they depart. I am happy to spend time with the children in the congregation in other contexts as well.

I will sing as much of the liturgy as desired, if it is your custom. I will use the solemn tone.

Sometimes I wear the vestments of the parish, although I often bring my own vestments. I will also bring a plain alb, mitre, and pastoral staff. I will generally wear the chasuble for the entire liturgy, rather than changing to or from a cope, except on high festival days (Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, etc.).

I will stand for confirmations and receptions, so the bishop's chair may remain in its usual location.

I may bring a deacon with me, depending on deacon availability. The normal functions of a deacon in the liturgy include: proclaiming the gospel, bidding the Confession, setting the table, and dismissing the congregation. The details of assisting the bishop will normally also include such things as:

- holding the Prayer Book during the initiatory rites so that my hands are free
- receiving and retrieving the pastoral staff at various times during the liturgy
- assisting at baptisms.

In the absence of a deacon, those duties may be performed by parish clergy, a senior acolyte, or assisting lay minister. If the Archdeacon accompanies me, she may ask to give a 5-minute presentation on the ministry of deacons.

If additional pastoral acts are requested, such as commissioning officers or ministers, I am more than willing to do that as part of the offertory. The brief service on BCP pp 420-421 is often suitable.

At confirmation, reception, or reaffirmation, please have the candidates wear nametags that clearly show the candidate's name, in large, bold print, and which form of commitment they are making. Please present the candidates in groups: first candidates for confirmation, then candidates for reception, then candidates for reaffirmation.

Confirmation is a full adult affirmation of the vows often made by others at our baptism. If a person has previously made an adult affirmation of faith in another Christian tradition, they may be received rather than confirmed. Either confirmation or reception counts as confirmation for Episcopal canonical purposes (service on the vestry, ordination, etc.) Reaffirmation is open to people who have been previously confirmed or received in the Episcopal Church, and who have undergone a life event or other transformation that leads them to desire to reaffirm their vows. I am willing to offer open Reaffirmation of Vows to members of your congregation on the day of my visitation, if you wish.

Chrism is not used for confirmation. In the New Testament, anointing is associated with Baptism. In the Prayer Book, the use of chrism occurs only in the baptismal liturgy, while the laying on of hands is associated with confirmation. Note that the baptism of an adult includes anointing and completes the rite, and constitutes confirmation if the baptism is performed by the bishop.

You should plan to provide pre-printed baptism, confirmation, reception, and reaffirmation certificates, which I will sign, along with prayer books or other gifts for the candidates, if you wish.

If part or all of your worship service is customarily in Spanish, I will gladly preside in Spanish. I will preach in English. If an interpreter is needed for my sermon, please provide one from the congregation.

### **AFTER THE VISITATION**

Please return to the Office of the Bishop the confirmation record signed by the clergy to Registrar Alyson Terry, [aterry@edsd.org](mailto:aterry@edsd.org), or by mail. In addition, please send contributions to the Bishop's Pastoral Needs Fund. Checks should be made out to "EDSD" with "Bishop's Fund" in the memo line. Please mail checks to the following address:

The Episcopal Diocese of San Diego  
2083 Sunset Cliffs Blvd.  
San Diego, CA 92107

Date

Name

Congregation

Address

City, State Zip

Dear Name,

Episcopal Visitations are one of the most important parts of my ministry with you. The visitation is an outward and visible sign of the unity of the church (local and global), and a particular opportunity to encourage, strengthen, and challenge the congregation's missional engagement in its local context as well as more globally. I am scheduled to be with you and the people of **CONGREGATION** for an Episcopal Visit on **Sunday morning, DATE**.

To assure that the visitation is a creative and constructive experience, Erin McDougal will arrange a telephone call with you two to three weeks before the visitation. Before the phone call, I ask that you read this year's Customary for Visitations and complete the worksheet (page 6 of the Visitation Customary) found at <https://edsd.org/visitations>.

In our phone conversation, we will review the details of the services, the overall schedule, and what you would like me to do when I am with you. In addition to presiding and preaching at all services, I am more than happy to give a short children's homily or do other activities upon request. I would like to lead an adult forum if possible, and to meet with candidates for baptism, confirmation, reception, and reaffirmation for a few minutes before the main service. I would also like to meet with your vestry or bishop's committee (and search committee, if applicable) during my visitation. If you customarily have a worship service in Spanish, I will be happy to preside in Spanish. I will preach in English, so if Spanish interpretation is desired, please provide an interpreter from the congregation.

I am attaching my [2023 Visitation Customary](#). Please note that if I did not visit your congregation in 2022, I encourage you to make this Visitation in Revival format. That format can be found on the EDSD website at the link for my [2022 Visitation Customary](#).

I also ask you to have a discussion of the questions on the Vestry Preparation Questionnaire (page 7 of the Visitation Customary) at the vestry or bishop's committee meeting before my visitation. When I meet with your vestry (and search committee, if you are in a clergy transition) during my visitation, I will discuss these questions with you.

Finally, please remember that the canons of our diocese dictate that the loose offering that day is for the Bishop's Pastoral Needs Fund. I would ask that you note this both in your bulletins and in the spoken announcements for each service.

I look forward to meeting you and those with whom you serve.

In Christ,

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Susan Brown Snook  
Bishop



Episcopal Diocese of San Diego  
Bishop's Visitation Worksheet

Please complete and return to the Bishop's Office three weeks prior to visitation by mail or email, [emcdougal@edsd.org](mailto:emcdougal@edsd.org)

**Date of Visitation:** \_\_\_\_\_

Church Name:	Church Phone:
Church Location Address:	Contact Cell Phone:
Contact Person:	Email:

**Service Information**

Times	Rite I, Rite II or EOW	Eucharistic Prayer I; II; A; B; C; D; EOW 1, 2 or 3	Is the Eucharistic Prayer said or sung? <u>If sung, please use solemn</u>
<b>Color of the Day:</b>			

**Revised Common Lectionary**

<b>Old Testament:</b>		<b>Psalm:</b>	
<b>New Testament:</b>		<b>Gospel:</b>	
<b>Total Baptisms:</b>			
Of those, how many are	Infant:	Youth:	Adult:
Number of Confirmations:	Number of Receptions:	Number of Reaffirmations:	
If you are celebrating a non-lectionary saint's day or other feast with the bishop's prior permission, which feast or saint's day?			
Do you want the bishop to lead a children's moment?			

**Other information or requests:**

Reminder: Canon 3.3.0 requires the undesignated plate offering on the date of the Bishop's official visit to be given to the Bishop's Discretionary Fund. An announcement should be made to this effect including that checks be written and designated to the Bishop's Discretionary Fund as well.

**Vestry Preparation Questionnaire  
For Bishop Visitations  
Episcopal Diocese of San Diego**

*During my visitation, I would like to meet with your vestry or bishop's committee for forty-five minutes or so to discuss the challenges and opportunities of your ministry. If you are currently in a rector/vicar transition, please include the search committee in that meeting as well. At your last vestry or bishop's committee meeting before my visitation, I ask you to discuss the following questions so that we can be prepared to talk about them when I visit.*

1. What are the major strengths and gifts of your congregation?
2. What are the major challenges of your congregation's ministry?
3. Looking at the community beyond your doors, what groups in the area might benefit from hearing the good news of Christ through the Episcopal Church? What ideas do you have for sharing that good news with them?
  - For this conversation, use websites such as [census.gov/quickfacts](https://www.census.gov/quickfacts), [censusreporter.org](https://www.censusreporter.org), [datausa.io](https://datausa.io) or [city-data.com](https://city-data.com) to collect demographics on your community. Distribute this information to your vestry or bishop's committee.
  - Consider how your community has changed in recent years, and how well your congregation matches the demographics of your neighborhood.
  - What are important local issues in your area?
4. What are the major needs of the neighbors in your wider community? How are you currently serving your neighbors? How might you be called to serve them in the future?