



# THE DIOCESE OF SAN DIEGO

## Guidelines for Episcopal Visitations

### 2026

*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.

#### **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. 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. If your parish doesn't have a regular lead clergy person, I will hold the call with your Senior Warden or Bishop's Warden. 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.
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 Sunday morning liturgies, at Baptism, Confirmation, and the Holy Eucharist. If you also have liturgies on Saturday night or Sunday night, please check with me as to whether my schedule allows me to attend those liturgies. 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). Upon request, I can wear white if there are baptisms or red if there are confirmations / receptions / reaffirmations. 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. 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. The Archdeacon, Cindy Campos, will accompany me on many visits. If present, the Archdeacon will serve as my chaplain. If you have a regular deacon assigned to your congregation, they can fulfill deacons’ responsibilities during the service; if you do not have a deacon, the Archdeacon can do those roles. If the Archdeacon is not with me, I will likely ask the parish clergy to perform deacon and chaplain roles.
7. 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 Archdeacon, if she accompanies me. If the Archdeacon is with me, she may give a short 4-minute presentation on the ministry of the diaconate during the congregational forum.
8. 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? I will discuss these questions with your Vestry or Bishop’s Committee during our meeting.

## **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 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. It is important to be clear about when each rite is appropriate.

Confirmation is a full adult affirmation of the vows often made by others at our baptism. A person who has not previously made a public adult affirmation of faith in any Christian denomination should be confirmed. Please note that it does not make a difference whether the previous Christian denomination had historic succession or not.

Reception. 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 with laying on of hands by the bishop.

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. However, some adult baptismal candidates desire to be separately confirmed, and I am willing to do this if it is important to them or their family.

If the liturgy includes baptisms but no confirmations, receptions, or reaffirmations, Holy Baptism begins on page 299 of the Book of Common Prayer. It begins with the opening acclamation and call-and-response from Ephesians 4:4-6. The Gloria or Kyrie is not used in a baptismal service.

The rite for Confirmation, Reception, and Reaffirmation of Baptismal Vows begins on page 413 of the Book of Common Prayer. Please note that the service begins in the same way as a baptismal service. The Gloria or Kyrie is not used at a service that includes Confirmation, Reception, or Reaffirmation.

If your service includes both Baptisms and Confirmation / Reception / Reaffirmation, please use the service of Holy Baptism beginning on BCP p. 299, following the directions for integrating the two services.

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 Reception, then Reaffirmation.

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

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.

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

## **Renewal of Baptismal Vows**

If there are no candidates for Baptism, Confirmation, Reception, or Reaffirmation, I will lead a Renewal of Baptismal Vows in place of the Nicene Creed. The Renewal of Baptismal Vows begins on BCP p. 292 with the prayer that begins “Through the Paschal mystery, dear friends...,” omitting the phrase “now that our Lenten observance has ended.” It continues through the prayer at the top of BCP p. 294 that begins “May Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ....”

## **Closing Blessing**

For the closing blessing, my preference is to use the episcopal blessing on BCP p. 523. This blessing has congregational responses, so if you are printing the full service in the bulletin, you will need to print the blessing. On occasion, I am willing to use a special seasonal blessing if that is your wish.

## **SCHEDULING**

The scheduling of visitations will be coordinated by the Bishop’s Office. You are encouraged to request any particularly desired dates.

## **OTHER LITURGICAL GUIDELINES**

I anticipate that all visitations will be celebrations of the Holy Eucharist. I will preside and preach. 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. Upon request, I am willing to use white vestments (if there are baptisms) or red vestments (if there are Confirmations, Receptions, or Reaffirmations). As required by the Canons, you should use the Revised Common Lectionary unless I have given you permission to use a different observance. I will normally be glad to approve using propers for your patronal feast day, if that is being observed for my visitation.

If a children’s sermon is your normal practice, please inform me ahead of time, and I will prepare a short 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 chant 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 usually bring my own vestments. I will also bring a plain alb, mitre, and crozier. 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 may bring a deacon or Archdeacon with me, who will perform the deacon roles in the service. The normal functions of a deacon in the liturgy include: proclaiming the gospel, 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, including pouring the water into the font

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 4-minute presentation on the ministry of deacons during the congregational forum.

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.

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.

### **SERVANT MINISTRY AWARDS**

I am happy to present a Servant Ministry Award to one or two members of your congregation. Please nominate persons who have done extraordinary lay ministry in the congregation over the past year. Please let Erin McDougal know at least a week in advance of the visitation whom you would like to nominate, and send her a short one-paragraph citation naming the areas of your nominee's servant ministry. At the Sunday service, I will bring a framed certificate to present to the nominee. Your citation will be printed on a card in an envelope taped to the back of the award. I will explain what the award is, and then ask you to name the person and read the citation. I am happy to pose for pictures with the two of you. We can do this presentation during your normal announcements time.

### **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  
P.O. Box 7920  
San Diego, CA 92107