

The Diocese of New Jersey

Guidelines for an Episcopal Visitation Including Confirmation, Reception and Reaffirmation

The Right Reverend Sally French

Visitations are scheduled by arrangement with Mirelle White, Executive Assistant to the Bishop.

On Sundays it is my usual practice to make one visit in the morning and one in the afternoon. I am happy to arrange a visit on a weeknight or a Saturday.

I intend to visit each congregation within the Diocese at least once every three years [Title III, Canon 18, Section 4(a)]. I am happy to visit even if there are no Confirmations, Receptions or Reaffirmations to be celebrated on that occasion.

If I am not available on the date requested, Mirelle White will work with you to arrange for a visiting Bishop to preside at the Eucharist, preach the Word and administer Confirmation, Reception and Reaffirmation.

The liturgical color for a visit that includes Confirmation, Reception or Reaffirmation is red. Please note, however, that white is used during Christmastide; on the Epiphany; on the Sunday after the Epiphany; during Eastertide; on Trinity Sunday, All Saints' Day and the Sunday after All Saints'. Please check with me re: other Feasts and Holy Days. When there are no Confirmations, Receptions or Reaffirmations, the color of the liturgical season is used.

Please provide service outlines, leaflets or booklets, well in advance of the visit for my review. The day of my visit, I would like to see the service registers and financials, including the most recent annual report.

Please provide two Bishop's chaplains, one to hold the Book and one to assist the Bishop (crozier, mitre, etc. - this should be a Deacon, if available). If a Deacon is not available, both chaplains can be lay people.

I am willing to observe the local liturgical customs, provided that they fall within the rationale and rubrics of The Book of Common Prayer.

Please identify the parts of the Liturgy that are customarily sung in your church. I am happy to chant the Collect of the Day, Sursum Corda, Preface and other portions of the Liturgy. I prefer the Solemn Tone.

If Baptism(s) is (are) to be administered as well as Confirmations, please begin the Liturgy on page 299. The Presentation and Examination of the other Candidates follows on page 303. Confirmation, Reception and/or Reception prayers are on page 309.

I prefer to be seated for the administration of Confirmation, Reception and Reaffirmation.

It is helpful for Confirmands, those to be Received and those to make a Reaffirmation to be identified by nametag or card and/or announcement by the Presenter.

I support and encourage the practice of having parents, family, sponsors and/or mentors come forward together with the Candidate and to lay hands on the Candidate as I pray. Please plan the logistics of such movement so that the Liturgy does not get bogged down.

In the case of Receptions, it is my practice to extend a hand of welcome for the first sentence (at the bottom of page 418) and to make the sign of the cross and lay on hands for the Blessing that follows.

Please assign someone to read the Prayers for the Candidates, pages 305-306. See direction at the bottom of page 417. Note that the prayer on page 418 (or 309) precedes the Confirmation, Reception and/or Reaffirmation. The concluding prayer is found on page 419 (or 310).

I much prefer to move directly from the concluding prayer on page 419 (310) to the Peace. It is my view that this Liturgy flows better if we do not offer Prayers of the People after the conclusion of the Confirmation Rite. If it is desired to include intercessions, please use Eucharistic Prayer D and note the provision for prayers, on page 375.

In the Celebration of the Eucharist, let me know your local custom re: any special ceremonial practices at the Words of Institution (genuflections, elevations and/or bows). It is also good to know if any of the following are chanted: Memorial Acclamation; the conclusion of the Eucharistic Prayer; the introduction to the Lord's Prayer; the Lord's Prayer; and/or the Fraction Anthem.

At the conclusion of the Liturgy, I am happy to offer the Episcopal Blessing (see page 523 of the BCP and/or S 173 in The Hymnal 1982). If you would like this Blessing to be chanted or said, please reproduce it in the service bulletin.

The undesignated offering (loose plate) received at the Bishop's Visitation is designated for the Bishop's Discretionary Fund. Please note this designation in the service bulletin. Please send checks made to payable to "Bishop's Discretionary Fund" to: Bishop's Office, Diocese of New Jersey, 808 West State Street, Trenton, NJ 08618. Due to an IRS regulation, checks for the Discretionary Fund that are made payable to Bishop French personally cannot be deposited into the Discretionary Fund.

If you need certificates: Confirmation, Reception, Reaffirmation of Faith, and/or Baptism, please contact Mirelle White (e-mail: mwhite@dioceseofnj.org or phone: (609) 460-5411) prior to your visit and she will send them to you along with the Official Acts form to be completed and returned to the Diocese within three days after the visitation. Whether you use your own certificates or those supplied by the Bishop's office, the Official Acts form, copy enclosed, must be returned so that the Official Acts can be recorded.

The Right Reverend Sally French
Bishop of New Jersey
January 2024