



Convocation of American Churches in Europe

“The Bishop Is Coming!” Now What?

One advantage that we have in the Convocation is that travel requirements mean that Bishops’ Annual Visitations last a whole weekend. This is an opportunity for you and the Bishop to plan ways in which he can be of help to you and the parishioners, e.g.:

- Leading retreats
- Teaching
- Youth group activities
- Hospital/prison visits

besides the oversight and sacramental aspects of episcopal ministry.

I. ORGANIZING THE LITURGY

- Consult with the Bishop well in advance. The liturgy should look and feel like your usual liturgy, so as to honor the tradition of your congregation. However, there are a few points to remember.
 - Follow the rubrics (they have the force of canon law).
 - Only one chalice on the altar during the Eucharistic prayer.
- Use the second post-communion prayer (BCP 366), to which the Bishop is especially attached. (He can tell you why.)
- Do you use the RCL yet? Let the Bishop know.
- Please send the proposed Order of Service as early as possible and latest 10 days in advance of the Bishop’s visitation. If you have more than one liturgy, the Bishop will normally celebrate those as well.
- Tell us when you normally print your bulletins so that the Bishop can proof it and changes can be made in a timely fashion.
- Normally the church musician should choose the hymns to agree with the lections and the occasion. The hymn “A vision seen, a call obeyed” is always a good choice as recessional hymn. If you want to use it, please make sure you have the latest version.

II. BAPTISM

- The Bishop presides, while the priest who prepared the candidate should do the actual baptizing. Please remember to assign the prayers for the candidate to an appropriate person.
- The Office can make certificates, if needed. Give us two weeks’ notice, please.

“The Bishop is coming !”

III. CONFIRMATION, RECEPTIONS & REAFFIRMATIONS

- Send the names of the candidates along with your proposed Order of Service.
- Indicate whether you wish the Bishop’s Office to make up certificates if you don’t make your own.
- Make sure that Bishop can meet the candidates for at least an hour prior to the liturgy. They should expect opportunities to show their readiness for this important step in faith.
- If the congregation does not have fresh chrism, provide some fresh olive oil in a receptacle large enough for the congregation to see it being blessed.

IV. OTHER MATTERS

- The Vestry or Bishop’s Committee should meet with the Bishop during a Visitation – at the very least every two years. During this meeting current audited financial statements (including discretionary funds), the congregation’s by-laws, organizational compliance reports (as required by local law), contracts, leases, the clergy Letters of Agreement, current compensation of clergy and staff, and Mutual Ministry Review reports will be reviewed together.
- The Bishop is canonically bound to inspect all Congregation Registers and Service Books. Please have them ready.
- The loose offering (cash) at Visitation is traditionally given to the Bishop for his Discretionary Fund. Until recently, the modest income from a small endowment was deemed sufficient, and this was not done. Now, however, the Bishop’s Discretionary Fund (BDF) has many more demands placed upon it due to the growth of the Convocation. The Treasurer of the congregation should send a check or transfer to the Convocation office, which will then deposit the funds.

Thank you in advance! We hope this helps you plan effective Visitations. •

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