

TO: Heads of Congregations

FROM: Melissa Soderberg, Executive Assistant to The Rt. Rev. Angela M. Cortiñas

SUBJECT: Customary – Church Visitations

To facilitate Bishop Cortiñas' visit to your congregation, the following information is shared with you. These guidelines are intended to make the visit helpful, productive and graceful for the congregation and the clergy family.

PURPOSE OF VISIT

1. To celebrate the Eucharist and preach the Word as the suffragan bishop and co-shepherd of the Diocese.
2. To baptize, confirm, receive and hear the reaffirmation vows of those who are prepared to follow as disciples of Jesus Christ.
3. To review the life and health of the congregation. This is accomplished by:
 - a. Conversation with clergy or wardens
 - b. Participation with the congregation in worship, coffee hour and other activities and by
 - c. A look at the parish records. This should be approached with informality and largely based on positive personal relationships with the clergy. The Canons provide that the Register of the Church Services and the Parish Register be made available for review. I will review these as part of my visit. The names of those being baptized, confirmed or received should be entered properly in the register before my signature is expected.
4. To visit with the clergy family. This is a crucial part of my visit and I would like to have time to visit with the clergy and family. This can happen on Saturday evening if I am traveling the night before a visit or Sunday after worship.

BEFORE THE VISIT

1. Please complete and return the information sheet **two weeks** prior to the visit. This should be sent to Melissa Soderberg at melissa.soderberg@dwtx.org.
2. **Confirmation / Visitation Record Form:** Please return the attached Bishop's Visitation Record Form to the bishop's office **two weeks** prior to the visit. If you are not able to enter the information electronically, contact the Bishop's Assistant, Melissa Soderberg, at 210-824-5387 and a form will be sent to you.

LITURGY

Colors: For confirmation, the color should be the color of the day; for baptism with confirmation, the color is white. For services not on Sunday, please confirm with Bishop Cortiñas the color. The bishop will vest in red chimere and seasonal stole except during Advent and Lent when a black chimere and seasonal stole will be used. If your congregation has a different tradition or request regarding vestments, please contact the bishop in advance.

Readings: The readings should be those appointed for the day. For a weekday confirmation service, please consult with Bishop Cortiñas and she will select the

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readings. The bishop may instead select readings from the previous or upcoming Sunday.

Order of Service: Please send by email (melissa.soderberg@dwtx.org) a copy of your Order of Service (even if only a draft) **two (2) weeks** in advance for Bishop Cortiñas' use in preparing for the service. Do not print service sheets or booklets until you receive changes or corrections.

Altar Book: The bishop prefers to use an altar book for the Great Thanksgiving. Please check the ribbons in advance.

Name Tags: Candidates should wear printed name tags denoting confirmation, reception or reaffirmation. Large print is helpful.

PARTICIPANTS

Deacons: Bishop Cortiñas expects the deacon, if present, to serve in the diaconal role. Priests should not read the Gospel or say the dismissal if a deacon is present. If there is no deacon, a priest will read the gospel and say the dismissal and set the table.

Bishop's Chaplain: The Bishop's Chaplain should have no other liturgical role in the service (no vergers, crucifers, or Lay Eucharistic Ministers). The bishop's chaplain will assist in carrying the crozier and help the bishop throughout the liturgy. If available a youth or student is appropriate. No advance training is necessary. The bishop travels with a stand. When not in use the crozier goes in the stand NOT on the altar.

Lay Eucharistic Ministers: Lay Eucharistic Ministers are to be used only if there are insufficient vested clergy present.

Photographer: Please designate a lay member of your congregation who does not have other responsibilities during the visit to take photographs of the bishop, confirmands, clergy, and parishioners. These photographs do not need to be professionally produced or edited but should be appropriate for use in Diocesan communications. Please send the photographs to the Diocesan Communications staff.

ADMINISTRATIVE

Coffee Hour / Christian Education: A congregational forum can take place during the formation hour or after the service. Please visit with Bishop Cortiñas about proposed topic.

Meeting with Vestry / Bishop's Committee: The bishop does not need to meet with your vestry or bishops's committee during the visit unless there is some specific reason for the meeting. If a meeting is needed, please call and arrange this in advance.

Review of Parish Records: Bishop Cortiñas will review the Parish registers of baptisms, marriages, burials, and membership. Please make these readily available.

Meeting with Confirmands / Signing of Certificates: Bishop Cortiñas hopes to meet with the confirmands whenever practical. This should not cut short the meeting with the congregation.

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MISCELLANEOUS

Parking Space: If parking is an issue on the day of a visitation, please mark the best place for Bishop Cortiñas to park.

Discretionary Fund Check: It is a courtesy to include in the worship leaflet, and to announce at the Offertory, that the undesignated offering will be given to the Bishop's Discretionary Fund. Please make the check payable to: The Diocese of West Texas with the memo: Bishop Cortiñas Discretionary Fund. Mail to: Episcopal Diocese of WestTexas 111 Torcido Drive, San Antonio, TX 78209

For Further Information: Please call or email Bishop Cortiñas' Executive Assistant, Melissa A. Soderberg, at (210) 824-5387 or melissa.soderberg@dwtx.org.