

To: *The Clergy of the Diocese of West Texas*
From: *Bishop Read*
Date: *March 2025*
Subject: *Liturgical Guidelines and Information for the Episcopal Visit*

Being present in the congregations of our diocese, and with the clergy and their families, are highlights of the ministry of a bishop. I come in peace and in joy. These guidelines are intended to make this visit helpful, productive, and graceful for the congregation and for the clergy family.

The Specific Purposes of the Visit are Four-Fold

1. To celebrate the Eucharist and preach the Word as the chief shepherd of the Diocese.
2. To baptize, confirm, receive and hear the reaffirmation vows of those who are prepared.
3. To review the life and health of the congregation. This is accomplished by:
 - (a) conversation with the clergy or wardens,
 - (b) participation with the congregation in worship, coffee hour and other activities, and by
 - (c) a look at the parish records. I expect to undertake this responsibility with great informality and largely on the basis of 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 believe that this would be helpful, and I would like to review them as part of the visit. I am uncomfortable signing the Parish Register before the names of those to be baptized, confirmed, or received are entered, so please take care of this in advance.
4. To visit with the clergy family. In some ways, this is the most important part of the visit. Jacqui will often travel with me, and we look forward to spending time with you either on Saturday evening if we are traveling there, or on Sunday after worship.

Note: The bishops do not need to meet with your vestry or bishop's committee during the visit unless there is some specific reason for the meeting. If so, call the Bishop in advance to discuss this.

Before the Visit:

1. Please complete and return the Information Sheet **two weeks** prior to the visit. For a visit from Bishop Read please send it to Leigh Saunders at leigh.saunders@dwtx.org. For Bishop Cortiñas please send it to Melissa Soderberg at melissa.soderberg@dwtx.org.
2. If your congregation plans to print the liturgy or an order of service, please send it two weeks prior to the visit.
3. The bishop is happy to participate in or lead any activities, special events, blessings, classes, etc., Please let us know at least 2 weeks in advance so that we might have time to prepare for them.

4. We will call the clergy or warden in charge 7-10 days before the visit to confirm and discuss any details.
5. Should you need to change the date of the visit notify Leigh Saunders as soon as possible. You are responsible for arranging a swap with another congregation and confirm with Leigh.

During the Visit:

1. If you believe parking will be a challenge, please reserve a parking space for the bishop.
2. The visit is centered in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist with the bishop as celebrant and preacher.
3. The bishop visits the congregation in the midst of its ongoing life and ministry within the liturgical season or Feast Day. The lessons appointed for the day will be used, unless the bishop has been consulted in advance. The liturgical color of the day should be that of the season, but if your congregation has a different custom, please note it on the Information Sheet. When confirmation and/or baptism is added to the Eucharist it extends the length of the liturgy. This is not a problem for the bishop but may be for some in the congregation. Please feel free to adjust this by deleting a reading, or psalm, or not singing all the verses of a hymn. If you delete a lesson, please note it on the Information Sheet.
4. The bishops will vest in red chimere and seasonal stole except during Advent and Lent, when we will vest in black chimere and seasonal stole. If your congregation has a different tradition or request regarding vestments, please contact the bishop in advance.
5. It is helpful for the bishop to have a chaplain – an acolyte – appointed to carry the crozier and assist in other ways. If available, this is often a student. No advanced training is necessary.
6. If possible, depending on the morning schedule, the bishop would like to meet with those who are to be confirmed/received/reaffirmed for a few minutes. Please spend a few minutes with the candidates so they know where to sit and are familiar with the questions and responses.
7. The bishops will confirm while standing, so there is no need to move the bishop's chair. If there are local customs around the roles of sponsors or families in confirmation, please notify the bishop in advance.
8. Lay persons should read the lessons, prayers of the people/prayers for the candidates, and other roles appointed for the laity. A deacon or priest should read the Gospel. Parish clergy should prepare the altar and join the bishop at the altar.
9. The bishop prefers to preach following the reading of the Gospel.

10. Candidates should wear printed name tags denoting confirmation, reception, or reaffirmation. Large print is helpful!
11. The bishops will generally use the second confirmation prayer on p. 418 of the prayer book.
12. The bishop prefers to use an altar book for the Great Thanksgiving. Please check the ribbons in advance.
13. The “undesigned” (or “non-pledged” or “loose”) offering is to be given in support of the bishop’s Discretionary Fund. As with your own discretionary fund, the bishop’s fund is called on often and for many and varied needs. It frequently is used to respond to emergencies and pastoral needs of clergy and their families. The Sunday contributions of our congregations are the primary source of funding for this assistance. Please encourage your people to be generous.
14. If you have questions feel free to ask.