Episcopal Diocese of Georgia

BISHOP’S CUSTOMARY FOR VIRTUAL VISITATIONS

It is a joy and delight to get to serve as your chief pastor. As we live through this unprecedented time, I want to be with the people of the Diocese of Georgia in the ways open to us. I am offering three ways that I will visit your congregation virtually and am open to additional ways to be with you. Please take this as an offer from your new bishop for us to find ways to be together between now and a return to in-person worship.

A virtual visitation will not count as your visitation for purposes of the Canons of the Episcopal Church. Part of what will not happen is a meeting with the vestry as a part of the visitation. Though any vestries that would benefit from a virtual meeting with me may set that up separate from this process by emailing me to make that request. Also, for the time being, confirmations and baptisms are on hold as well. As a return to in-person worship becomes possible in some form, I will offer a revised customary appropriate to those initial liturgies.

SCHEDULING A VISITATION

While the Bishop’s Office typically initiates scheduling of visitations through an annual schedule, I am asking congregations to begin this process. Contact my Executive Assistant, Maggie Lyons using the online form offered below, letting her know of your interest in either a visit through pre-recorded worship, worship via a video-conferencing service (such as Zoom), or being on site to take part in your livestreamed worship.

I will seek to balance these virtual visitations so that congregations of every size and area of the diocese are scheduled as equally as invitations and schedule permit. As we create it, the Diocese will publish the calendar of visitations on the diocesan website and share it each week in From the Field.

Next steps

As soon as possible complete the online form listed at the bottom of this customary naming your desire for a visitation and giving us some initial details.

A week before the visit, please send the bulletin to flogue@gaepiscopal.org. Maggie will schedule a phone call 4-5 days before the visitation to go over the schedule.
THE DAY OF THE VISIT

In general, it is my desire to maintain the regular schedule of the parish as adapted for the pandemic. If, for example, you are typically worshipping at 10 am on Sunday, then I will not ask you to shift that time. If you have a mid-week liturgy online, that will make for an easier option in scheduling. I realize that may diminish the numbers in attendance. I leave it to the clergy and vestry to balance those concerns when making a request as I hope to visit more than one congregation each week through these varied virtual options. To balance these two ideals, the following guidance is offered:

For pre-recorded worship
Let me know what parts of the service you hope I can record, offering any counsel on how I might better match the rest of the liturgy.

For worship via video conferencing
- I will plan to preach and preside at a liturgy of the word (Morning/Evening Prayer, Ante-Communion etc.).
- Please select members of the community to read the readings, lead the psalm, and the Prayers of the People.
- Let me know how you have typically dressed for these liturgies so that I can match your ongoing virtual worship in a way appropriate for a bishop.
- If there is a Deacon present in the community please invite the Deacon to proclaim the Gospel, introduce the prayers of the people and offer the dismissal. When a Deacon is not present, a Priest, or I, will proclaim the Gospel.
- Designate one or two persons to be the “All” or “People” during the liturgy.
  - Multiple people responding via Zoom is a little chaotic.
  - In the event that there are two people designated please invite them to respond alternately.
- While the Nicene Creed (for Ante-Communion) or the Apostles Creed (for Morning Prayer) is a sufficient statement of faith for our time together, my preference would be to use the Renewal of Baptismal vows as a way of reminding us that we are all united in Holy Baptism even while being physically distanced.
- Announcements should be made by the clergy person or a lay leader.
- An offering may be taken for the Bishop’s Fund if you wish, but in this interim time, I am perfectly fine with any congregation that opts not to receive a special offering for this virtual visitation.
- Since we are not able to gather to celebrate the sacraments of the church at this time, I am happy to spend some time, either before worship or after for a “Zoom coffee hour” with your congregation.

Taking part in your livestream in person
If you are livestreaming your worship from your church, I am open to coming to your church to worship with you. I will weigh these requests alongside a desire to be with as many congregations as practical during this time of not worshipping in person.
REQUIRED ONLINE FORM
Cut and paste this link into a browser to complete the online form requesting a virtual visitation:
https://forms.gle/PbsYfcDCPawTkCxa6

FINAL NOTES
I take quite seriously the phrase in the Examination during the ordination rite for a bishop, “will you sustain your fellow presbyters and take counsel with them.” This designation of fellow presbyters is a quite intentional statement on the relationship between a bishop and the clergy and I apply that same courtesy to the lay leadership of our congregations. It is therefore my hope as bishop that you will continue to call me by my Christian name, Frank. Of course, you should refer to me as Bishop Logue as is appropriate, but continue to address me as Frank. We all understand the office of bishop and the authority that comes with this call. I trust we also understand that authority is primarily relational, touching only on canonical authority as necessitated by circumstances.

Some may have a personal preference to address me as Bishop Logue or Bishop Frank. After a single reminder, I will endeavor to recall this preference and to not offer correction. I intend to likewise call deacons and priests by their Christian name and to refer to you as “the Reverend” adding your first and last name. When I am with you in your congregation, please let me know how you are typically addressed by your parishioners. I will follow that practice trusting that women and men clergy serving in your church share equal forms of address as is essential.

Use of social media to communicate about the visitation is encouraged. Please tag me on Facebook (@frankslogue), Instagram (@bishoplogue), or Twitter (@franklogue) in any photos or announcements that include me on those social media sites.

It is my hope that these details answer the general questions you may have, but we are all figuring this out as we go. Don’t hesitate to offer additional thoughts, questions, concerns, and opportunities. My great hope is a virtual visitation might be an occasion in the life of the congregation that supports your ongoing ministry in your community even before we begin sorting through in-person worship.

Pax et Bonum,

[Signature]

The Rt. Rev. Frank Logue
Bishop of Georgia