



The visitation of their Bishop is an important time in the life of the congregation and can be a more worthwhile experience if there is some careful preparation. This is meant to be a guide to help the clergy and the congregation prepare for the visit, but also to help me prepare for my time there with you.

The importance of prayer. I am hoping that my visitations will be times of renewal and refreshing in the Holy Spirit for the congregation, the clergy, and me. This will not occur without the anointing of the Holy Spirit, which usually occurs when people have been praying for God to have his way in the services and meetings of that day. Please prepare for my visit by asking the congregation to pray for God's anointing on the services, on me, on the ministry of the Word, on the administration of the Sacraments, and that all who are present encounter the Living God.

A leadership meeting the day before, or after the last service. When possible, my strong preference is that I meet with some segment of a parish's leadership to have a discussion of how the parish is faring. It could consist of vestry and Rector; or wardens, clergy and key staff; or some other configuration. My only request is that the Rector (or Vicar) and some vestry leadership would be there. I will essentially ask some diagnostic questions, which you can share with others in advance if you wish:

1. What is the primary focus/vision of your parish?
2. What are 2-3 key missional strategies of the parish aimed to accomplish this vision?
3. What is going well; what is bearing fruit? What needs improvement?
4. Have you completed a parish assessment within the last 5 years? If so, what have you learned from it? If not, where are you in the process and when do you expect to have it completed?
5. Have you begun a process of succession planning for your Rector (or Vicar)? If yes, do you have a plan in place? This is an appropriate conversation no matter how long the Rector has been there.
6. How are you raising up leaders--youth, adult laity, deacons, and priests?
7. What is your cradle-to-grave discipleship plan for the members of your congregation?
8. How are you strengthening your ministry to the poor?
9. How do you as a Vestry approach stewardship?
10. How often do you as a Vestry discuss supporting Church Planting in the diocese?
11. What do you need from the diocese? How can we support you?
12. Are there areas of flourishing where you could help/lead/model for the diocese?
13. Have you done a 360 review of the rector?
14. Do you have a succession plan? If so, please be ready to provide a copy during the bishop's visit.

Preparing youth for Confirmation. I place high value on discipling the next generation. I am grateful for your team's preparation (and partnership with families) for Confirmation for youth. Whenever possible, and if travel permits, I will welcome the opportunity to have dinner with the youth confirmands the night before the Confirmation service. I would like to get to know them,

share my testimony, and inspire them to contribute to the world in which they face for the glory of God. Please plan well in advance for this possibility and communicate with the diocesan office regarding location/time (ministry@gulfatlanticdiocese.org).

When I arrive for worship. My being met by a designated representative at the car and assisting with the carrying of my Bishop's vestments and the crozier will be very helpful, if possible. Often times, my wife Jody will be with me. We require a handicap accessible parking spot with wheelchair access. If the facility is not accessible (including reception areas), please contact me immediately so we can adjust our plans.

It is an honor to share your ministry with my family when they are available to join me for visitations. If there are multiple events happening during the visitation (leadership meetings, meals with youth confirmands, receptions, etc.), it would be hospitable to consider checking in on Jody during those events. The host could be clergy, a clergy spouse, a leader of the parish, or anyone who will not also be presenting during those events so that they could feel free to occasionally see if there is anything my family may need during the visit.

Food. Different parishes will have different customs but having some kind of meal (or healthy snack or bottle of water if there is no meal planned) soon after the liturgy will be a help.

Parish Register. As part of my canonical duties, I would like to inspect and sign the parish register (in whatever form it is in) while I am there.

Signatures. If you have items for me as Bishop to sign (certificates, Bibles, prayer books, etc.), please have them ready to be signed before the service and laid out in the room near where the Bishop will be vesting. Congregations should print their own Confirmation certificates using the diocesan template. The Diocese can assist with printing issues if necessary. However, the diocesan staff will need the full names (First, Middle, & Last) at least two weeks in advance of the Sunday of the visitation.

Service Bulletin. It is important that you upload your service bulletin in the linked form below or email it to my office (ministry@gulfatlanticdiocese.org) by Thursday at noon prior to the visit so I can prepare appropriately for your service. If you are having Confirmations and Receptions, the liturgy I expect to use for that part of the service is the *Book of Common Prayer 2019* unless we discuss prior to the visitation. It can be found here [BCP2019](#).

I will use the ACNA lectionary for the years to come. If you, for some reason, want to deviate from those readings, please let me know a week ahead of time.

Offering. It is customary to take up an offering for the Bishop's discretionary fund when I visit, which is used to help priests, people, parishes, and with other various needs. However, I do not want to cut into your regular offering so I need you to tell us the way you would like to handle it. You can tell the congregation that the loose offering will be used in this way; or you can just designate an amount of which the Treasurer would write a check payable to the diocese (not to me) and memo: Honorarium or Bishop's Visit. Also, when you are visited by an Assisting Bishop on my behalf, an honorarium is customary (amount to be determined). Again, you can determine the best way to do this (the Diocese can assist with this if necessary).

Administering Communion. Since we have a variety of practices within our diocese and within the Anglican Communion, I would value having the Rector or designated person to direct me when it comes time to serve the Sacrament to the congregation.

Clearing the Table. At the end of Communion (before of the Post-communion Prayer), someone (usually a deacon or assisting priest) should clear or reset the Table. I do not consume the remaining wine and would prefer that the vessels be emptied and cleaned after the service, although I know that in some places this is done after the congregation has received and at the clearing of the Table.

Pictures. In today's climate, people want to take pictures. I am fine with this but prefer the details to be arranged ahead of time for a group photo rather than have a last-minute scramble. Photography should not intrude on a worship service, similar to most wedding policies.

Please let us know if we can help in any way as you prepare.

It is my great joy to be sharing in your parish or church plant ministry. My hope and prayer is that my visit will be a blessing to you, your family, and the congregation.

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Alex". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Right Reverend Alex Farmer