

Some Notes Concerning Parish Visitations

Your synod bishop, Reverend Ron Mayan, and his assistant, Reverend Dr Larry Kochendorfer, have many opportunities to visit and worship with the different congregations of our synod. Indeed, these visits provide a source of great joy in ministry!

Sometimes these visits involve participation in services of installation, dedication and anniversary. Sometimes they are scheduled for the purpose of consultation on specific issues or simply as a means of maintaining a healthy relationship between the congregation and the synod.

Still, regardless of the focus, parish visitations require careful and considered planning if they are to properly fulfill their intended purpose.

Sunday Morning Visitations

Synodical visits are first and foremost *pastoral* visits. As such, it is appropriate for the bishop or staff designate to preach and/or preside at the Eucharist when invited to be with a congregation on Sunday morning.

It is also most appropriate to arrange opportunities to visit with congregational groups such as adult education classes, Sunday Schools or Youth Groups as time allows. Such gatherings work best when they allow for open conversation that helps synodical personnel to learn something about your congregation's life and ministry.

The presence and participation of the pastor loci is of utmost importance. Therefore, synodical personnel are unable to accept invitations to provide pulpit supply when the regularly called pastor is not able to be present.

Weekday Visitations

Invitations can also be extended to visit with congregations on days other than Sundays. Such visits might include some of the following components:

- individual meetings and consultation with pastors, diaconal ministers and other ministry personnel
- meetings with ecumenical and community partners
- visitation to experience specialized ministries that the congregation is involved with in the community
- evening consultation with Congregational Councils and/or other congregational groups

Again, while synodical representatives are always pleased and prepared to share information concerning the life and ministry of the wider church, the primary focus of the visit should be directed toward affirming and strengthening local ministries.

Invitations

Invitations for the bishop to visit with your congregation for special events on a particular Sunday should be issued at least six months, and preferably one year, in advance. If the bishop is unable to attend on the date requested, an assistant to the bishop can often be assigned to attend in his place. (Invitations can also be issued directly to any one of the assistants to the bishop.)

Invitations for weekday visitations should also be issued with plenty of advance notice and will ordinarily be scheduled to coincide with other visitations being conducted in a particular region or conference.

All invitations should be made in writing, either by regular mail or e-mail. They should include a proposed itinerary and clearly indicate the various components to be included in the visit. Ordinarily, a representative of the synod office will respond to your invitation by telephone and then follow-up with written confirmation.

Once confirmation has been received you can begin publicizing the event, making sure, if appropriate, to also inform community media outlets. It's a quick and easy way to generate some additional publicity for your congregation! The synod office can provide you with photos and biographical information as required.

In Closing

The maintenance of healthy relationships between the local and wider church expressions of the church are highly dependent upon providing regular opportunities for meaningful person-to-person contact. In addition to arranging parish visitations by representatives of the Bishop's Office, you might also consider inviting representatives of the Synod Council, the Conferences and any number of other persons serving in specialized ministries, working groups, committees or agencies of our church. You will find them eager to share the story of our wider church family as experienced from their particular perspective. In turn, they will be delighted to learn how ministry is experienced in your particular context and setting!