



Diocese of Missouri
THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

2020 CUSTOMARY FOR VIRTUAL VISITATIONS

THE REV. DEON K. JOHNSON, BISHOP-ELECT

Dear Friends,

I have been very much looking forward to spending time with you and your community of faith as we begin to minister in Christ's name together. My goal is to spend significant time with every one of our worshipping communities in my first year serving with you here in the Diocese of Missouri. Visitations are an opportunity for us to live more fully into the understanding that we are "one church in many locations serving Christ together."

Being new to the diocese I have much to learn from you and your community of faith. I envision our visits as an opportunity for mutual discovery and learning as we seek to discern God's desire for the Diocese of Missouri. Since we are no longer able to gather in person for worship, I am very much committed to continuing our regular schedule of visitations albeit via a virtual platform until such a time as we are able to resume in-person worship. Please know that I will try my best, once we are able to gather in person once more, to make a visit to communities of faith that had previously been visited virtually.

I have had the opportunity to visit virtually with some of our communities of faith and I have found those visits to be extremely life-giving. I have heard the hopes and dreams as well as the anxieties and fears that are a part of our common life. Knowing our strengths while acknowledging our fears allows us to move further forward into God's purpose for our lives and the life of the world. We can "do all things through Christ" who strengthens us in so many ways.

Please send the bulletin for the service at least a week prior to the virtual visitation. I will reach out to the person in charge of the community of faith (clergy or lay) during the week prior to the visitation. Our phone call is intended to be a time to connect and to have conversation about what might be most helpful to you in the course of my visit. It would also be helpful for me to chat with one or two lay leaders in the community of faith to get a better sense of your context.

WORSHIP

Worship is at the heart of who we are as followers of Jesus Christ and I am always awed and delighted to be worshipping with a new community, even in a virtual setting.

- I will plan to preach and preside at a liturgy of the word (Morning/Evening Prayer, Ante-Communion etc.).
 - Resources provided in the Book of Common Prayer, Enriching our Worship or other sources may be used in crafting the liturgy for our time together. Be creative in crafting the worship for our time together.
 - I encourage the use of expansive and inclusive language but it is not a requirement.
- Please select members of the community to read the readings, lead the psalm(s), and the Prayers of the People.
- Clergy should vest using the liturgical colors of the day/season.
- If there is a Deacon present in the community please invite the Deacon to read/proclaim the Gospel, introduce the prayers of the people and offer the dismissal.
 - When a Deacon is not present a Priest or I will read/proclaim the Gospel.
 - In some instances Archdeacon Rebecca Barger will join us for the visit.
- 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.
- The Nicene Creed, the Apostles Creed or the Renewal of Baptismal Vows 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.
- The Prayers of the People offer a wonderful opportunity to express the particular needs and concerns of the community. Please be creative in crafting prayers for our time together.
- Music is a wonderful way to express our praise to God and I encourage musicians to sing or play instruments as part of our time together. Be creative!

- The following prayer should be used prior to the dismissal.
 - *Lord of the Feast, we thank you for gathering us as your people. We call to remembrance the many times we have been fed at your table and we lament our distance now. Be present Lord Jesus as you were present with your disciples, be known to us in the breaking of the bread, and may your Holy Spirit sustain us and all your Church until we can gather together again. We ask this for the sake of your love. Amen.*

BAPTISM, CONFIRMATION, AND RECEPTION

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 “coffee hour” with candidates preparing for Holy Baptism, Confirmation or Reception into the Episcopal Church. I am also willing to schedule a separate time with candidates outside of the virtual visitation. Please contact Jillian Smith (jsmith@diocesemo.org) to schedule time with candidates.

AFTER WORSHIP FORUM: COFFEE HOUR

- I am happy to spend time after worship answering questions or presenting on a topic of your choice.
- Please let members know in advance about the forum or Q&A time.
- I will have questions for your community to ponder. We will discuss the questions at our next scheduled in-person visitation. Feel free to share them in advance of our time together. I will ask them as questions to ponder for the next time we gather.
 - What is working well in our community of faith?
 - How are we practicing evangelism and outreach in our neighborhood/community?
 - What are we willing to let go of in order for something new to grow or thrive here?
 - Where do we hear God calling our community of faith in the next two years?
 - How can the Bishop’s office be helpful in our ministry together?

ZOOM ETIQUETTE

Zoom is a wonderful medium for building community and I have found the following tips helpful while using videoconferencing. Please feel free to share them with your faith community.

- Mute your microphone when necessary.
 - Zoom has a “Mute Microphone” option that cuts down on ambient feedback for the audience.
- Use Zoom’s chat function.
 - You can send a question or statement to everyone or privately to a participant.
- Think about your actions on camera.
 - Always remember that everyone can see you. Someone is watching as you take a big, wide-mouth yawn, stretch, or wander around the room.

LASTLY

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to call or text me on my cell phone 314-728-2471 or to send me or my executive assistant, Jillian Smith (jsmith@diocesemo.org) an e-mail. I’m very much looking forward to getting to know you and your faith community.