



North/West Lower Michigan Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Customary for Visits from the Bishop and Assistants to the Bishop

The Rev. Craig Alan Satterlee, Ph.D., Bishop

Introduction

Regularly visiting all the congregations and worshiping communities of our synod is among the principal responsibilities of my ministry among you. According to our synod constitution, the first two responsibilities of the bishop are to “preach, teach, and administer the sacraments in accord with the Confession of Faith of this church” and “have primary responsibility for the ministry of Word and Sacrament in this synod and its congregations, providing pastoral care and leadership for this synod, its congregations, its ordained ministers, and its other rostered ministers.” I am blessed to share these responsibilities with our synod’s assistants to the bishop as an extension of my ministry as bishop. We find visiting congregations to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments is a great joy and delight of the offices to which you have called us. I therefore have named preaching and presiding in congregations of our synod as a tangible expression of the unity of the church both a priority of my ministry as bishop and an expectation of my assistants. As bishop, I symbolically bring the congregations of our synod, our brothers and sisters in the ELCA, and, indeed, our full communion partner churches with me when I am among you. As representatives of the Office of the Bishop, our synod’s assistants do this as well.

I desire my visit—and those of my assistants—will be at once both business-as-usual *and* a special occasion in the life of the congregation. By this, I mean that I hope, regardless of how infrequent, my visitation will not be perceived as unusual, a reason for concern, or an excuse to put on unnecessary airs. While celebratory in nature, these visits need not look like a state occasion and, as the synod’s pastor, I prefer not to be treated as an “outsider” or “guest.” We are, all of us, guests at the table where Jesus is the host.

The central act of every Sunday visit is the preaching of God’s Word and the celebration of Holy Communion. I expect that worship will include Holy Communion. I am honored to preach and, whenever possible, to preside at Holy Communion in a manner that does not “displace” the pastor. We find that people genuinely appreciate receiving the Eucharist from their bishop, so I ask that I might participate in distributing the bread of Communion.

I cherish worshipping with you at the table of the Lord as the time and the place where we as a faith community discern ourselves to be Christ’s body for the sake of the world as we receive Christ present in the sacrament (1 Corinthians 11:22-33), I hope that worship will also invite us to spend some time discerning together what God is doing and inviting to us to do—in the body of Christ that is your congregation, in your community, and in our synod. To this end, I hope you will plan a Bishop’s Forum or Q&A session. I also welcome the opportunity to meet with those charged with leadership for your life together—pastors, deacons, elected leaders of the congregation, and others whom you deem helpful for me to meet.

Providing a meal after worship is a welcome but not expected part of the visit. If the congregation desires an extended time after worship that includes a meal, please consult my office as part of scheduling, since I regularly have Sunday afternoon or evening commitments, including installations, in a congregation other than the one where I am worshipping on Sunday morning.

What is a Customary?

This “customary” provides a process, a pathway, for you and I to make my visit an opportunity to celebrate your congregation’s mission and ministry. Hopefully it informs you of my preferences for the visit, especially worship, so you know what to prepare, how to prepare, and what to expect.

Within the past few years, many congregations have developed unique liturgies, patterns, and practices using the abundance of worship resources, including our worship books, *Sundays and Seasons*, and ecumenical resources. The result is a one-time, one-of-a-kind liturgy, which complicates my, and my assistants’, ability to successfully prepare for and lead worship.

At the request of multiple congregations, Pastor Bright, Pastor Sprang, and I have developed a “common liturgy” that we request congregations use when any of us lead worship in your congregation. We are grateful for the freedom and flexibility provided in *The Use of the Means of Grace* and *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* and we hope this “common liturgy” provides some opportunities for variety while also helping us streamline the worship planning process and reduce miscommunication and misunderstanding. If you have any questions, please reach out to the Synod minister who will be leading worship at your congregation. The liturgy is available here: <https://www.mittensynod.org/resources/publications/>

This customary is an evolving document. I use it to answer frequently asked questions. In response to questions about compensating the bishop and his assistants for preaching, I now include a section entitled Honorarium. To assist my assistants in responding to our congregations’ expectations, I have, at their request, expanded this customary in ways that include them as well. The section is entitled Welcoming an Assistant to the Bishop.

Yet, the customary has more than a practical side. It allows all of us to more fully participate in the day, the worship and whatever else you and I plan. Planning well before my arrival makes the visit more relaxing for all of us, and allows us to be open to what is happening, rather than wondering about the little details of what happens and when.

Finally, the customary has a catechetical dimension as, where appropriate, I provide my rationale for my preferences. This final dimension is balanced by the need to keep the customary a reasonable length. For a more detailed treatment of my approach to worship, I invite you to read my book *Presiding in the Assembly* (Augsburg Fortress 2003).

Please read this customary carefully as you plan for my visit and contact my office should you have any questions or concerns. I look forward to celebrating our unity in Christ as God’s

beloved Church through our worship and witness as together we prayerfully participate in Christ's own work of reconciling the world to God's very Self.

Peace,

The Rev. Craig Alan Satterlee, Ph.D., Bishop

Scheduling a Visit

Pastor Bright, Pastor Sprang, and Bishop Satterlee coordinate congregational visits to maximize both the visit and synod resources. Beyond geographic proximity, Pastor Bright concentrates on congregations in transition and "first call" congregations. Pastor Sprang concentrates on congregations genuinely interested in reaching out to their communities or increasing mission support. Bishop Satterlee concentrates on congregations that invite him, congregations celebrating significant events, and those where there is a need. As pastors seek to visit congregants on a regular basis, so Bishop Satterlee endeavors to visit congregations regularly. The called staff shares installations of pastors and deacons at the bishop's direction—the bishop alone ordains—and does their best to accept invitations to preach and/or preside, especially when there is a sacramental need due to vacation or vacancy.

The bishop and his assistants are happy to schedule special worship services during the week, including installations, and have found these to be very meaningful times. They frequently include time for a meal, fellowship, and conversation that Sunday morning cannot.

To assist with your planning, you can view Bishop Satterlee's public schedule at <https://craigasatterlee.com/schedule>

You may schedule a visit with any of the called staff by contacting them directly. The best way to contact Bishop Satterlee is to call the North/West Lower Michigan Synod Office (517-321-5066 xt 101). Pastor Bright (chrisy@mittensynod.org), Pastor Sprang (davidsprang@mittensynod.org), and Bishop Satterlee (bishopcraigsatterlee@mittensynod.org) maintain their own schedules.

You may download bulletin inserts about the synod, bishop, and assistants to the bishop at <https://www.mittensynod.org/resources/publications/>

Honorarium

Congregations regularly ask whether the bishop and his assistants require or expect to be paid an honorarium for preaching. The bishop and his assistants do not receive honoraria for preaching and leading worship in the congregations of our synod. They are compensated through mission support to the synod from congregations and individuals.

Particularly when the bishop or an assistant serves as “supply pastor” due to vacancy or vacation, generous congregations often make a gift to the synod for mileage and even the amount of a supply, pastor. These gifts are appropriately given to “staff travel.”

Depending on the distance the bishop or an assistant is traveling, generous congregations frequently provide a hotel room for Saturday night.

Indeed, Bishop Satterlee is Legally Blind!

Bishop Satterlee generally leads worship from memory, including the appointed gospel and Prayer of the Day, as well as the sermon and Eucharistic Prayer. Memorizing is a prayerful and time-consuming discipline for the bishop. The bishop’s schedule does not afford him time to commit “new” liturgies beyond those in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* and *Lutheran Book of Worship*. Even the seasonal resources intended to compliment *LBW* and *ELW* in *Sundays and Seasons* require time the bishop increasingly does not have to commit to memory. As a liturgical scholar, the bishop is aware that the church does not bless the resources in *Sundays and Seasons* in the same way that our worship books are, and these resources have on occasion raised concern in our synod. Where possible, the bishop therefore prefers the liturgy be taken from *ELW* or *LBW*.

Bishop Satterlee appreciates receiving a complete leader’s book (14-point font) with all prayers, liturgies, and hymns for the service in the document (to avoid the need to switch back and forth to a hymnal) on the Tuesday of the week prior to the visit. Please indicate what the bishop is doing in the liturgy. Please email the leader book to bishopcraigsatterlee@mittensynod.org.

The leader’s book from Bishop Satterlee’s installation is posted as an example:
<https://craigasatterlee.com/bishops-visits>

When every word of the liturgy is printed in the bulletin or worship folder, or projected on a screen, the bishop has experienced people following along closely to test his memory and then pointing out his “mistakes” to him after worship. While the bishop understands the reasons for printing and projecting everything, he is concerned that people reading along, rather than watching what is done and listening to what is said, quenches the Holy Spirit, in the same way that going to the theater and reading the script rather than watching and listening to what is happening on stage diminishes one’s experience of a play. Moreover, “testing” and pointing out “mistakes” to any worship leader—including the bishop and especially children—after worship is impolite and unnerving to worship leaders. The bishop humbly suggests congregations print or project only what worshipers need to participate with ellipses (...). The bishop is increasingly inviting the assembly to put their bulletins down to watch and listen, and explaining that when the bishop’s words differ from what is printed, the bishop’s words are “right.” In fact, since the bishop has a reservoir of liturgical texts in his head and at his disposal, he has been known to spontaneously yet intentionally change the liturgy.

The bishop appreciates spending some time in the worship space prior to worship to become familiar with it and to go over exactly what he is doing in the liturgy.

In synod worship, we have found appointing a “bishop’s chaplain” very helpful. The bishop’s chaplain serves no liturgical function beyond assisting the bishop as guide, escort, prompt, and to sit with and hold things (book, miter, pastoral staff). The bishop’s chaplain frees the other leaders to be about their tasks and relaxes the congregation. A quality leader other than the pastor fills this role very nicely during the bishop’s visits to congregations.

For additional guidance on being helpful and sensitive to the bishop as a person who is legally blind, please consult the documents:

- “Indeed, Bishop Satterlee is Legally Blind”
- “Hosting Craig”

Both of these documents are available at <https://craigasatterlee.com/bishops-visit>

Or ask the bishop directly. Asking others about the bishop in this regard is impolite; he instructs his staff to answer, “That’s a great question to ask the bishop.”

COVID-19

Bishop Satterlee takes COVID-19 very seriously. He carries and frequently wears a mask. He is not yet hugging, even at the exchange of peace. He is not always comfortable eating in a congregational setting.

The Service

The bishop’s practice is to use the appointed propers for the day, including all three readings and the psalm from Revised Common Lectionary, which “serves the unity of the Church, the hearing of the breadth of the Scriptures, and the evangelical meaning of the church year” (UMG 7A). Whenever there are choices among the readings, for example, during Eastertide, you will need to consult with the bishop ahead of time what will be read. Similarly, since the bishop prepares sermons well in advance, kindly consult with the bishop when other readings, such as the Narrative Lectionary or topical preaching, are being used.

In keeping with our Lutheran tradition, leaders of worship should reflect the priesthood of all believers as well as the ministry of rostered ministers. The bishop’s strong insistence that leaders other than the bishop or the pastor lead those parts of the service designated for the assisting minister is indicative of his commitment to the priesthood of all believers—the foundational baptismal identity and vocation that unites us—and not a sign that he cannot lead an entire service by himself because he is legally blind.

The bishop vests in the color of the day or season according to the calendar in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. He ordinarily wears a clerical collar (purple), alb, and stole when he preaches and a chasuble when he presides at Holy Communion. He also wears the pectoral cross and episcopal ring, since these were given at his installation. The bishop will wear the cope and miter

and carry the crosier when requested or appropriate. Yet, the bishop's goal is always to proclaim Christ. When he visits your congregation, if wearing something different helps people to receive the good news of the gospel, please let him know.

Read Bishop Satterlee's explanation of these vestments at: <https://craigasatterlee.com/bishop>

The bishop will make every effort to arrive no less than 30 minutes before the first service. It is helpful to have a designated place to park, since he and Cathy need to carry vestments and other materials into the building. When possible, it is also helpful to provide a space, such as a classroom, for the bishop to set up and prepare. After traveling, sometimes for several hours, the bishop's first stop upon arriving is the restroom. Please give him and Cathy time to do this.

Cathy Satterlee will assist the bishop in setting up the crosier and vesting. She will sit (or hover) in the back of worship, to be available to the bishop if needed, and will not participate in anything confidential, even if invited. The bishop and Cathy schedule time to relax and worship together in faith communities where the bishop is not the bishop.

Since the bishop is focused on worship and concentrating on the sermon and liturgy, conversations on other matters are best had after the service.

In most worship spaces, the bishop does not need to wear a microphone. He does not tone down his voice to accommodate the sound system. The sound person should be apprised of this in advance.

The bishop appreciates being prayed for or leading prayer with worship leaders (and choir) prior to worship.

The bishop does not make parish announcements. The bishop appreciates being recognized but not welcomed as a "special guest," since he is the synod's pastor. Cathy also appreciates being recognized during the announcements.

When there is a procession, custom directs that the bishop enters and leaves last. He appreciates knowing whom to follow.

The bishop understands the Prayer of the Day as the "collect"—the prayer offered by the presiding minister that symbolically "collects" the preparatory prayers of the faithful. Historically, this is not a unison prayer. The appointed prayers in *LBW* and *ELW* are not constructed so that the assembly can pray them in unison. If the bishop is not to pray the Prayer of the Day because the congregation is, he needs to know that in advance. The bishop reserves the right to include a secondary Prayer of the Day.

The bishop ordinarily proclaims the gospel when he preaches the sermon. He is happy to provide a children's sermon, which generally is about his role as bishop, and is grateful to have an adult whom the children know join him. Alternatively, the bishop does not want to displace someone for whom the children's sermon is a cherished ministry and with whom the children are more comfortable.

In keeping with the practice in our worship books, the bishop prefers that, whenever possible, a cantor lead the Kyrie and hymn of praise, and an assisting minister distribute the offering plates and receive the offering, set and clear the table, pray the offertory and post communion prayers, and lead the dismissal. The cantor and assisting minister are often the same person.

The bishop prefers to select the Eucharistic Prayer and to sing the Great Thanksgiving, including the preface.

The bishop distributes bread or hosts.

In keeping with *The Use of the Means of Grace*, the bishop's default practice is to commune baptized children. Children and adults who receive a blessing can aid the bishop by folding their arms across their chests when they come forward.

The bishop can name theological justification for the presiding and assisting ministers receiving Holy Communion both first and last. He respects congregational practice, though his default is to commune the leaders first. The bishop finds both intinction and small communion glasses personally difficult to navigate. He therefore drinks from the cup, which may commend the bishop communing last.

Teaching

The bishop is a teacher of the church and Bishop Satterlee's background is as a seminary professor with expertise in preaching, worship, spirituality, stewardship, mission, managing change, leadership, the Gospel of John, and evangelism. With enough notice, he is happy to teach what might be helpful in your setting, formally or informally. He regularly leads a question and answer forum following worship. This can also be part of a coffee hour.

Rostered and Elected Leaders

With notice, Bishop Satterlee is happy to schedule time with rostered leaders and their families, and/or elected congregational leaders, as part of his visit.

Welcoming an Assistant To The Bishop

Our practice is to use the appointed propers for the day, including all three readings and the psalm from Revised Common Lectionary, which “serves the unity of the Church, the hearing of the breadth of the Scriptures, and the evangelical meaning of the church year” (UMG 7A). Whenever there are choices among the readings, for example, during Eastertide, or when other readings, such as the Narrative Lectionary or topical preaching are being used, you will need to consult with the assistant to the bishop ahead of time.

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The assistants to the bishop appreciate receiving a complete leader’s book (14-point font) with all prayers, liturgies, and hymns for the service in the document (to avoid the need to switch back and forth to a hymnal)—on the Tuesday of the week prior to the visit so they have time to review it, answer questions and discuss concerns, and prayerfully prepare to lead worship.

The leader’s book from Bishop Satterlee’s installation is posted as an example: <https://craigasatterlee.com/bishops-visit>

Please indicate what the assistant to the bishop is doing in the liturgy. Please email the leader book directly to the assistant to the bishop; their email addresses are provided in this customary under Scheduling a Visit.

The assistants to the bishop will make every effort to arrive no less than 30 minutes before the first service. After traveling, sometimes for several hours, their first stop upon arriving is often the restroom. Please give them time to do this.

The assistants to the bishop appreciate spending some time in the worship space prior to worship to become familiar with it and to have someone go over exactly what they are doing in the liturgy. Since the assistants to the bishop are focused on worship and concentrating on the sermon and liturgy, conversations on other matters are best had after the service.

Assistants to the bishop vest in the color of the day or season according to the calendar in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. They ordinarily wear a clerical collar, alb, and stole. If wearing something different helps people to receive the good news of the gospel, please let them know.

The assistants to the bishop appreciate being prayed for or leading prayer with worship leaders (and choir) prior to worship.

In keeping with *The Use of the Means of Grace*, our default practice is to commune baptized children. Children and adults who receive a blessing can identify themselves by folding their arms across their chests when they come forward.

Given notice, the assistants to the bishop are eager to teach and consult in their areas of expertise and responsibility.

Questions

The bishop expects this customary will evolve; it is different today than it was when first written. The bishop also recognizes that every worship service and every worship space is unique. If you have questions or concerns, please contact the Synod Office to schedule a conversation with Bishop Satterlee or contact his assistants directly.