

The Episcopal Diocese of Montana

BISHOP'S CUSTOMARY

Revised 21 April 2010

This customary is issued by the Bishop of Montana with the advice and consent of the Standing Committee and after review by the regional canons. Its purpose is to promote our common life and worship in a clear and uniform way. Most of the following material is from the canons of the General Convention, the rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer, the canons of the diocese, or widely-held professional standards.

1. LITURGY AND CHURCH MUSIC:

- a. All services of public worship must be from the Book of Common Prayer; rubrics should be carefully observed, and any changes whatsoever in the text are not permitted. Use of the Book of Occasional Services and Lesser Feasts and Fasts is encouraged.
- b. Occasional use of Enriching Our Worship is permitted, but requires the permission of the Ordinary and should be used as outlined in the Preface. EOW liturgies should not be used more frequently than the Book of Common Prayer.
- c. The celebrant should preside at both the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of Holy Communion.
- d. During the Great Thanksgiving, only one chalice should be seen on the altar.
- e. When there are sufficient clergy they should administer both cup and paten; lay Eucharistic ministers can be used when only one cleric is available.
- f. An Order for Celebrating the Holy Eucharist ("Rite III") is not intended for use on Sunday morning services or weekly celebrations; careful preparation is required before it can be used.
- g. Deacons, if available, should function liturgically according to the rubrics. Also note that deacons are responsible for delivery of the sacrament to the hospitalized and shut-in on Sundays; Eucharistic visitors are to be used only in the absence of a deacon.
- h. All liturgical ministers should be carefully trained, should be chosen from exemplary confirmed members of the congregation, and should have been a member of the church for at least two years.
- i. Hymns should come from authorized hymnals only as of September 2008. The General Convention has authorized the following: Hymnal 1982, Hymnal 1940, Wonder Love and Praise, Lift Every Voice, and With One Voice.
- j. Only baptized persons may commune, and statement of that fact should be made clear to the congregation either in print or orally.
- k. All congregations should use the Revised Common Lectionary. Only Bible translations authorized by the General Convention may be used.
- l. If used, children's sermons should be based on the appointed readings, be directed to the children, and not be patronizing or sentimental in tone. In considering the use of children's sermons, note that they are not mentioned in the Book of Common Prayer or the canons, and are, therefore, not encouraged.
- m. All matters of liturgy and church music are under the direction of the local Rector or Vicar. (For the sake of this document, rector is defined as the priest of a self-supporting parish, and a vicar is the priest of an assisted congregation.)

- n. 'Deacon's masses' are discouraged. Authorization by the Ordinary is required, and may be granted in special circumstances.
- o. Special worship services and devotions not in the Book of Common Prayer need authorization of the bishop.
- p. Out of respect for the sacred rites of another religion, Seder meals are discouraged unless they are led by a rabbi or other Jewish leader.
- q. All lessons should be read from a sizable Bible or lectionary, not service leaflets.
- r. All persons being Confirmed, Received, and Reaffirming their baptismal vows should be thoroughly instructed before being presented to the bishop.
- s. If the church has a bishop's chair, the rector or vicar as representatives of the bishop are welcome to sit there. Otherwise, the chair should not be used by anyone else, and should be kept clear of books, papers, Bibles, etc.
- t. Only a priest gives blessings to persons at the altar rail.

2. **OF THE CLERGY:**

- a. A priest or deacon may not function in another congregation without the permission of the rector or vicar. No cleric may function in a church of another denomination without the permission of the bishop. Only clergy of the Episcopal Church may function as officiant in an Episcopal Church liturgy, including weddings and funerals.
- b. Clerics need the authorization of the Ordinary to pursue any form of secular employment, to marry, and to retire. It is a customary courtesy to consult with the bishop when seeking a position in another congregation.
- c. Non-stipendiary clergy, non-parochial clergy, and retired deacons and priests should make a report of official acts performed during the year; this report is due at the end of December. This is required by canon.
- d. All clergy are expected to have a spiritual director and a Rule of Prayer, which should include provision for regular retreats and quiet days.
- e. Drunkenness, profanity, and gossip are always inappropriate.
- f. When functioning in any official capacity, clergy need to dress in clerical attire, and behave in a professional manner. These are ways to show respect to the people being served and to the ordained ministry to which the cleric is called.
- g. Duties of the rector or vicar are detailed in III.9.6 in the Canons of the General Convention. All clergy need to have completed anti-harassment, anti-sexual abuse, and anti-racism training in order to function in the diocese.
- h. Clergy are encouraged to volunteer services at Camp Marshall. Work at Camp is not to be seen as vacation or continuing education.
- i. Annual continued education is now mandated by the General Convention. Sabbaticals are encouraged. Guidelines for both have been issued by the Commission on Ministry.
- j. Clergy should have a Letter of Agreement with the church/s being served. This is not a contract, but a covenantal document describing mutual responsibilities. Note that the priest does not 'work' for the Vestry, but works with the Vestry under the supervision of the bishop. A mutual ministry review should be a part of the Letter; this involves the Vestry and the priest in shared evaluation on an annual basis not to coincide with yearly fund drives or salary negotiations. All Letters of Agreement need the signature of the bishop.
- k. All church records are canonically the responsibility of the priest. These include records of services, baptism, confirmation, reception, marriage, burials, and communicants. The priest should maintain an up-to-date list of members of the church. They are to be inspected by the bishop at every official visitation.

- l. In order to maintain a sense of the college of presbyters and the community of deacons, clergy are expected to attend diocesan convention, clergy conference, deanery meetings, and clericus meetings. Attendance at ordinations and clerical funerals within two hours of their homes is expected. While retired clergy are always welcome at these events, their attendance is not required.
 - m. The canons require that the clergy of this church teach stewardship and biblical tithing. Further, clergy should tithe or be working toward the biblical tithe.
 - n. Pathways is no longer a ministry of or supported by the bishop.
 - o. Clergy of the diocese are expected to abide by the Church's teaching regarding sexual behavior (sexual activity is to be confined to marriage).
 - p. Unmarried clergy shall not date members of their congregation/s.
3. **ASSISTANT CLERICS AND OTHER COMPENSATED PARISH EMPLOYEES:**
- a. Assistant priests and other paid staff, ordained or not, are under the supervision of the rector or vicar.
 - b. An ordained assistant is called by the rector with the consent of the Vestry. When the rector resigns, all ordained persons must submit resignations unless requested to continue to serve *ad interim* by the Vestry and under conditions laid out by the bishop and Vestry.
4. **PRIESTLY VACANCY:**
- a. When the rector or vicar wishes to resign, permission of both the Vestry and bishop are needed. At the time of the resignation the wardens are canonically required to give written notice to the bishop within thirty days.
 - b. During the vacancy the diocese will provide a list of priests authorized to do Sunday supply work.
 - c. The process of searching for a new priest is based on canon law. Soon after the departure of the priest, the bishop or the Canon to the Ordinary will meet with the Vestry to detail the call process. No plans should be made by the Vestry until after this initial meeting.
 - d. An interim rector or vicar may be appointed by the bishop after consultation with the wardens.
 - e. A priest is canonically allowed 30 days to make a decision about accepting a congregation's call to serve as rector or vicar.
 - f. Priests of the diocese should make no public judgments about the necessity for interims, the qualities of the priest needed by the parish, the call process, or any other matter before, during, or after a vacancy in a pastoral cure.
5. **CLERGY RETIREMENTS:**
- a. Permission of the Vestry and Bishop are needed to retire. Planning for this event should involve both the Vestry and Bishop. Deacons need the permission of the bishop to retire.
 - b. At the time of retirement, the rector or vicar will take the initiative to end all professional, pastoral and priestly ties with the people of the congregation, and will decline invitations to be involved in the life of the congregation. Involvement in the life of the parish should not take place until after one year following the arrival of the succeeding incumbent and only at his or her invitation.
6. **VESTRIES:**
- a. The rector or vicar presides at Vestry meetings.

- b. In the absence of the rector or vicar, a Vestry meeting may take only with the permission of that priest and only after he or she has approved the agenda.
- c. The Vestry is responsible for the developing and passing an annual budget; congregational meetings are not canonically empowered to pass a budget.
- d. The Vestry also is responsible for the upkeep of the building and property. The rector or vicar is solely responsible for the liturgy and music, and has the absolute right to use of the building and to scheduling use of same. By canon the rector or vicar has access to all records of the church.
- e. Buying or selling of property and encumbering debt needs the authorization of both the Standing Committee and the bishop.

7. MARRIAGES:

- a. All marriages are scheduled and planned by the rector or vicar. The priest has the right to refuse to marry a couple without stating the reasons for the refusal.
- b. All marriages require at least three pre-nuptial counseling sessions, which should include, among other things, the church's theology of marriage as stated in the Book of Common Prayer. All marriages require a 30 day waiting period.
- c. The rector or vicar officiates at all marriages; other Episcopal clergy may officiate at the invitation of the priest (and with the authorization of the ordinary if they are not part of the Diocese of Montana). Clergy of other denominations may assist in appropriate ways at the invitation of the priest.
- d. Remarriages require special authorization from the Ordinary. Allow 60 days for the bishop to respond. The canonical forms are available from the diocesan office. Normally, third marriages will not be authorized by the bishop.
- e. The liturgy must come from the Book of Common Prayer without emendation. Music during the liturgy should be sacred and dignified in character.

8. FUNERALS:

- a. Funerals in the church building rather than a funeral home are encouraged.
- b. The coffin will be closed during the funeral liturgy.
- c. Only one eulogy by a family member or friend is permitted by the rubrics, but this practice is not encouraged.
- d. The funeral service is a liturgy of the resurrection, and that fact should be reflected in the bulletin, the homily and music for the service. Contrarily, funeral services are not 'celebrations of the life' of the deceased, but rather celebrations of the victory of Christ over death and the grave.
- e. Military and Masonic rites may take place before or after the church liturgy, but not during the liturgy.

9. ALCOHOL:

- a. Use of alcoholic beverages at church functions should be carefully monitored. It should be limited to beer and wine. Other sorts of non-alcoholic beverages should be easily available. In publicity, avoid focusing attention on the beer or wine (for instance, do not use "beer and pizza" or "wine and cheese" to attract participation at the event).

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