What is the role of a bishop?
A bishop is one of the three orders of ordained ministry in the church; the others are priest and deacon.

The traditional role of a bishop is as chief pastor of a diocese. That means he or she is called to represent Christ to the church and is charged with guarding the faith, unity and discipline of the Church. The bishop provides pastoral care to the clergy and to the laity and is the chief teacher of the faith. The bishop is called to proclaim Christ to the world and to serve as a vehicle for reconciliation. The bishop also exercises a ministry of oversight and supervision and hold “jurisdiction” in their diocese. In fact, this ministry of oversight is echoed in the term, episcopal, which is derived from the Greek episcopos and means overseer.

A bishop coadjutor serves with the diocesan bishop and has the right of succession when the diocesan bishop retires. The bishop generally is the chief celebrant at worship services. In the Episcopal system, the bishop has jurisdiction over clergy discipline, the ordination process and financial matters as well as other duties assigned by the canons.

Only a bishop can ordain a bishop, priest or deacon. Only a bishop can confirm or receive someone into the church. In addition, only a bishop can consecrate a space for worship. Bishops bless altars and fonts, and the blessing of chalices, patens and church bells are traditional reserved for the bishop.

Why do bishops generally wear purple?
One simple explanation is that the “color coding” helps people differentiate between bishops and priests and deacons. Priests and deacons traditionally wear black shirts, while bishops wear purple. So why purple?

Some believe that bishops wear purple to remind themselves and others to repent and prepare for Christ’s second coming. Others believe that the purple color for bishops is derived from the ancient tradition of reserving the color purple for royalty and others in authority. Purple dye was a rare and valuable thing in the ancient world; the Bible speaks of Lydia of Tyre who was “a seller of purple,”
and Jesus told a story about “a rich man who was clothed in purple.” Finally, some think that because in the book of Exodus (39:1), Aaron’s vestments are described as being made of blue, purple and crimson yarns, bishops ended up with the magenta shade of purple that is most commonly seen today.

**Source:** Carol E. Barnwell/Director of Communications, Diocese of Texas, epicenter.org