

Vestry Resource Guide Summary

Vestry Responsibilities

- Vestry members are legal representatives and agents of a parish, charged with specific responsibilities by the canons of The Episcopal Church.
- They share specific leadership responsibilities with the rector.
- As legal representative and agent, the vestry functions much like the board of any nonprofit, with responsibility for finances and management of property and human resources.
- Many aspects of the vestry's role are defined by entities beyond the congregation—local, state, and federal laws, and diocesan and Episcopal Church canons—as well as by the church's own constitution and bylaws.

You are called to this ministry

- Your call means working collaboratively with fellow vestry members and the rector to create a vision and action plan reflecting God's dream for the congregation.
- It means cultivating congregation-wide conversations about where God is calling your faith community.
- It means balancing your role in discerning God's mission and vision with sound stewardship of its property and resources.

Rector's Responsibilities

- Worship and spiritual life
- Selection and oversight of all assisting clergy
- Use and control of all buildings and furnishings, as delimited by the canons
- Education of all ages in the scriptures; the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the Church; and in the exercise of ministry as baptized persons
- Stewardship education for all ages
- Preparation for baptism, confirmation, reception, and reaffirmation
- Announcing the bishop's visit with the warden and the vestry and providing the bishop with information about the congregation's spiritual and temporal state
- Applying contributions not otherwise designated from one Sunday per month to charitable uses
- Reading communications from the House of Bishops at worship
- Recording all baptisms, marriages, confirmations, and burials in the congregation register

Vestry Responsibilities shared with the Rector

- Discernment of God's call
- Identification of new leaders
- Stewardship and development of resources
- Nominating people for ordination

Rector as host of Vestry meetings

- Understands that it takes the creativity and commitment of everyone to move forward
- Pays attention to group dynamics and guidelines
- Supports and encourages the team
- Helps the team learn from mistakes
- Measures and celebrates the team's progress
- Honors the goodwill, energy, and faith that the vestry brings to difficult decisions

Vestry meeting norms

- Meetings (length, attendance, cell phone usage, agenda procedures)
- Discussion (listening, handling debate/disagreement, courtesy, respect)
- Confidentiality (balanced with the need for transparency)
- Accountability (everyone's responsibility)

All decisions need a plan and followthrough

- Clear goals and expectations
- A timeline with defined milestones or checkpoints
- Regular communication to the congregation on goals and progress using multiple channels
- A method for seeking support from stakeholders and critics
- A method for selecting people for each task involved and holding them accountable
- A way to measure results and evaluate impact on the congregation

Everything should begin with “Why?”

- The challenges of tight budgets, leaky roofs, and community criticism need to be seen in the light of Christ's own mission for our congregation
- They must be understood in relation to a hopeful vision of our church's future
- The vestry's work in mission and vision is ongoing and adaptive. The Spirit is ever on the move, and we are called always to be open to new directions, new possibilities, and new life