

FIDUCIARY DUTIES OF THE VESTRY

Serving your Parish and making it stronger

The Vestry as Fiduciary for the Parish

The Vestry acts on behalf of the Parish and must do so in good faith and in the Parish's best interests.

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE SCOPE OF THE VESTRY'S RESPONSIBILITIES

The Vestry is responsible, whether by oversight or direct action, for the sound management of the Parish. Certain aspects of its job are defined for it by secular and Canon law.

Under our Canons, the Vestry “shall be **agents and legal representatives of the Parish in all matters concerning its corporate property and the relations of the Parish to its Clergy.**”
(Title 1 Canon 14.2)



- To make decisions in the best interests of the Parish, each Vestry and vestry member must obtain and understand matters relevant to Parish property, finances, insurance, and personnel.
- You can find training and educational resources on the Diocesan and the Episcopal Church websites and the Diocese is always available to direct you and help you.

SECULAR AND CANON LAW DEFINE THE VESTRY'S ROLE

- The Vestry's work is defined in some respects by secular and Canon law, which identifies certain the Vestry **may not do** and **things it must** do

The Vestry Cannot

Meet in the absence of the rector, or the priest in charge

Have members under 18 or who are not Episcopalians

Unless you first get Diocesan approval

- 'alienate' church real estate for more than a year (e.g., this includes leases, mortgages, easements, sales of land) without complying with Canonical requirements
- remove or destroy consecrated property
- Amend the Parish articles of incorporation
- Borrow money in excess of the limits in the Canons (currently in excess of 150% of the annual income)

A Vestry must
comply with
the Canons
governing the
protection and
management
of Parish assets

Parish endowments and accounts must be maintained in a secure bank or other financial institution

Parish accounts must be kept using good accounting and business practices, including appropriate financial controls

The Rector and other Parish employees must be offered the minimum salary and benefits set by Canon

Parish real assets must be insured (and other insurance is also a good idea)

Preparation and submission of accurate Parish reports

The Vestry
must manage
and maintain
the Parish

Pay bills

Approve expenditures

Arrange for the maintenance of Parish
property and assets

The Vestry
Must Ensure
Parish
Compliance
with secular
laws

Each Parish has different characteristics but here is a list of the laws that may be relevant to your Parish

APPLICABLE LAWS

- Rector or other staff are employed
- You engage independent contractor services (organists, landscapers, etc)
- Parish operates a day care or leases facilities to a day care
- Parish operates special camps for children
- Parish engages in bingo or similar games of chance for fundraising
- Parish leases property to third parties
- Parish maintains a cemetery
- Parish permits community groups to use its facility for meetings
- Parish has real estate which may be subject to tax

The Vestry must lead by example and engage the Congregation

Attend the vestry meetings and should be active in the Congregation

Arrange for and conduct the Annual Meeting

Attend services and encourage others to participation in Parish mission and life

The Vestry may need to address Pastoral Care issues— and can access abundant Diocesan resources when needed

- the Parish is without a rector, has no full-time rector or is starting a search for a new Rector.
- The Vestry will need to ensure that the Pastoral needs of the Parish and its congregation are being met.

The Parish
Mission – when
you are done
looking inward,
look around

A vestry may oversee the Parish mission and it may lead the Parish forward to a more robust future

We call the elected leaders at the Parish a “Vestry” because they originally met in the sacristy, where the rector kept vestments and religious articles used for church services

Let the
name be a
reminder
Vestry

You are a VESTRY – the name given to secular leadership in the Anglican Communion because the original Parish secular leaders would meet in the sacristy, where the priest or rector would prepare for services and maintain the vestments worn and religious articles used.

Our religious mission.

After you have organized the internal Parish operations, start to look outside the Parish to your community. You are, after all, a Parish dedicated to the work of the Episcopal Church.

Members of your congregation, people working for the Diocese and the participants in your Deanery are all important resources to you and your Parish.

Reach out and let them reach out to you.

This year, we really have to grow as a parish. Are you with me?

I am, as long as no one sits in my pew.

I am, as long as no one suggests any changes in the liturgy.

I am, as long as I still know everyone's name.

I am, as long as everyone knows my name.

I am, as long as I don't have to listen to noisy kids.

I think I better look for a new church!

