
BASIC ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE VESTRY/BISHOP'S COMMITTEE AND ITS WORK

PRESENTED BY THE REV. CANON ELLEN EKEVAG

AGENDA FOR TODAY

- Presentation 1: Bishop- The Church Moving Forward
- Presentation 2: Ellen – Basic Assumptions

WHAT THE CANONS SAY...



AT A MINIMUM THE ROLE OF THE VESTRY/BISHOP'S COMMITTEE IS TO ACT AS....

- “agents and legal representatives of the parish in all manners concerning its corporate property (including financial) and the relations of the parish to its clergy.”
- The vestry shall ensure that standard business methods will be observed.
<https://www.episcopalchurch.org/finance-office/manual-of-business-methods/>
- When a parish is without a Rector, the officers of the vestry are responsible for the continuation of worship, including the calling of a new rector.
- Vestries are also charged with reviewing and recommending people for Holy Orders.

THE PRIEST IS RESPONSIBLE FOR....

- Worship and music
- The “spiritual jurisdiction of the parish”: Teaching and preparing people for sacraments, teaching the faith, instructing parishioners as to proper stewardship of creation as well as the biblical standard of the tithe in their use of time, talent and treasure
- “is entitled to the use and control of the Church and Parish buildings”
- Oversight, with the option of presiding over vestry meetings as an expression of the priest’s oversight function
- Oversight of hiring, firing and managing staff

A VARIETY OF ROLES CAN BE PLAYED BY WARDENS

Typically, the role of warden is to collaborate with the priest(s) on:

- Shaping vestry discussions/meetings relative to the role the vestry is playing in the parish
- Leading relationally with other vestry members and with congregational members. The wardens should work with the priest for the overall health and effectiveness of the congregation.
- In some congregation, wardens take on more specific functions.
- Priest and Wardens should always be a united front.



HOW VESTRIES/ BISHOP COMMITTEE'S CAN FUNCTION

	Vestry Focus	Broader Implication	Time Needed	Rector's Focus	Other Notes
Option 1 Canonical Basics	Oversees finances and property	Strategic work and ministry development through the Rector.	Meeting once a month Vestry works on issues between meetings	Rectors strategize alone or with individual groups	Vestry members also participate in other ministry groups This option is heavily dependent upon the Rector.
Option 2 More Power and Resp. taken on by Vestry	Vestry Members chairs/oversees ministry areas. Vestry and Rector ties things together	Vestry responsible for strategic work, approving and overseeing all ministry efforts	Vestry, Committee and Planning Meetings required.	Rector works directly with vestry- and spends less time with groups and individuals	This can create a sense of an organized parish. It can also create an "in" crowd and Vestry Members report a higher rate of burn out.
Option 3 More Power and Resp. out in the cong.	Vestry approves and supports a team structure. Teams carry out needed functions Vestry members serve on the teams (often in a liaison role)	Cong's strategy and dev. Emerges and is created with parish collaboration with rector. Cong. energy focused on teams	Vestry meets once a month And Is Updated and Supports teams.	Rector interacts with teams making sure things are integrated into a coherent whole	This approach encourages each member to engage in a ministry. Communication & coordination becomes a key cornerstone and can often be where problems arise

SOME BEST PRACTICES TO CONSIDER...



PRACTICES OF PRAYER AND STUDYING SCRIPTURE

“PRAYER IS THE BUSINESS OF THE CHURCH”
HOW ARE WE INVITING GOD INTO OUR CONVERSATIONS?



PRIEST AND WARDENS TO MEET AT LEAST ONCE A MONTH

TO SET VESTRY/BISHOP COMMITTEE AGENDA, TROUBLESHOOTING, TALK ABOUT NEXT
STEPS AND PROCESSES AND HOW'S IT GOING... WHAT ARE WE WORRIED ABOUT,
WHAT ARE WE LONGING FOR...



AT THE BEGINNING OF VESTRY MEETINGS CHECKING-IN AND LISTENING

It doesn't need to take long:

- One word that describes where you are right now?
- Name one joy and one grief.
- What is one interesting thing that happened to you this week?
- What did you do last weekend?



PARTICIPATORY DECISION MAKING

THINK THROUGH DECISION MAKING PROCESSES



VESTRY SIZE

CANONS SAY NOT FEWER THAN 6 NO MORE THAN 15
(INCLUDING WARDENS.) CONSIDER THE SIZE OF YOUR
VESTRY AND SEE IF IT'S STILL A GOOD FIT FOR THE SIZE
OF YOUR CHURCH.



PUT THE MOST
IMPORTANT TOPICS AT THE
TOP OF THE AGENDA



SHARE WHAT YOU HEAR, BUT NOT ANONYMOUSLY

WE NEED TO OWN OUR VOICES AND OPINIONS, AND LEADERS (INCLUDING PRIESTS) CAN'T RESPOND OR FOLLOW UP IF THEY DON'T KNOW WHO IS SPEAKING.



DON'T WAIT FOR VOLUNTEERS, INVITE PEOPLE
INTO MINISTRY.

MEET PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE AND INVITE
THEM TO GO DEEPER.

PEOPLE WANT TO BE RECOGNIZED FOR THEIR GIFTS AND SKILLS



COMMUNICATE...COMMUNICATE... COMMUNICATE

HOW ARE WE MAKING WHAT WE DO TRANSPARENT, KEEPING
PEOPLE “IN THE KNOW”, AND BRINGING PEOPLE ALONG.
THINK ABOUT COMMUNICATION SCHEDULE AND CREATING A
REGULAR TIMES TO DO TOWNHALLS AND RECEIVE FEEDBACK



LOOK OUTSIDE YOUR DOORS

HOW ARE WE STAYING CONNECTED TO THOSE IN OUR
COMMUNITY? WHO ARE OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS IN
MISSION AND MINISTRY?



**“WE LIVE IN THE WORLDS OUR QUESTIONS
CREATE.”**

- DAVID COOPERRIDER

**“ORGANIZATIONS GROW IN THE DIRECTION OF
WHAT THEY REPEATEDLY ASK QUESTIONS
ABOUT AND FOCUS THEIR ATTENTION ON.”**

-GERVASE BUSHE

WHAT DOES YOUR VESTRY TALK ABOUT THE MOST?



CELEBRATE INCREMENTAL WINS!

RECOGNIZE AND CELEBRATE SMALL WINS, THE INCREMENTAL CHANGES, AND WHEN
YOU TRY SOMETHING NEW!



WHAT WOULD BE A BEST
PRACTICE THAT YOU WOULD
ADD?