



TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH

VESTRY HANDBOOK

THE VESTRY IS THE LAY LEADERSHIP TEAM WHICH WORKS WITH THE RECTOR TO OVERSEE THE CHURCH.

THE OFFICIAL DEFINITION OF THE VESTRY IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IS
“A COMMITTEE ELECTED BY MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION TO SERVE
WITH THE WARDENS IN MANAGING THE TEMPORAL AFFAIRS OF THE
CHURCH”

THE VESTRY IS THE BODY WITHIN A CONGREGATION THAT LEADS THE PARISH. MEMBERS OF THE VESTRY ARE ELECTED BY THE CONGREGATION AT ITS ANNUAL MEETING IN JANUARY AND SERVE A TERM OF THREE YEARS. IN PRESERVING TRADITIONS FROM THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, TRINITY HAS TWO WARDENS, GENERALLY REFERRED TO AS “SENIOR” OR RECTOR’S WARDEN AND “JUNIOR” OR PEOPLE’S WARDEN, A TREASURER, A CLERK, AND EIGHT VESTRYMEMBERS.

THE SENIOR WARDEN IS THE MEMBER OF THE VESTRY WHO CAN CONVENE AND CHAIR VESTRY MEETINGS WHEN THE RECTOR IS ABSENT. THE JUNIOR WARDEN IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE STEWARDSHIP OF THE CHURCH’S BUILDINGS AND PROPERTY.

THE VESTRY LOOKS AFTER THE BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF THE CHURCH, FINANCE, BUILDINGS, AND MAINTENANCE.

VESTRY MEMBERS MUST BE AT LEAST 16 YEARS OF AGE AND BE CONFIRMED COMMUNICANTS IN GOOD STANDING.

Trinity Episcopal Church, January 2017

Dear Vestry Members,

Thank you for responding to God's call to serve Trinity Church as a member of the Vestry. Yours is an important role in the life of this parish. You have been called by your fellow parishioners to exercise leadership and oversight.

It is important that you remember several things. You are called to be both a generalist, acting with concern for the overall health and vitality of the parish, and also a specialist, responsible as a liaison with a specific ministry area (or "commission") at Trinity.

First, you have been called to a ministry. This is not a job, and it should not be a burden, but an experience of growing in faith and joy. You have been asked to serve the members of your parish. You are in a position to help them grow in their knowledge and love of the God. As you help guide the parish in its work, you also help to guide its people in their spiritual journeys. Every aspect of the life of the parish, from child care to window washing, from choosing hymns to raising funds, affects the life of the entire parish, and our primary purpose of supporting God's mission in the world.

Second, you have not been asked to do it all. Your position is that of an enabler, or facilitator. You are asked to lead and guide, not to be the one doing all the work. The Church is most effective when all of its members work together. It is your responsibility to help them work together. If you try to do it all yourself, you will soon burn out.

Third, you are not alone. Your fellow Vestry members, and especially the Senior and Junior Wardens, are here to help you. Feel free to call on former Vestry members who have worked in your specialty area as well. They can give you insight and guidance on what has and has not been done in the past. The Rector is here to provide you with direction and experience. And God is always with you. Be prayerful in your work and it will prosper.

Fourth, communication is a key to success. Don't keep things a secret. Share your thoughts, ideas, plans, frustrations, etc. with the Rector, Wardens and other Vestry members. We are all in this together.

With God's help we will all prosper.

Faithfully,

The. Rev. Paul J. Carling, PhD
Interim Rector

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VESTRY COMMISSIONS

Each year in early February, the Vestry participates in a retreat to discern its main focus areas for the year. Vestry commissions are formed, goals and objectives are set, and chairpersons are selected to implement commission work. They report their progress on a monthly basis to the entire Vestry. Additionally, written reports summarizing the year's activities are submitted at the end of the year to be included in the Annual Report. Depending on the needs of the Parish, such commissions might include: Communications, Education, Facilities, Fellowship & Church Growth, Finance, Inreach, Outreach, Pastoral Care, Stewardship, Worship, etc.

GENERAL COMMISSION GUIDELINES

- Each Commission should seek to have a Vestry chairperson and a non-Vestry co-chairperson. It is expected that the co-chair may eventually become a Vestry member.
- It is the responsibility of the Vestry chairperson to recruit members for the Commission, with the guidance of the Rector and Wardens.
- Each Commission should have a minimum of two members, not including the chairpersons.
- Commissions should strive to meet on a monthly basis. It is essential that the time, date, and place of the meetings be cleared with the Rector and the Parish Administrator to avoid scheduling conflicts and to help publicize the meetings and activities of each Commission.
- Any activities or projects that may affect the buildings, grounds, or other activities of the church should be cleared with the Rector so as to avoid conflicts and to keep the lines of communication open.
- If Commissions anticipate the need for Vestry authorization for any projects or plans, it is recommended that such be put in writing and given to the Parish Administrator at least one week prior to regular Vestry meetings.
- Commissions should expect to report to the Vestry on their regular activities. It is preferred that this be done in writing on a monthly basis. These reports should be submitted to the Parish Administrator at least one week before regularly scheduled Vestry meetings.
- All Commissions should expect to prepare an annual report, to be submitted in writing to the Parish Administrator no later than two weeks before the Annual Meeting of the Parish (third Sunday in January).
- Commissions wishing to have material published in *The Trumpet* should submit the same to the church office no later than the 15th of the month preceding its publication.
- Several Commissions have mail boxes in the church office. It is important that

chairpersons check these boxes on a weekly basis. There is also a general "Vestry" mailbox and one for the Wardens. These should be checked regularly.

- It is hoped that each Commission will seek opportunities to make itself and its purposes known to the parish. It is a general parish goal to have every member of the parish involved in some capacity in some Commission. Full incorporation is our goal. People need not be actual "Commission members" in order to be involved in the work of the Commissions.
- A list of the Commission members should be posted in the Sunday bulletin, on the bulletin board, and in *The Trumpet*.
- The Wardens share the responsibility of overseeing the various Commissions. It is their responsibility to see to it that Commissions meet on a regular basis. Each warden will be responsible for overseeing an equal share of Commissions. When formed, the Rector oversees the Worship Commission and is the ex officio member of all Commissions.
- Any Commission seeking to expend funds should do so only with the guidance of the Treasurer depending on the amount of the expenditure. Requisition forms are available for requesting funds and reimbursement.

GENERAL VESTRY GUIDELINES

- Vestry members, according to the Canons of the Episcopal Church, are expected to have been confirmed or received into the Episcopal Church.
- It is expected that each member of the Vestry be the chair of one of the Commissions. When there are less than seven Commissions, it is expected that one or more of the Commissions (excluding Worship) will be co-chaired by two Vestry members.
- Vestry members are expected to attend all Vestry meetings. In the event that you are not able to attend for any reason, it is important that you call the church office to notify the Rector of your intended absence. In order to conduct business, a quorum (seven) must be present. In the event that it is known that a quorum cannot be present, the meeting will be rescheduled.
- It is the duty of the Clerk to prepare the minutes as soon as possible after the meeting.
- If you are aware of any business that will be presented, it is essential that the Rector or Wardens be notified at least one week in advance so that this business may be added to the agenda. The Vestry meeting is no place for surprises.
- Each Vestry member will receive an agenda during the week before the Vestry meeting. Agendas and minutes of previous meetings should be brought to each meeting.
- The Handbook should be brought to each meeting.
- In the event that a Vestry member should find it necessary to resign before the

completion of their term, such resignation must be put in writing and given to the Rector or Wardens.

- Vestry members are asked to only bring to Vestry meetings business that pertains to the whole Vestry. If there are questions about any Commission activities, whenever possible, they should be posed to the appropriate chair outside the meeting.
- It is the responsibility of the Vestry to make decisions that affect the life of the parish, based on the research, advice, and counsel of the Commissions, the Officers, and the Rector.
- In the event that the entire parish must be notified of something in a short period of time, depending upon the subject of the notification, the Parish Administrator will send electronic notification to those parishioners having internet access and will notify the media. Vestry members will be asked to call parishioners without internet access. A phone list will be provided.