

Vestry Roles

- The Canons of the **Episcopal Church** (TEC) states that the Vestry
 - Shall be agents and legal representatives of the Parish in all matters concerning its corporate properties; and the relations of the parish to its clergy (I.14.2)
 - Ensures that standard business methods are observed (I.7.1)
 - When the parish is without a rector, responsible for the continuation of worship, including the call of a new rector (III.9.3)
 - Has responsibility for nominating people for Holy Orders (III.5.2)
- In **Southwest Florida**, Canon VII “Of Congregational Governance” provides...
 - “Congregation” can refer to a Parish or a Mission
 - “Congregational Council” can refer to a Vestry or a Bishop’s Committee
 - Member of the Congregational Council:
 - Serve until their successors are elected and qualified
 - Shall not remain as a member for more than six consecutive years
 - Minimum number is five
 - Responsibilities: the Congregational Council
 - Selects a Junior Warden
 - Selects a Secretary
 - Does not need to be a member of the Congregation
 - Takes and maintains minutes
 - Attests to public acts
 - Preserves all records and papers belonging to the Congregation
 - Selects a Treasurer
 - Does not need to be a member of the congregation
 - Furnish a bond of a suitable amount
 - Books and accounts shall be audited annually
 - Office of Secretary and Treasurer may be the same person

Presider: TEC Canon I.14.3 specifies that the Rector (or a Vestry person designated by the Rector) presides. The Presiding officer:

- Conducts the Vestry Meeting
- Serves as a principal communications link to the Vestry regarding diocesan and Episcopal issues, concerns and events.

Wardens: (1604 England) Refers to an official charged with the enforcement of specific canons and the bylaws of the congregation. The Warden is the person with the keys and a responsibility to unlock the church for worship.

TEC Canons assign a particular duty to the Wardens: If the clergy person in charge of a congregation is absent, or disabled and unable to give consent to another member of the clergy to officiate at the worship services of the congregation, then one of Wardens is responsible for giving consent (III.9.6.b.1)

In Southwest Florida, the Wardens are elected. From among those elected,

- Rector chooses the Senior Warden
- Vestry chooses the Junior Warden.
- Wardens are appointed annually
- Wardens may not serve for more than three years

Sample Job descriptions (from the Vestry Resource Guide and canons)

Vestry members

- Have a love of God and demonstrate a commitment to following the way of Christ
- Be active in and knowledgeable about the Congregation a, its programs and governance
- Be fair, interact with people and strive to earn the respect of the members of the congregation;
- Strive to check your ego at the door
- Strive to be a servant of the people
- Have enthusiasm for this ministry

- Time Commitments:
 - Vestry meetings, Committee work
 - Vestry Retreats
 - Weekly worship
 - Congregational events
 - Diocesan meetings as necessary
 - Annual Parish meeting

- Episcopal Church Canons
 - Be aware that the vestry is legal agent and representative of the congregation
 - Insure that standard business methods are used
 - When the parish is without a rector, be part of the process to continue corporate worship and participate in the call of a new rector

- Diocesan Canons
 - Protect the properties of the congregation
 - See to it that all things needed for the orderly worship of God and for the administration of the sacraments of the Church be provided
 - Take charge of the real and personal properties of the Congregation
 - Keep them fully insured
 - Provide for the remuneration and reimbursement of the clergy and employees serving the congregation
 - Prepare a budget for the congregation
 - Keep order in the church during the celebration of Divine worship (VII.5.b)

Senior Warden Job Description

In addition to general Vestry expectations...

- *Elected to the Vestry at the annual meeting*
- *Selected by rector as Senior Warden for one (1) year*
- *Not to exceed three (3) consecutive years*

- Time commitments
 - Weekly meetings with the rector (Wardens and staff), if required

- Responsibilities
 - Meet regularly with the rector to review the life and work of the congregation, plan ahead, anticipate and resolve problems
 - Provide leadership in the congregation so that the vestry can identify the vision, mission and goals of the congregation, make and implement plans, assess progress and celebrate achievements
 - Provide leadership in the congregation by demonstrating a consistently positive attitude that seeks to solve problems, recognizes accomplishments and gives thanks for those things that build the community and further the mission of the Church
 - Able to discuss any and all concerns with rector; maintain confidentiality as appropriate
 - Available to discuss concerns with members of the congregation; avoid making hasty judgments; avoid “triangles” by encouraging complainants to speak directly
 - Foster understanding, forgiveness and reconciliation, in cases where the rector staff or vestry is beleaguered or unfairly criticized;
 - Ensure that policies and procedures are in place and reinforced regarding employee and volunteer misconduct; take and questions, concerns, and complaints to the rector and/or appropriate authorities immediately;
 - Support the rector in taking action when employees or volunteers are charged with misconduct on inappropriate behavior;

- Additional Responsibilities
 - (TEC Canon) If the clergy person in charge of a congregation is absent, or disabled and unable to give consent to another member of the clergy to officiate at the worship services of the congregation, then one of Wardens is responsible for giving consent
 - (Diocesan Canon - Unless otherwise described in the bylaws and In the absence of the clergy in charge) shall preside at the meetings of the congregational Council;
 - Take action to intervene promptly (with others as appropriate) in the event that the rector is charged with misconduct, has problems with drugs or alcohol

- Accountability
 - Accountable to the rector and vestry
 - Accountable under any “behavioral covenants” approved by the vestry
 - Should be party to any annual mutual ministry review

Junior Warden Job Description

In addition to general Vestry expectations...

- *Elected to the Vestry at the annual meeting*
- *Selected by Vestry as Junior Warden for one (1) year*
- *Not to exceed three (3) consecutive years*

- Time commitments
 - Weekly meetings with the rector (Wardens and staff), if required

- Responsibilities
 - Assist the rector and senior warden in pursuit of the vision for the parish
 - Provide leadership in the congregation so that the vestry can identify the vision, mission and goals of the congregation, make and implement plans, assess progress and celebrate achievements
 - Work closely with the rector and senior warden in providing overall leadership in the congregation by demonstrating a consistently positive attitude that seeks to solve problems, recognizes accomplishments and gives thanks for those things that build the community and further the mission of the Church

- Property matters (if the junior warden is not responsible for property matters, it is advisable to have a designated individual or committee charged with building and property management)
 - Understand property maintenance needs
 - Work with service people, recruit and motivate members to take responsibility for maintenance work
 - Establish and oversee seasonal maintenance of all equipment (HVAC, etc.)
 - Oversee annual safety checks
 - Review insurance needs with Treasurer and Insurance agent and revise as needed
 - Establish/oversee process for securing contractors as needed
 - Chair (or work with chair) of any Maintenance Committee
 - Chair (or work with chair) for any appointed group for new construction or property acquisition
 - Consult with vestry and rector regarding the acceptance of gifts of real property to the congregation

- Other responsibilities: (Unless otherwise described in the bylaws) (In the absence of the clergy in charge and the Senior Warden) shall preside at the meetings of the congregational council

- Accountability
 - Accountable to the rector and vestry
 - Accountable under any “behavioral covenants” approved by the vestry
 - Should be party to any annual mutual ministry review

Treasurer

- *Elected by Vestry annually*
- *Does not need to be a member of the congregation*
- *Must be bonded of a suitable amount*
- *Books and accounts shall be audited annually (September 1 deadline per TEC Canon)*
- *May also hold the office of Secretary/Clerk while Treasurer*

- Time commitments:
 - Weekly oversight of collections and deposits
 - Bill payment oversight
 - Monthly accounting reports

- Responsibilities
 - Oversee the collection, counting and deposit of all contributions to the congregation, ensuring that at least two (2) persons are present for same
 - Oversee treasurers of all other accounts, ensuring established accounting procedures and safeguards
 - Work with any designated committee to ensure that adequate insurance is maintained on all real and tangible property
 - Determine that books and accounts of the congregation are kept in accordance with standard accounting procedures and the requirements of the canons
 - Ensure the congregation's financial operations are in accord with the Episcopal Church and diocesan canons, the bylaws and state and federal law
 - Ensure that congregations deeds and other instruments of ownership are secure and maintained in the manner described by canon and civil law
 - Ensure that anyone serving as custodian of and congregational or organizations funds over \$500 is bonded by a professional bonding insurer
 - Meet regularly with rector, wardens and/or staff to planning and evaluation
 - Develop (if one does not exist) and serve on the Finance Committee
 - Assist in the development of budgets
 - Be available to consult with other committees that might need help in planning budgets or other assistance in financial matters
 - Submit monthly report to the vestry and an annual financial report to the congregation
 - Make appropriate contributions and sign the Diocesan Parochial Report

- Accountability:
 - Accountable to the rector and vestry
 - Accountable under any "behavioral covenants" approved by the vestry
 - Should be party to any annual mutual ministry review

Secretary/Clerk

- *Elected by Vestry annually*
- *Does not need to be a member of the congregation*
- *May also hold the office of Treasurer while Secretary/Clerk*

- Time commitments
 - Distribution of agenda and minutes for previous meetings
 - Maintain a roster of members and contact information

- Responsibilities
 - Take notes during Vestry meetings and, afterward, prepare and distribute minutes
 - Maintain a file of all vestry meeting minutes
 - (if so requested and as provided by the Bylaws) take minutes fo the annual congregational meeting
 - Prepare, date, sign and maintain documents as required

- Accountability
 - Accountable to the rector and vestry
 - Accountable under any “behavioral covenants” approved by the vestry
 - Should be party to any annual mutual ministry review

By Laws

Diocesan Canon VII.2.a: A Congregation may adopt bylaws for the governance of the affairs of the Congregation. Bylaws that conflict with the provisions of the Constitution or Canons of the Episcopal Church shall be void. Unless these Canons grant specific authority to the Congregation to adopt an alternative provision, bylaws that conflict with the provisions of the Constitution or Canons of this Diocese shall be void...

Bylaws may:

- Govern the selection of Lay Delegates and Alternate Delegates to Diocesan Convention
- Specify the date of the Annual Meeting

Bylaws shall:

- Provide rules governing the right of a person to vote at an annual meeting
- Specify the number of persons serving on the congregational council, which must consist of at least five (5) electors
- Provide for the orderly succession of persons serving on the congregational council
- Provide for the selection of wardens of the Congregation

The Canons (Episcopal Church / Diocese) do not provide a means to remove a person from a Congregational Council. Congregational bylaws could provide for such removal.

Bylaws need to reflect adoption by the Rector and Congregational Council. If at all possible, Congregational Council members should sign it. They should then be approved at the next Annual Meeting, and approval should be recorded. A copy must be filed with Diocesan House, recording the Bishop has approved of the form of the document.