Vestry Responsibilities and Structure

Based on Church Canons

The vestry of any Episcopal parish has four (4) primary responsibilities. It serves as the legislative authority for the parish and shall transact all of the temporal business of the parish. The primary responsibilities are:

- Take care of the parish finances
- Care and maintain parish facilities
- Choose parish leadership;
  -- Interview and call a Rector
  -- Elect delegates to the Annual Diocesan Convention
  -- Establish parish committees/task forces
  -- Appoint representatives to parish school board and/or community boards
- Assist the Rector in the nurture and extension of Christ’s Church.

The legal standing of a Parish Vestry is drawn from three sources: Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church, the Charter and Canons of the Diocese of Alabama, and parish customs and publish vestry policies.

CONSTITUTION AND CANONS OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

I, 6, Sec. 1: Annual report of membership and finances is a joint task with the Rector. (Parochial Report which must be signed by the Clerk of the Vestry, the Treasurer and Rector)

I, 6 Sec. 1: Assist in showing parish records to the Bishop and for reporting on the state of the parish and other information as requested by the Bishop.

I, 7, Sec.3: Cannot sell or mortgage church property with the consent of the Bishop.

III, 5, Sec. 2c: Certify parish members applying to go to seminary by a 2/3 majority of the vestry.

III, 9, Sec. 3c: Give approval for all assistant clergy selected by the Rector

III, 9, Sec. 3a: The Wardens will notify the Bishop when the parish is without a priest and take measures to make provision for services of public worship within 30 days.
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**III, 9, Sec. 6d**: Notify the Bishop if clergy in charge is unable to fulfill his/her office and give consent to Interim clergy assistance.

**III, 9, Sec. 3a3**: Written notice on the election of a rector and signed by the wardens shall be forwarded to the Ecclesiastical Authority.

**III, 14**: By majority vote, a vestry may petition the Bishop to intervene and assist a parish resolve any disagreement or dissension between a priest and parish.

**III, 15, Sec. 1**: Gives consent to the resignation of a Rector and recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

**CHARTER AND CANONS OF THE DIOCESE OF ALABAMA**

Canon 9 of the Charter and Canons of the Diocese of Alabama relates to the Parish and Vestry. This canon defines a Parish is Section 1 and deals with the Vestry in Sections 2, 4, 5 and 6:

**Sect. 2(a) MEMBERSHIP:**
The vestry shall consist of not less than three (3) nor more than thirty (30) lay communicants of the Parish qualified to vote at the Parish meeting, elected at a Parish meeting for the term of no longer than three (3) years, with nearly as may be, but not more than one-half (1/2) of the terms expiring simultaneously. No member shall be eligible to serve again on the same vestry until the expiration of one (1) full year after such service, except that a member elected for an unexpired term of less than one (1) year shall be eligible for re-election on the expiration of that term. Vacancies on the vestry may be filled by vote of a majority of the remaining members of the vestry for the period until the next Parish meeting at which members of the vestry are elected. Members of the vestry shall be communicants who are qualified to vote in a Parish meeting, provided that all of its members under the legal age of the majority shall not constitute a majority of the vestry and shall not be entitled to vote on any matter legally requiring action by persons of a stated age, as to which matters the members over the legal age of majority shall constitute the entire vestry. A Senior Warden and one or more Junior Wardens shall be elected annually by the Vestry from among its members.

**Sect. 2 (b) AUTHORITY:**
The Rector, when present, shall preside (or designate the member of the Vestry to preside) at all meetings of the Vestry and shall be entitled to cast the deciding vote in case of a tie. In the absence of the Rector, the Senior Warden, or in the absence of the Senior Warden, a Junior Warden, shall preside if the Rector has failed to designate another presiding officer. The Vestry shall assist the Rector in the nurture and extension of Christ’s Church. The Vestry shall have the legislative authority for the Parish and shall transact all of its temporal business. The Vestry shall be responsible for furnishing, preserving and adequately insuring the Parish property, including all items necessary for public worship, for maintaining adequate Parish records; and for managing the financial resources of the parish. The Vestry shall maintain order and decorum during the time of public worship. There shall be at least six Vestry meetings in each year, and reasonable notice of meetings of the Vestry shall be given to the Rector and the members of the Vestry. No meeting shall be valid in which there shall not be present either the Rector or one Warden except for the purpose of electing Wardens if there be no Rector or Wardens. No acts of the Vestry shall be valid unless taken at a valid meeting by a majority of the actual membership of the Vestry.

Sect. 4 PARISH OFFICERS
The Vestry shall elect a Clerk, Treasurer and such other officers of the Parish as it may deem appropriate. The vestry shall define the duties of the Wardens and other officers of the Parish.

Sect. 5 USE OF CHURCH PROPERTY
The Church and Parish buildings of the parish may be used, under the direction of the Rector, for all services, rites, ceremonies and other purposes not contrary to the traditions or directions of the Episcopal Church, and at such times as the Rector, or when there is no Rector, the Vestry, may deem proper.

Sect. 6 PARISHES ENTERING INTO UNSECURED DEBT
No parish shall enter into unsecured debt in an amount in excess of ten percent (10%) of the Parish’s net disposable income, as reported on its prior year’s parochial report, except with the written consent of the Bishop and Diocesan Council.