Lining the Field

SETTING NORMS FOR CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL, VESTRY, BISHOP’S COMMITTEE

2014 Diocesan Vestry Retreat, May 10, 2014

Sources

The Canons of the Episcopal Church
The Canons of the Diocese
The Vestry Resource Guide
Consultation with Chancellors
The Episcopal Church

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).
  - Also note Diocesan Canon VI.6.b: Congregation’s congregational council and the Diocese shall develop a mutually acceptable plan for calling a person to the position
- Has responsibility for nominating people for Holy Orders (III.5.2)

Diocese of Southwest Florida

In **Southwest Florida**, Canon VII “Of Congregational Governance”

- “Congregation” can refer to a Parish or a Mission
- “Congregational Council” can refer to Vestry or 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 for the Congregational Council is five
Diocese of Southwest Florida

- Responsibilities (Diocesan Canon VII): the Congregational Council Elects Junior Warden
  - Elects 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
  - Elects 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
  - Secretary and Treasurer may be the same person

A Note on Presiding

TEC Canon I.14.3 specifies that the Rector (or a Vestry person designated by the Rector) presides. Note that the Wardens are not automatically assumed to be the presider. The Presiding officer:
  - Conducts the Vestry Meeting
  - Serves as a principal communications link to the Vestry regarding Diocesan and Episcopal Church issues, concerns and events. (From The Vestry Resource Guide)

Diocesan Canon VI 1.b.1 “Clergy” duties includes chairing the Congregational Council
Wardens

Originally (1604 England)
- The person with the keys
- Responsibility to unlock the church for worship

(The Vestry Resource Guide) Refers to an official charged with the enforcement of specific canons and the bylaws of the congregation.

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 (Canon VII “Congregational Governance”), Wardens chosen from those elected to the Congregational Council
- Wardens are appointed annually
- Wardens may not serve for more than three years
- Rector chooses the Senior Warden
- Vestry chooses the Junior Warden
- See “Job Descriptions” for more information

Bylaws

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...

This canon provides that bylaws may:
- Govern the selection of Lay Delegates and Alternate Delegates to Diocesan Convention
- Specify the date of the Annual Meeting (subject to Diocesan canon)

This canon provides that 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
Bylaws

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.

Questions?
Job Descriptions

Sample Job Descriptions for Vestry, Wardens and officers were included in your advance mailing. When writing a job description always remember:

- Time Commitments
- Responsibilities
- Accountabilities

Discussion time: In your parish groups, please take 15 minutes to discuss the sample job descriptions to see how they might apply in your own setting.

From Canonicity to Creativity

Creating a Behavioral Covenant

All leadership groups have norms. In many congregations, the norms are unwritten and usually discovered by tripping over them. You know when you’ve done this when you hear:

- “We’ve never done it that way before”
- “We’ve always done it this way”
- “We tried that once and it didn’t work”

It is tough to pull the team together if there is no established set of norms. This is especially true for new members. A behavioral covenant sets certain norms into written form.
Behavioral Covenant: Member

As a member of St. Swithin’s Church and the Body of Christ, with God’s help, I promise to:

- Keep myself informed about and participate in the life of the parish.
- Listen in order to understand one another, and to respect each others views.
- Express myself honestly and respectfully, focusing on issues, not personalities.
- Support parish decisions reached by the appropriate process.
- Remain mindful of our continual need for God’s grace and especially, of the need we all have for forgiveness.

Behavioral Covenant: Vestry

We seek to follow God’s will in our lives and provide a safe environment where viewpoints are welcomed, sought, heard and respected. Therefore, Vestry members covenant to be:

- OPEN to discerning God’s will through attention to Scripture and to hearing the opinions of others
- POSITIVE and constructive, focusing on important goals, issues and problems, not on personalities
- RESPECTFUL, receptive, patient and understanding listeners, creating opportunities for everyone to express their needs, viewpoints, opinions, and passions
- HONEST and responsible in expressing oneself directly and with sensitivity
- TRUSTFUL and presume that each person is well intentioned
- TOLERANT and seek to understand our differences and, if necessary, be able to agree to disagree
- READY to forgive, as well as to accept God’s Forgiveness, and the forgiveness of others

Doing this with Christian love will focus our words and actions on the common good of the congregation, while welcoming diversity and differences, trusting God’s guiding Spirit.
Discussion time

Using the samples provided, what values would make for a good “Behavioral Covenant” with the Vestry you now serve?

Group debrief after 15 minutes

Review

Which of the following does NOT belong?
Review

Which of the following does NOT belong?

The Canons of the Episcopal Church (TEC) states that the Vestry

1. 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
2. Ensures that standard business methods are observed
3. Shall continue the operation of the Parish Moonshine Still in the event of Junior Warden’s imprisonment
4. When the parish is without a rector, responsible for the continuation of worship, including the call of a new rector
5. Has responsibility for nominating people for Holy Orders
Review

Which of the following does NOT belong?

In **Southwest Florida**, Canon VII “Of Congregational Governance” provides...

1. “Congregation” can refer to a Parish or a Mission
2. “Congregational Council” can refer to a Vestry or a Bishop’s Committee
3. Member of the Congregational Council:
   1. Serve until their successors are elected and qualified
   2. Serve until Jesus comes again with power and great glory to judge the earth
   3. Shall not remain as a member for more than six consecutive years
   4. Minimum number is five
Review

Which of the following does NOT belong?

Responsibilities: the Congregational Council (Diocesan Canon VII)

1. Selects a Junior Warden
2. Selects a Secretary
   1. Does not need to be a member of the Congregation
   2. Takes and maintains minutes
   3. Attests to public acts
      1. Preserves all records and papers belonging to the Congregation
3. Selects a Treasurer
   1. Does not need to be a member of the congregation
   2. Anybody’s OK. After all, we are in the Forgiveness business, aren’t we?
   3. Furnish a bond of a suitable amount
   4. Books and accounts shall be audited annually
4. Office of Secretary and Treasurer may be the same person
Why do all this?

Honor Our Tradition
Build for the Future
Mercy in Mission