

**St. George's Episcopal Church, Clifton Park, NY**  
**Covenant for Vestry Members and other Elected and/or Appointed Leaders**

Church leadership includes many of the traits of organizational leadership, yet takes them a step further. Like all leaders, church leaders are called to motivate and inspire others to achieve the vision and mission of the organization. Church leaders are also called to do so from a spiritual basis and to center their understanding of the vision and mission on the idea of living into their spiritual calling from the Lord and helping others to do so as well.

**I/We do not work alone:**

- We will attend the annual vestry retreat to ensure full understanding of our mission and goals.
- We will participate in major parish events to ensure visibility and to reinforce the event's importance in the life of our parish.
- We will create and nurture a safe and trusting atmosphere in which all members can feel comfortable and confident in expressing their thoughts and opinions.
- We will be sensitive to the different styles and personalities of individual members.
- We will validate, appreciate, acknowledge, and understand the unique and special gifts of each member.

**I/We will uphold our baptismal covenant by:**

- Speaking and acting so that we build up and support one another. *"speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ."* Ephesians 4:15 (NIV)
- Confronting issues without demeaning anyone
- Refusing to initiate or participate in gossip or rumors about anyone
- Not making accusations against any church leader
- Maintaining confidentiality in regards to vestry business and be willing to prayerfully seek the wisdom to know when this is appropriate.
- Confronting with love, individuals who have hurt us in any way
- Following St. Matthew's principle (Matthew 18: 15-17) for conflict resolution between individuals: speak first to the individual alone; if to no avail, ask another (vestry member and/or clergy) to meet with both of you; if necessary, refer the matter to entire vestry
- Practicing forgiveness; forgiving those we feel have wronged us and accepting the forgiveness of others
- Encouraging and supporting those who are suffering through trials or challenges
- Nurturing a servant attitude; realizing our role is to serve God, God's church, and God's world.

**I/We meet reasonable expectations:**

- We will regularly attend Vestry meetings – having not more than three unexcused absences during a year – so we represent everyone in our work.

- We will make and keep an annual pledge to demonstrate our commitment.
- We will adequately prepare for meetings in advance to ensure active participation and successful consideration of the actions before us
- We will provide timely information to support effective communication
- We will offer honest expression of support or concern to facilitate consideration of each issue
- We will use "I" statements to reflect ownership of our ideas and opinions.
- We will respect each other's opinions.
- We will strive toward consensus.
- We will support decisions agreed upon by the Vestry.
- We commit to bringing unresolved issues/divergent opinions back to Vestry meetings for further discussion.
- We agree to be time-sensitive during discussions at Vestry meetings.
- We will honor any member's call for prayer and/or silence during Vestry meetings.
- We will use emails selectively, and all written correspondence sending copies to all Vestry members and clergy.
- Respond to conflict
- Understands the political realities of the church and congregation.
- Are familiar with the satisfactions and pinches experienced by members, newcomers, and visitors in the church today. ???
- Work well with the pastor/priest.

**I/We will do nothing without prayer:**

- We will attend worship regularly so we experience prayer in community with the congregation which means that we will be in attendance for worship unless we are sick, working, or out of town.
- We will participate in Christian study opportunities to promote growth in our understanding of our mission and ministry.
- We will use prayer to help us overcome differences and provide spiritual direction.
- We will pray regularly for all those in the St. George's Episcopal Church community, particularly clergy, vestry members, and other church leaders
- We will pray for the bishop and those who serve the wider Church

**I/We will remain outwardly focused:**

- We will actively solicit and gather information from parishioners to facilitate consideration of all aspects of parish life.
- We will seek participation from others outside the vestry to fill leadership roles so we might strengthen our foundation.

**Our agreement to which I willingly and respectfully commit:**

- We will faithfully strive to fulfill these obligations. If we fall short, we will renew our intention. If we repeatedly find we cannot meet these expectations, we will acknowledge that we are not providing the leadership expected of our position and seek assistance from our priest. If we find that we continue to be unable to meet the expectations of our position, we will resign our position so that it can be filled by others.
  
- We will also look to the greater whole and, after prayerful consideration, counsel any fellow member who is clearly not living into this covenant. If a vestry member does not live up to expectations, after counseling, he/she may be asked to resign or may be removed from office. As members of the vestry, we each accept that encouraging and ensuring appropriate participation from all vestry members is part of our responsibility. We are responsible for our actions and choices while also being responsible to one another in those actions and choices.

**Respectfully Resolved,**

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Clergy / Vestry Member / Lay Leader

Date