

# **Vestry 101**

## **Module 3: Concrete Responsibilities**

### **Rev. Brian Winter**

*The text of this section of the video is below. Please refer to it as necessary as you reflect on and answer the following questions about your leadership goals & needs.*

1. In what ways are you a praying body?
2. Are you up-to-date on your fiduciary responsibilities and requirements?
  - a. Follow appropriate accounting procedures
  - b. Complete and review annual audits and Parochial Report (please see <https://episcopalcolorado.org/congregational-resources/finance-administration-resources/>)
3. Are you up-to-date on your Safeguarding requirements and trainings? (please see <https://episcopalcolorado.org/safeguarding-training/>)
4. Are your legal and canonical documents up-to-date?
  - a. Letters of Agreement for clergy and staff
  - b. Bylaws
  - c. Letter of Incorporation
  - d. Annual non-profit certificate (please see <https://episcopalcolorado.org/congregational-resources/finance-administration-resources/>)
5. Have you done a recent Mutual Ministry Review? (If not, please contact Ann Fleming at the Bishop's Office for assistance.)
6. Do you have a clear mission and vision for your congregation, and for yourselves as a leadership body?
7. Do you have clear and written policies for how to handle conflict and/or change?

### **Concrete Responsibilities**

Here's a summary and review of some of the more concrete things a bishop's Committee or Vestry is called to do:

*Be a People of Prayer*

First and foremost, the Vestry or Bishop's Committee should be **people of prayer**, holding the church, the ministries and members of the church as well as the leadership in their daily prayers.

- The Vestry is the governing body of the church. You have fiduciary responsibilities for the church.
- The Vestry/Bishop's Committee sets and approves the annual budget for the congregation
- Monthly they review the financial statements and make sure proper accounting procedures are being followed.
- They make sure that annual audits are taking place and they sign off on the annual Parochial Report.
- The Vestry is the decision-making body of the church. This is what you have been elected or appointed for.

#### *Diocesan Canons & Procedures*

Bishop Committees and Vestries are also there to make sure that the Episcopal Church and Diocesan Canons and procedures are followed, such as:

- Making sure the Safeguarding requirements and trainings are being up held.
- Appointing delegates to Diocesan Convention—at least one vestry member is supposed to be a delegate to Convention

They are also tasked with maintaining and updating legal and Canonical Documents such as:

- Letters of incorporation, Bylaws, letters of agreements with staff and clergy,
- And completing that all important annual non-profit certificate with the state.

#### *Partnership with Clergy*

The Bishop's Committee or Vestry is called to walk along side of the Rector and Vicar in the mission and ministry of the church. While the priest does have Canonical responsibility for the spiritual and temporal care of the parish, this responsibility works best when all are working for that common goal.

- The Priest should have a good and clear Letter of Agreement with the congregation
- **The Clergy presides at each of the Vestry or Bishop's Committee meetings unless she or he appoints the warden to take on that task.**
- Working together to both cast and implement the mission and vision of the church is the work of the clergy as well as the elected members. Actually, it is the work of all the body of Christ, but the Vestry and Bishop's Committee in conjunction with the clergy have been tasked with that specifically.
- The Vestry and Bishop's Committees are not called for the daily operations and management of the congregation, but that overall governance and vision setting of the congregation.

#### *In times of clergy transition*

- It is the Vestry who elects a new Rector, who is then called by the Bishop
- While it is the Bishop who appoints a new Priest-in-Charge, or the Vicar of a Mission Congregation, the Vestry or Bishop's Committee works alongside the Bishop and her or his staff in that process.

### *Healthy Vestry Roles*

Some important things to help keep things working in a positive and Christ-centered way are:

- Support the congregation to fulfill its mission and purpose both in action and prayer
- Speak only to those items within its scope of governance or purpose
- Each member owns the decisions of the whole regardless of personal vote – **build consensus and make sure each decision is the best for the larger body and then support your brothers and sisters in Christ.**
- Engage constructively with vestry peers – **Teamwork here!**
- Model scriptural principles of faithful leadership – **Be that Body of Christ that comes together to lift up the other and spreads the Good News of Christ into the world.**

### *Congregational Conflict*

Sometimes there is conflict in a congregation, and there are healthy and unhealthy ways to address it.

Having some policies BEFORE conflict erupts can be extremely helpful.

But also know that you are not alone. The Bishop and the Bishop's office is here for YOU and while they have not seen everything, they have seen many, many situations. Reach out to them sooner rather than later.

One tool that can be very helpful is the Mutual Ministry Review process, where the leadership looks at their MUTUAL MINISTRY, not just a performance review of the clergy. These are part of almost all Letters of Agreement and should happen at least every other year if not every year depending on the ministry context. It is a great diagnostic tool and a constant reminder that we are all in this together and it is not just one person's ministry that empowers and lifts up the Body of Christ.