

Sample Vestry Job Descriptions

Congregations should have written job descriptions for every position. Here we offer sample vestry job descriptions to customize for the needs of your faith community. We also recommend contacting your diocese for other examples.

General Job Descriptions for All Vestry Members

Vestry members should, to the best of their ability

- Have a love of God and demonstrate a commitment to following the way of Christ
- Be active in and knowledgeable about the congregation, its programs, and governance
- Be fair, interact well with people, and strive to earn the respect of the members of the congregation
- Commit themselves to the concept of partnership between vestry and clergy leaders, recognizing the success of an inclusive model of leadership relies on everyone's participation
- Offer talents to discern and support the congregation's mission and vision
- Be active ministers of the gospel in daily life and work
- Pledge financial support early in the annual or other campaign

Vestry members should be able to make the following time commitments

- Vestry meetings and committee work
- Vestry retreat(s)
- Weekly worship services, rotating occasionally if more than one is offered
- Congregational events: coffee hours, meals, fundraisers, Christian formation programs,
- Diocesan meetings as necessary
- Annual meeting

Episcopal Church canons stipulate the vestry shall

- *Be agents and legal representatives of the congregation in all matters concerning its corporate properties and the relations of the congregation to its clergy (Title Canon 14, Section 2).*

- *Ensure that standard business methods, as outlined in The Episcopal Church's Manual of Business Methods in Church Affairs, will be observed (Title I. Canon 7, Section 1).*
- *When a congregation is without a rector, the officers of the vestry are responsible for the continuation of worship, including the calling of a new rector (Title III. Canon 9, Section 3).*
- *The vestry has responsibility for nominating persons for holy orders (Title Canon 5, Section 2).*

Vestry members are responsible for

- Bringing one's whole self to the table: being present in mind, body, and spirit
- Risking openness with one's ideas, beliefs, and desires
- Praying daily for the rector, leaders, and members of the congregation

Senior Warden Job Description

The Canons of The Episcopal Church assign specific responsibilities to the senior warden and form the basis for their job description. These are in addition to the requirements and responsibilities of all vestry members.

Time commitment

- Weekly meetings with the rector, if required. These may be one-on-one or include the junior warden or church staff depending on the need of the congregation

Responsibilities

- Meet regularly with the rector to review the life and work of the congregation, plan ahead, and anticipate and resolve problems
- Provide leadership so the vestry can identify the mission, vision, and goals of the congregation; make and implement plans; assess programs; and celebrate achievements
- Provide leadership in the congregation by demonstrating a consistently positive attitude that seeks to resolve problems, recognizes accomplishments, and gives thanks for those things that build community and further the mission and vision of the church
- Be available to discuss any and all concerns with the rector and maintain confidentiality where appropriate
- Be available to discuss any and all concerns with members of the congregation; avoid making hasty judgments; and avoid triangulation by encouraging complainants to speak directly to those involved

- Foster understanding, forgiveness, and reconciliation, in cases where the rector, staff, or vestry is beleaguered or being overcriticized
- Ensure that policies and procedures are in place and enforced regarding employee or volunteer misconduct; immediately take any questions, concerns, and complaints to the rector and/or appropriate authorities
- Support the rector in taking action when employees or volunteers are charged with misconduct or inappropriate behavior
- 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, or is acting inappropriately; speak with the rector and the bishop
- Petition the bishop in writing on behalf of the vestry to intervene in cases where conflict imperils the pastoral relationship between the rector and the congregation
- Encourage the rector to take corrective steps as appropriate in cases where the rector is overworked, disregarding his or her health and well-being or the health of the rector's family
- Assist in the identification of persons for leadership roles and participate in inviting them to serve in those roles
- Be prepared to assist the rector or to step in and do what is necessary (represent the congregation at community meetings, take responsibility for preparing the church for special events, advocate on behalf of the congregation, etc.)
- With the rector, announce the bishop's pending visit and prepare information on the spiritual and temporal state of the congregation to be discussed during his or her visit (Title III. Canon 9, Section 5b)
- When the congregation is without a rector:
 - Notify the bishop promptly and make provisions for worship services (Title III. Canon 9, Section 6d)
 - Lead the congregation by ensuring that:
 - The worship services, program, and pastoral care needs are being met
 - The selection process for a new rector has begun
 - Employee relations and communications with the diocese are maintained
- Ensure the name of the person proposed to be called as rector is submitted to the bishop thirty days before the election is to be held and deliver written notice of the election of a rector to the

bishop (Title Canon 9, Section 3a (2&3))

- Prepare a Letter of Agreement with the proposed new rector, which outlines mutual responsibilities and is subject to the bishop's Check with your diocese for sample letters. (Title III. Canon 9, Section 3a (4))

Additional responsibilities

The following responsibilities may not apply in all congregations. They are often more applicable in smaller congregations, especially those without full-time clergy. In cases where the clergy's role is limited to providing Sunday services and pastoral care, the wardens may provide the primary leadership in the congregation. In some congregations, tradition dictates the senior warden provide more leadership.

- Conduct the vestry meetings in the absence of, or when delegated by, a rector or priest-in-charge. While the canons designate the rector as the one to preside at vestry meetings, he or she may delegate this responsibility
- Conduct the annual meeting. Again, the rector often does this but in some congregations, the senior warden takes this responsibility
- Make the Sunday morning announcements
- Visit anyone known to have a major problem with a program, vestry decision, clergy, etc. in consultation with, and often accompanied by, the rector

Accountability

The senior warden is elected and accountable to the rector and the vestry. In some dioceses and congregations, the rector selects the senior warden.

- Adopt the practice of creating a covenant (promise) in which both the rector and the senior warden agree on the roles and responsibilities of the warden. This should be developed, and then reviewed annually, in a conversation with the vestry and in place before the election/selection of the senior warden.
- The senior warden's ministry should be considered as part of the annual mutual ministry review of the congregation.

Junior Warden Job Description

Time commitment

- Weekly meetings with the rector, if requested

Responsibilities

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

In congregations where this position is responsible for property management and maintenance

- Have an understanding of property management and maintenance needs
- Have an ability to work with service people and to recruit and motivate members of the congregation to take responsibility for maintenance work
- Establish and execute a plan for and oversight of seasonal maintenance of all equipment (furnace, air conditioning, plumbing, kitchen facilities, office equipment, etc.)
- Establish and oversee a process for annual safety checks
- Review insurance needs with the treasurer and insurance agent; revise annually as needed
- Establish and oversee a process for obtaining the service of contractors as needed
- Chair or work with the head of a maintenance committee. If such a group exists, the above responsibilities may be delegated among the members with the warden providing primary oversight on behalf of the vestry
- Chair or work with an appointed group to oversee new building construction or renovation and property acquisition or disposal
- Consult with the vestry and rector on whether or not to accept gifts of real property to the parish

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.

Accountability

- The junior warden is elected and accountable to the rector and the vestry.
- Adopt the practice of creating a covenant (promise) in which both the rector and the junior warden agree on the roles and responsibilities of the warden. This should be developed, and then reviewed annually, in a conversation with the vestry and in place before the election/selection of the junior warden.
- The junior warden's ministry should be considered as part of the annual mutual ministry

review of the congregation.

Treasurer Job Description

These are in addition to the requirements and responsibilities of all vestry members.

Time commitment

- Weekly oversight of collections and deposits
- Periodic payment of bills
- Monthly generation of accounting reports

Responsibilities

- Supervise the collection, counting, and deposit of all contributions to the faith community, ensuring that at least two persons are present at all times during the collection and counting process
- Supervise the treasurers of all other accounts, ensuring that they follow established accounting procedures and appropriate safeguards (those accounts maintained by any organization/committee/task force that is part of the congregation)
- Ensure that bills are paid in a timely fashion
- Work with any designated committee to make certain that adequate insurance is maintained on all real property
- Determine that the books and accounts of the congregation are kept in accordance with standard accounting procedures and the requirements of the canons
- Ensure that the congregation's financial operations are in accordance with The Episcopal Church's and diocesan canons, congregational bylaws, and state and federal laws
- Ensure that the congregation's deeds and other instruments of ownership are secure and maintained in the manner prescribed by canon and civil law
- Ensure that anyone serving as custodian of any congregational or organizational funds over \$500 is bonded by a professional bonding insurer
- Meet regularly with the rector, wardens, and/or staff for 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 with financial matters
- Submit a monthly financial report to the vestry and an annual financial report to the congregation
- Make appropriate contributions to the diocesan parochial report

Accountability

- The treasurer may be elected or appointed as provided for by diocesan canon or congregational bylaws. The treasurer is accountable to the rector and vestry, and depending on the diocesan canon or congregational bylaws, may or may not be a member of the vestry.
- Adopt the practice of creating a covenant (promise) where the treasurer, rector, and the vestry agree on the roles and responsibilities of the treasurer. This should be developed, and then reviewed annually, in a conversation with the vestry and in place before the election/selection of the treasurer.
- The treasurer's ministry should be considered as part of the annual mutual ministry review of the congregation.

Secretary/Clerk Job Description

These are in addition to the requirements and responsibilities of all vestry members.

Time commitment

- Distribution of agenda and minutes from previous meetings
- Maintain roster of members and contact information
- Other duties as deemed necessary by the rector and senior warden

Responsibilities

- Take notes during vestry meetings and afterwards, prepare and distribute minutes
- Maintain a file of all vestry meeting minutes
- If asked, take minutes for the annual congregation meeting
- Prepare, date, sign, and maintain documents as required

Accountability

- The secretary/clerk may be elected or appointed as provided for by diocesan canon or congregational bylaws.
- The secretary/clerk is accountable to the rector and vestry.
- A covenant between the secretary/clerk, rector, and the vestry should be developed and reviewed annually.
- The secretary's/clerk's ministry should be considered a part of the annual mutual ministry review.

Additional sample vestry job descriptions are available on ECF Vital Practices (ecfvp.org/topics)
 (<http://ecfvp.org/topics>).