



**PROPOSED**  
**Parish Policy Paper**  
**of**

**The Anglican Church of Saint Nicholas**  
**A Member of The Anglican Province of America**  
**Diocese of the Eastern United States**  
**June, 2008**

This publication is intended to be used in conjunction with the Constitution and By-Laws of the Anglican Church of Saint Nicholas. Its purpose is to define parish policy in accordance with the articles of said constitution. The duties enumerated in this Policy Paper shall not in any case supersede the Canons of the APA or the Constitution and By-Laws of the Anglican Church of Saint Nicholas.

Within this stricture, all Vestry members and Parishioners agree to abide by this Policy in the governance of the Parish, unless and until amended by the Vestry.

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## The Vestry Defined

The Vestry is the legal governing, leadership, and planning body of the parish. It is the authoritative body of the Congregation and is subject only to the Diocesan and Provincial Church Canons. Its purpose is to speak for and represent all members of the congregation as it oversees and makes decisions concerning the temporal and, in concert with the Rector (or the Priest-in-Charge), the spiritual well being of the church.

The Rector and Wardens are the "Board of Directors" for the parish corporation.

It belongs to the Vestry to take charge of the property of the Parish ; to regulate its temporal concerns ; to make provision for the support of the Rector, and in case of his death, resignation, or removal, with the advice and consent of the Bishop, to supply his place as soon as possible; and in general to act as helpers to the Rector in whatever is appropriate to laymen for the furtherance of the Gospel.

The Vestry makes sure that the parish tithe to the diocese is always paid on time as part of the working budget. It supports *DEUS* and makes sure that it elects the most talented people to diocesan and provincial synod. The Vestry encourages its priest and other clergy to attend clergy conferences and retreats and helps with expenses. The Vestry responds to appeals for help and money to enable the whole church to grow.

The Vestry also shows loyalty by abiding by the Canons and the teachings and practices of the whole Church.

## **Delegation Of Authority**

The Vestry has sole authority to represent and act for the parish. No individual, committee, or group shall claim to represent the Parish, or act on it's behalf, without the expressed direction and authority of the Vestry. The Vestry shall maintain a record of authority delegated to any individual, committee, or group. Delegation of authority shall not exceed a period of thirteen months without a renewal action by the Vestry.

- (a) The Vestry shall have the care and management of all the temporal affairs of the church including all properties and shall have authority, in the corporate name, to lease or to purchase and to hold such real estate as shall be reasonably necessary for parish use.
- (b) The Vestry shall not have the power to alienate or encumber any real estate without being first authorized to do so by a majority vote of the members of the Parish at the annual meeting or at a special meeting called for such purpose.
- (d) The Vestry shall have the authority to erect, alter, enlarge, take down, or remove and rebuild any church or other building belong to the Parish, providing such Vestry shall first obtain from the Parish, at an annual meeting or at a special meeting called for such purpose, the authority to do so.

## **Members of the Vestry**

### **A) Clergy**

#### **1) The Rector**

The Rector is the Chair of the Vestry, the President of the parish corporation, Chair of the Executive Committee and presides over meetings of the Congregation.

A parish priest is given the Cure of Souls. At ordination he is solemnly warned that the spiritual lives of the people are his care and responsibility. In this respect he answers not to the Vestry, but to the Bishop and to God. Rectors have a good deal of power. The wise ones try to exert influence through love and the teaching and preaching of the gospel. It is important for Rectors and Vestries to know their respective responsibilities.

Many Vestries are only too willing to allow the Rector to do their work as well as his; many Rectors are only too willing to grasp tasks out of the hands of unsuspecting Vestries in their bid to exert control. Tasks must be shared between Rector and Vestry, and it is important that all know, and agree on, who is ultimately responsible for what.

- a)** It is understood always that the Spiritual concerns of the Church are under the EXCLUSIVE direction of the Rector, in subordination to the Ecclesiastical Authority and laws of the Diocese.

- b) It is a common mistake to speak of the Vestry apart from the Rector: this has arisen from the fact that in the absence of a Rector the corporate right and privilege of the Parish may, for the time being, rest in the Wardens and At-Large Vestry members. But it is always to be borne in mind that the Rector is an integral portion of every Parish, bearing the same relation to the Parish that the Bishop does to the Diocese.
- c) It arises out of the constitution of a Vestry that in matters affecting the temporality of the Parish, a Rector has no power apart from the body of which he is the head. He cannot, of his own motion, alter or change the Church building or the Rectory. He cannot incur any expense or make the Vestry responsible for any obligation without their consent; in all temporal matters he is to consult the body of which he is the head.
- d) The Canons state that the Rector is responsible for worship. In many modern churches, worship committees decide on the form of worship, what service to have when, but in our Church the parish priest is responsible for all worship. Certainly all parishioners are free to bring to the Rector their wishes and desires and a wise priest will listen and accommodate when possible. *The Vestry should always remember it has no rights in this area.* A priest must make sure that worship is properly conducted. He it is who must evaluate the spiritual climate of a parish, preach the Word, and administer the Sacraments.
- e) The Canons state that the Rector is responsible for the music, organ, organist, and choir. Obviously this is necessary to ensure that music fits worship. If an organist is paid, the Vestry must set the salary. It can advise the Rector as he selects an organist, but it cannot hire or fire.

- f) The Canons state that the Rector is responsible for Christian Education. He is called to be a teacher and must ensure that the right people are selected as teachers and the right material chosen in order that his commission to make sure that all his people are well instructed can be honored.
- g) The Canons state that the Rector must keep the list of members. He it is who determines that a person is qualified, through baptism and confirmation, through regular attendance at worship, by following Christ, worshipping God each Sunday in his Church, and by working, praying, and giving for the spread of the Kingdom (BCP page 291). In the light of the Canons he determines who shall be baptized, confirmed, married, and buried.
- h) The Canons require that the Rector be given full use of the parish church and property and its contents.

## **2) Assisting Clergy**

All Assisting Clergy attached to the parish are members of the Vestry. They are also members of the synod delegation of the parish as House of Clergy.

- a) The Bishop, with advice of the Rector, appoints assisting clergy. It is solely the Rector's province, representing that authority, to assign duties and responsibilities to them.
- b) Assisting clergy may not seek nor hold an elected, voting Vestry position. They may not be considered as synod delegates for the House of Laity.

## **B) The Wardens**

### **1) Senior Warden**

The Senior Warden is the senior lay person of the parish, is appointed by the Rector (*and confirmed at the Annual Meeting by the congregation*), and shall perform the following duties:

- a) Share privately with the Rector insights, concerns and issues which may face the Congregation. Act as consultant and advisor to the Rector.
- b) Interpret the Rector's role and expectations to the people.
- c) Oversee all financial activities of the Parish.
- d) In the absence of the Rector, acts as the leader of the Parish, is responsible for presiding at Vestry meetings and ensures that a supply priest is present for services.
- e) Is a member of the Executive Committee, and chair of the Finance Committee.
- f) Performs such other duties as may be requested by the Rector.

*NOTE: As this appointment is confirmed by the congregation, the Senior Warden enjoys the protections regarding removal of Vestry members under Article X:D of the St. Nicholas Constitution and by-laws.*

## **2) Junior Warden**

The Junior Warden is elected by the Congregation and performs the following duties:

- a) Gives voice to the will of the congregation in all parish activities and endeavors.
- b) Is responsible for the upkeep of the Church property.
- c) Maintains an up-to-date inventory of the Parish property.
- d) Oversees the internal and external communications systems of the parish, including Sunday Bulletins, Newsletters, Announcements, Computer and Printing equipment, Internet sites, and all other communication needs.
- e) In the absence of the Rector and Senior Warden, acts as the leader of the Parish, is responsible for presiding at Vestry meetings and ensures that a supply priest is present for services.
- f) Is a member of the Executive Committee, and chair of the Building and Grounds committee.
- g) Performs such other duties as may be requested by the Rector.

### **3) Common Duties of the Wardens**

The Wardens corporately, together with the Rector and At-Large Vestry members, are responsible for all aspects of parish life. It is understood that in the due course of time, differing persons shall serve as Senior or Junior Wardens, offering various skills and abilities to the congregation.

For this reason, the Wardens, together with the Rector and At-Large Vestry members, shall divide their duties and responsibilities according to their several and separate skills, as best fits the needs of the Parish. The duties assigned to each as listed in this Policy Paper, Vestry handbook, or any other source or tradition shall be considered as informational only and binding only as defined by the sitting Vestry.

EXCEPT THAT the Senior Warden shall always serve as primary advisor and confidant to the Rector.

AND the Junior Warden shall always be the first voice of the congregation.

#### **a) Worship Services**

It is the Primary Duty of the Wardens to be responsible for the holding of regular Worship Services, and for the provision of all things requisite for Divine Service. If there is neglect or inability on the part of the Rector to perform his/her responsibilities, the Wardens must notify the Bishop as to the situation.

**b) Growth and outreach:**

The Wardens together with the Rector shall strive for the healthy growth and vitality of the parish.

The Wardens together with the Rector shall keep before the congregation the mandate of our Bishop to plant new congregations .

The Wardens together with the Rector and Almoner, if there be one, shall ensure that all alms and gifts of the parish are distributed generously and to the Greater Glory of God.

**c) Church Finances:**

The Wardens shall do everything in their power to insure that adequate financial support is provided for the Church and that the financial and physical concerns of the Parish are efficiently managed.

The Wardens are responsible for the collection and receipt of all monies contributed to the church, and with the Rector have joint responsibility for the disposal of all monies, stipends, and debts, and for keeping a complete record of all transactions.

If it is deemed advisable, the Vestry may appoint a Treasurer, BUT such an appointment does not release the Wardens from their responsibility for the finances of the parish.

The Clergy's priority is the spiritual care of the Parish and, as much as possible, they should be relieved of such all financial concerns by the work of the Wardens and Vestry.

**d) Budget :**

It is required of the Wardens to present to the Vestry for their approval and commendation to the Annual Meeting of Parishioners a budget setting forth clearly the expected income and expenses for the parish for the upcoming fiscal year.

**e) Church Property:**

The Wardens are responsible, jointly with the Vestry, for the care of all property of the Parish, including all owned or leased facilities or properties, ensuring that all property is kept accessible, in good repair and insured.

The Wardens shall keep or cause to be kept an inventory of all property belonging to the Parish.

**f) Meeting Minutes:**

The Wardens are responsible for the Minute Book of all parish and Vestry meetings, as well as Executive and Corporate meetings.

**g) Accounting Records:**

The Wardens are responsible for maintaining a proper set of accounting records that reflect, at all times, the financial position of the Parish. They should submit regular statements to the Vestry. The books must be open to the inspection of the Rector at all times. They must be presented to the Parish Accounts Examiner in sufficient time for a proper annual examination and to present a statement at the Annual Meeting of the Parish.

**h) Parish Registers:**

The Wardens shall ensure that a register is kept in which shall be recorded the dates and hours of all services held in the Church, names of officiating clergy, number of those present, number of those communicating, etc. They shall also provide the Rector with a register or registers in which to record all weddings, funerals, baptisms and confirmations. The Wardens are responsible for ensuring that the number of those present at the regular services is entered into the register.

**i) Bank Accounts:**

The bank account (or accounts) should be under the direct control of the Wardens. Both Wardens should be signing officers at the bank, along with the Rector and Treasurer.

**j) Expenditures:**

The Wardens must seek the consent of Vestry before incurring any expense not previously approved or budgeted.

**k) At Regular Services:**

In the absence of the Parish clergy, the Wardens should receive and welcome any visiting clergy or lay readers, visitors and newcomers and, if possible, obtain their names and addresses for the Parish records. Sidespersons may be appointed to assist the Wardens in these duties.

**l) Incumbent Vacancy:**

If a vacancy occurs, the Bishop and Archdeacon will confer with the Wardens and the Vestry with respect to choosing a new Incumbent.

### **C) At Large Vestry Members**

At Large Members share equally in the vital well being of the parish and shall actively participate in the governance of the parish. They shall perform such duties as required by the Vestry, Wardens, or Rector. At-Large members should seek to lead ad hoc committees as their skills indicate, and stand ready to perform the duties of either or both wardens if those positions should become vacant.

### **D) Clerk of the Vestry**

The Clerk of the Vestry shall be annually elected by the Vestry. This person shall not be a voting member of the Vestry. The Clerk's duties shall be:

- 1) Take and record the minutes of the Vestry and Parish proceedings, as well as Executive Committee and Corporate meetings.
- 2) Attest the public acts of the Vestry.
- 3) Preserve all records and papers belonging to the Parish .
- 4) Perform such other duties as may be properly assigned .
- 5) Deliver to a duly elected successor all books and documents of the Parish that may be in their possession.

## **E) Treasurer**

The Treasurer of the Parish shall be annually elected by the Vestry. This person shall not be a member of the Vestry. The Treasurer shall perform the following duties:

- 1) Be the Chief Financial Officer of the Parish.
- 2) prepare or oversee the preparation of monthly financial statements and report the financial status of the Parish to the Rector, Vestry and the Parish on a scheduled basis.
- 3) Prepare or oversee the preparation of financial records for pledges, receipts, disbursements, and all assets and liabilities should be maintained in accordance with "A Manual of Accounting Practices".
- 4) Assist the Vestry with financial planning, including preparation of the Annual Budget.
- 5) Ensure that all financial aspects relating to the Clergy and staff are duly performed in a correct and timely manner. Such items as pension, health, dental and life insurance premiums, housing, travel, sabbatical, continuing education, Social Security and stipend are to be considered.
- 6) Establish and maintain the necessary controls and procedures to prevent the unauthorized use of Parish resources.
- 7) Attend Vestry meetings.

## **F) Assistant Treasurer**

The Assistant Treasurer of the Parish shall be annually elected by the Vestry. This person shall not be a member of the Vestry. The Assistant Treasurer's duties shall be to assist the Treasurer. In the absence of the Treasurer, the Assistant Treasurer shall assume the Treasurer's duties.

## **G) Chancellor**

The Chancellor of the Parish, when the position is filled, shall be appointed by the Rector. This person shall not be a member of the Vestry. The Chancellor shall attend Vestry meetings, periodically review the By-laws, review any legal papers and matters to come before the Vestry, and perform such duties as may be assigned by the Rector or Vestry, from time to time.

## **H) Committees and Special Groups**

The Vestry may, as need arises, appoint parishioners to chair or serve on various committees of the parish. Such persons shall have a vote in all committee meetings of which they are members, but in no case shall they have a vote in any regular Vestry meeting, and are not considered Vestry members.

## **Resignations**

Resignations will always be accepted. It must be assumed that people will resign only if they cannot serve efficiently. If a person puts self before the good of the whole, and uses resignation as a threat, such a threat must be taken seriously and the resignation accepted for the good of both the individual and the parish.

## **Missions**

A mission congregation is governed by a mission committee, which enjoys all the rights of a Vestry save that of calling its priest. The Vicar of a mission is appointed by the Bishop. Similarly, only the Bishop may remove a Vicar.

The Mission Committee is charged with conducting a proper election of Vestry Officers upon being accepted as a Parish Church in the APA.

## **Amendments to this Policy Paper**

Any policy listed herein may be amended at any regular or special Vestry meeting by majority vote.

The duties enumerated in this Policy Paper are intended for clarification only, and shall not in any case supersede, add to, nor diminish the Canons of the APA.

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## VESTRY PLEDGE

We, the undersigned, realize that we are the governing body of The Anglican Church of Saint Nicholas and have been placed in a position that allows us to actively participate in the decisions concerning our Church. Recognizing Holy Scripture as the authority which should govern our behavior toward and relationships with one another and with the larger congregation, and recalling St. Paul's directive to St. Timothy concerning his need, as a church leader, to be "an example to the believers, in speech, love, faith and purity (I Tim 4:12)", we therefore agree:

- 1) To maintain a "servant attitude" by remembering, always, that the Vestry's role is one of serving Christ and His Church, recalling that we are representatives of the greater whole of our Church and were elected to these positions by our peers.
- 2) To strive to be open, honest, and respectful, recognizing that we each were given special talents by God, and will seek to use these talents wisely.
- 3) To consciously seek to abandon personal agendas and self-serving attitudes.
- 4) To keep open lines of communication regarding any and all decisions affecting the congregation as a whole; and refusing to take part in or encourage by inaction any secret or exclusive agendas.
- 5) To be visible in the church as often as possible including attending regular and special services.
- 6) To attend all regular Vestry and Wardens meetings as well as those designated as "Special Meetings."

We will consult this covenant and enter into prayer if we should ever stray from our promises to ourselves, our fellow parishioners or God. We pledge to uphold this covenant, with the help of God.

Rector \_\_\_\_\_

Senior Warden \_\_\_\_\_

Junior Warden \_\_\_\_\_

At-Large \_\_\_\_\_

At-Large \_\_\_\_\_

At-Large \_\_\_\_\_

Treasurer \_\_\_\_\_

Clerk \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

