



EPISCOPAL
CHURCH OF NH

manual for lay leaders

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Revised 2016

"We are the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement."

The clarity with which Michael B. Curry, our new Presiding Bishop, speaks of our identity is brilliant. We can glean so much in that one little sentence. Let me share some of what I take out of it.

"We are"

This is a community effort. In a culture so caught up in personal achievement and competition among individuals, we can take strength and purpose in joining sisters and brothers in a beloved community that seeks to reflect the life and communion of God, the Three-in-One.

the Episcopal

This particular community has been blessed with peculiar gifts of governance and order; a kind of trellis to help it grow as a vine. Committed to the via media, the middle way, our resolutions to conflict are not so much compromises for the sake of a faltering peace, but as comprehensions for the sake of truth. We are grounded in a tradition that goes back to the earliest of Jesus' apostles, and yet we listen deeply to how the Holy Spirit is revealing God's purposes for today.

Branch

We are part of a tree of Christian fellowship that contains many others, Catholics, Orthodox, Protestant, Reformed, Independent, even non-denominational. Ours is but one expression of God's desire to draw all people to connection with the life, teaching and full living mystery of Jesus Christ. As a branch, we are not the whole tree, but without us, the tree might be less vibrant. Or so we hope and pray. Likewise, the whole tree of the Church Universal supports and sustains us as well.

Of the Jesus

Yes, Jesus! We get to talk about a first century Jewish rabbi who has a lot to teach us. Though it may sound simplistic and elementary, we are living in a time when the words of the song "Jesus loves me this I know, 'cause the Bible tells me so," might reflect a new attitude of humility. When have we seen Jesus in our midst? Are we open to have our hearts burn within us when Jesus shows up in our walk along the way?

Movement

We are not a collection of buildings and silos attached to a calcified institution. Our baptism into Jesus expels us into the world and into uncomfortable relationships so that we can be agents of grace and reconciliation. Our Canons and Constitutions, our By-laws, and even our Book of Common Prayer are all to help us in our walk with Jesus, whose followers were first described as members of The Way. May we remember to travel lightly.

This Lay Leadership Institute is yet another shining example of how God is constantly blessing us for renewal in the Jesus Movement, in Tending the Vine who is the Living Christ. I hope that as we go through the seminars, you might keep Presiding Bishop's statement of our identity in mind as a guidepost.

Finally, I am so indescribably grateful for the leadership of Canon Judith Esmay, who has, yet again, brought us together in the Spirit for these special days of story telling, community building, and leadership formation. Without her knowledgeable presence and skillful leadership, this part of the branch would not have been as strong and robust as it is. Thank you, Canon Judith!

In Christ,

+Rob Hirschfeld
Tenth Bishop of New Hampshire

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Hallmarks of the Anglican Communion

During the Reformations in the 16th Century, Henry VIII declared the Church of England independent of the Roman Catholic Church with himself as its head. That development, which was the result of many factors, some political and some theological, gave rise to a distinct form of Christianity known as Anglicanism. The Episcopal Church is a constituent part of the worldwide Anglican Communion, the churches, or provinces, around the world that trace their roots to the Church of England, and maintain a “communion” with it, hence the name “Anglican.” Among the some 40 members of the Communion are the Anglican Churches of Canada, Nigeria, and Burundi. In fact, most Anglicans now live in Africa. The member churches of the Anglican Communion are joined together by history and by bonds of affection, and have no direct authority over one another. The Archbishop of Canterbury, the head of the Church of England, is acknowledged as the spiritual head of the Anglican Communion and summons bishops in the 165 countries embraced by the Communion to the Lambeth Conference every ten years, but has no direct authority over any Anglican Church outside of England.

The Episcopal Church shares with other provinces in the Communion the following characteristics:

Protestant, yet Catholic

Anglicanism stands squarely in the Reformed tradition, yet considers itself just as directly descended from the Early Church as the Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox churches. For example, Episcopalians celebrate the “mass” in ways similar to the Roman Catholic tradition, yet do not recognize a single authority, such as the Pope of Rome.

Worship in one's first language

Episcopalians believe that Christians should be able to worship God and read the Bible in their first language, which for most Episcopalians is modern English rather than Latin or Greek, the two earlier, “official” languages of Christianity. The Bible has been translated into many languages, so that those Episcopalians who do not speak English can come to know and worship God in their native tongue.

The Book of Common Prayer

Unique to Anglicanism is a book of common prayer, the collection of liturgies, creeds and prayers adapted within each of the provinces in the Anglican Communion. It's called “common prayer” because the people all pray it together, lay and clergy alike. The Book of Common Prayer first compiled in English by Thomas Cranmer in the 16th century has been adopted and adapted by the various provinces of the Anglican Communion. Its original purpose remains unchanged: to provide in one place the core of the instructions and rites for the common worship of Anglican Christians.

“...In the common prayer we join together in a great fellowship that is as wide as the world; and we are guided, not by the limited notions of our own priest, nor by the narrow impulses of our own desires, but by the mighty voice that rises from the general heart of Christendom.” Percy Dearmer in *Everyman's History of the Prayer Book*.

The present prayer book in The Episcopal Church was approved by General Convention in 1979. Many other worship resources and prayers exist to enrich our worship, but the Book of Common Prayer is the authority that governs our worship. The prayer book explains Christianity, describes the main beliefs of the Church, outlines the requirements for the sacraments, and in general serves as the main guideline of Episcopal life and worship.

Scripture, Tradition, and Reason

The Anglican approach to reading and interpreting the bible was first articulated by Richard Hooker, also in the 16th Century. While Christians universally acknowledge the bible (or the holy scriptures) as the word of God and completely sufficient to our reconciliation to God, what the bible says must always speak to us in our own time and place. The church, as a worshipping body of faithful people, has for two thousand years amassed experience of God and of loving Jesus, and what they have said to us through the centuries about the bible is critical to our understanding it in our own context. The traditions of the church in interpreting scripture connect all generations of believers together and give us a starting point for our own understanding.

Episcopalians believe that every Christian must build

an understanding and relationship with God's word in the bible, and to do that, God has given us intelligence and our own experience, which we refer to as "reason." Based on the text of the bible itself,

and what Christians have taught us about it through the ages, we then must sort out our own understanding of it as it relates to our own lives.



Diocesan Governance and

Governance and program at the diocesan level are the work of commissions and committees, some mandated by canon and others formed at the behest of the bishop, Diocesan Council, or Convention. Descriptions of and information for many of these commissions and committees are provided on the diocesan website, www.nhepiscopal.org.

ORGANIZATIONS

Standing Committee

Mandated by canons of The Episcopal Church, the Standing Committee is the bishop's council of advice and the ecclesiastical authority in the absence of the bishop. The Standing Committee also shares responsibility in the ordination process; is consulted for consent for the election and consecration of new bishops in the Church; reviews requests from congregations to encumber their property; and, when the need arises, supervises the election and consecration of a new diocesan bishop. The Standing Committee comprises six members--three clergy and three adult lay confirmed communicants. At the annual diocesan Convention, one clergy and one lay adult communicant are elected, each to a three-year term.

Diocesan Council

The Diocesan Council, under the leadership of the bishop, plans and promotes diocesan work subject to the Constitution and Canons of the diocese and all directives of the Convention. It has the authority and responsibilities of the diocesan Convention between annual convention sessions with regard to matters of the finances and program of the diocese and is accountable to the diocesan Convention. The Council shares in the overall responsibility for the financial life of the diocese and makes an annual report of its proposals and achievements to the Convention. Members of the Council are: The bishop, who is its

Resources

chair; one clergy and one lay representative from each of the six convocations, not members of the same parish; the chairs or designees of the diocesan Finance Committee, the Committee on Mission Resources, and the Council Commissions; one member of the Trustees; as well as a moderator, a secretary, and a treasurer appointed by the bishop. The Diocesan Council has responsibilities in the areas of resources, church development, human services, and ministry. Meetings normally occur monthly between September and June. Diocesan Council meeting minutes are available for viewing online:

Commission on Ministry

The Commission on Ministry consists of six clergy and six lay persons appointed by the bishop to assist him on matters relating to discernment and formation of candidates for Holy Orders. The commission members meet monthly to monitor the progress of the eight to twelve persons in the process for ordination at any given time, interviewing the candidates at several times during the process. Following interviews, the Commission on Ministry makes recommendations to the bishop regarding advancement in the process. Commission on Ministry terms are three years with no more than two consecutive terms. Vacancies occurring between diocesan Conventions are filled by the bishop's appointment.

Committee on Mission Resources

The Committee on Mission Resources administers grants to congregations that are expanding their mission in new and innovative ways. Typical grant uses have included operational support for congregations supporting youth centers, feeding programs, thrift shops, as well as support of strategic planning efforts. Grants generally cover operating expenses, but may include peripheral amounts of capital improvements, outreach, or other ministry

areas as needed to accomplish the desired mission. Grants are awarded annually, and typically decline over a period of three to five years, with the expectation that the mission becomes supported by the congregation in that time frame. The committee comprises some eight members, both lay and ordained, appointed by the bishop. CMR members serve as liaisons to granted congregations, helping to foster a relationship between the congregation and the diocese and providing a conduit to other resources available from the diocese. The grants are funded directly from the annual diocesan budget.

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee is responsible for preparing the diocesan budget for the following year for the Diocesan Council's review and approval in advance of the Convention. The Finance Committee is made up of a chairperson, a Trustee, one member chosen by the Diocesan Council, three at-large members elected by Diocesan Convention, one member nominated by the Finance Committee and approved by the Council, and the Treasurer of Convention. The three at-large members elected at Convention serve for three-year terms renewable once. The most recent diocesan budget and letters acknowledging the church's nonprofit [501(c)3] status can be found online. Also available are forms and instructions for parochial reports, information about audits, medical benefits information, information about the Diocesan Advance Fund and United Thank Offering grants, as well as the invaluable Manual for Business Methods in Church Affairs.

Committee on Constitution & Canons

Members of the Committee on Constitution and Canons are responsible for reviewing the Constitution and Canons of the diocese, drafting revisions as needed and proposing revisions to the annual diocesan Convention for adoption. The committee has prepared and published a set of model bylaws for New Hampshire congregations. Those bylaws, as well as the Constitution and Canons of both The Episcopal Church and the Diocese of New Hampshire are available as PDF files on the diocesan website.

Trustees

The Board of Trustees are a separately incorporated entity established by special act of the New Hampshire Legislature in 1846 for the purpose of holding real and personal property of the diocese and the parishes and missions therein. Trustees are responsible for the prudent management and investment of these holdings and annually submit a Treasurer's Report along with audited financial statements to Convention.

General Convention Deputation

General Convention, the highest authority in our Episcopal Church structure, meets every three years. Our diocese is represented by our bishop, who sits in the House of Bishops, and by lay and clergy persons (four in each order) elected to the House of Deputies by delegates to diocesan Convention. Clergy deputies must be canonically resident in New Hampshire, and lay deputies must be adult confirmed communicants in New Hampshire congregations. Deputies and alternate deputies to the 79th General Convention, which will meet in Austin, Texas in the summer of 2018, will be elected at Diocesan Convention in 2016.

RESOURCES

Congregational Life

The congregational life ministry in the diocese of New Hampshire serves the clergy, vestries, lay leaders and lay people of the Diocese of New Hampshire from the office of the bishop. The goal of the diocesan ministry of congregational life is to support, encourage, challenge and provide resources to the leadership of the diocesan churches which brings ever more abundant life to churches in vitality, stewardship, planning and spiritual depth. The diocese aids in local development of congregation life through resources available for capital campaigns, conflict transformation, safe church training, disaster preparedness, financial planning, leadership development, membership growth, stewardship, and much more.

Convention Business

Preparations for each Convention begin in the spring of the year. Convention documents on the website are available in PDF and Word formats and include Convention timelines, Convention information, nomination form and biographical sketches and

resolution guidelines. Also available are election results and resolutions passed by the previous Convention. The diocesan Journal and Directory is a critical publication of Convention business and contains all names and contact information of all clergy and also all people who serve on elected and appointed groups, as well as all parishes, missions and summer chapels. The Journal also contains Convention minutes, a copy of the bishop's address and any other reports to Convention. Copies of the diocesan Journal and Directory are sent to all canonically resident clergy, to each church secretary or administrator and to each convention delegate and alternate. A limited number of additional copies are available from Diocesan House but privacy concerns preclude online access to the Journal and Directory.

Convocation Leadership

New Hampshire has six regional convocations. Each of the state's 46 congregations belongs to one of the convocations based on location. Canon law states that each convocation will be composed of clergy and lay delegates to Convention. Each convocation determines its own meeting place and time. Convocation responsibilities include acting as liaison between congregations and the diocese; assisting communications among congregations, generating ideas and programs for referral to Diocesan Council, providing a medium for communication of Convention and diocesan business and more.

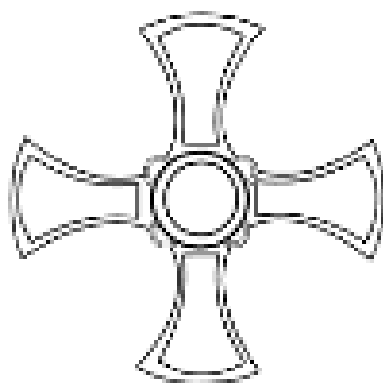
Outreach

The Outreach Commission organizes people and resources to respond to calls for help from our congregations, members and our neighbors in need. The Outreach Commission provides and nurtures a network of New Hampshire Episcopalians conversant in the areas of drug /alcohol concerns, environmental responsibility, prison concerns, health care and housing, Millennium Development Goals, peace and justice issues, refugee resettlement, campus ministry, death penalty abolition, fair tax reform, spiritual formation, intentionally inclusive parish models, food pantry and thrift shop ministries and more. The Outreach Commission networkers assist individuals and parishes to find the resources they need to offer local education and awareness building around issues close to their lives.

Additionally, the Outreach Commission can link individuals to other coalitions, agencies, national Church materials, and spiritual communities dealing with matters of mutual concern.

Worship

Our diocesan website offers liturgical resources, including services and suggestions for ordinations and celebrations of new ministry, even a service for the loss of a pet. Lay licensing procedures and forms are available online, as are resources for marriage in the Episcopal Church in New Hampshire.



Job Description for members of vestries and bishop's committees

All vestry members should be prepared to attend faithfully and participate appropriately in:

- Vestry or bishop's committee meetings and committee work;
- Vestry or bishop's committee retreats;
- Weekly worship services;
- Congregational events such as coffee hours, meals, fund raisers, and adult education programs;
- Diocesan meetings as necessary; and
- Annual meeting of the congregation.

The vestry is responsible for:

- Being agents and legal representatives of the parish or mission they serve in matters of corporate property and in relation of the parish or mission to its clergy;
- Transacting temporal (material world) business pertaining to the parish or mission;
- If in a parish, electing a rector, who then may be called by the bishop;
- Supporting the rector or vicar in the administration of the congregation;
- Compensating clergy as specified by diocesan guidelines on clergy compensation;
- Following best business practices, especially as outlined in diocesan Canon 4, section 6, and in the Manual of Business Methods in Church Affairs; and
- Collect and pay to the diocese the congregation's Fair Share to support the diocesan budget.

All vestry members should strive to the best of their abilities to:

- Remember that the rector or vicar is responsible for worship and spiritual life, pastoral care, selection of assisting clergy and staff, use and control of buildings, education in faith, ministry and stewardship, keeping parish records and more.
- Support the rector or vicar by reviewing continuing education policies, making sure days off and vacations are taken, and engaging in reviews such as Mutual Ministry reviews to set objectives for vestry and clergy.
- Offer talents to support the congregation's ministry;
- Have a love of God and demonstrate a commitment to following the way of Christ;
- Pledge financial support early in the stewardship campaign and then pay that pledge;
- Support fully programs or decisions made by the vestry or bishop's committee, even if they've disagreed;
- Find out what the parish bylaws say about their duties, terms, and operations;
- 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;
- Keep confidences and be discerning as information is shared outside of vestry meetings.
- Purposefully strive to "check one's ego at the door," striving to be a servant of the people without the need to be the "most important person" in the congregation or the need to be the one with the right answers to everything; and
- Possess and demonstrate enthusiasm and vitality for this ministry.

Definitions

Adult communicant in good standing: As defined by national canon: A person who has received the Sacrament of Holy Baptism with water in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, whether in this Church or in another Christian Church, and whose Baptism has been duly recorded in this Church, is a member. All members of this Church who have received Holy Communion in this Church at least three times during the preceding year, are 16 years of age and over, and for the previous year have been faithful in corporate worship and have been faithful in working, praying, and giving for the spread of the Kingdom of God, are to be considered adult communicants in good standing.

Annual Meeting - A gathering of the congregation mandated by canon for the purpose of electing wardens, vestry members, the clerk, Convention delegates, and, if so provided in local bylaws, the treasurer. The annual meeting is convened in January unless another date is specified by a church's charter or permission is given by the bishop. The rector or vicar presides at the annual meeting.

Bishop - Every diocese is organized around a single seated bishop, whose title derives from the Greek *episcopos*, meaning overseer or superintendent. Bishops are an order of ordained ministry, elected by the people of the diocese. The diocesan bishop is sometimes referred to as the "ordinary" and is the chief pastor and administrator of the diocese. A bishop coadjutor serves under the authority of the diocesan bishop and succeeds the diocesan bishop when a vacancy occurs. A suffragan or assistant bishop serves under the authority of the diocesan bishop but does not necessarily succeed to that office. The bishops of The Episcopal Church have no jurisdiction outside of their dioceses. As members of the House of Bishops, they gather twice each year to pray, confer, and counsel the Church.

Bishop's Committee - The governing body of a mission church. According to NH canons, the rights and duties of the bishop's committee are those of the vestry of a parish, except they do not select their vicar and the number of members is limited by canon to seven.

Book of Common Prayer - A guide to the people's worship, containing the words for forms of service. Because each church in the Anglican Communion has adopted a Prayer Book, there are many versions in many languages. The Book of Common Prayer of the new Episcopal Church in the United States was proposed in 1786 and adopted by the first General Convention in 1789. It was most recently revised in 1979.

Canonical residence - The diocese in which an ordained person has established formal relationship, subject to the authority of the diocesan bishop. Clergy may live in a diocese in which they are not canonically resident, but may not serve the church there without the express permission of the bishop.

Canons - The rules by which the church is guided and governed. Diocesan canons are adopted and amended by diocesan Convention and must conform to the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church, which are adopted and amended by General Convention.

Congregation - A congregation is a body of worshipers who share in common the ministry of Jesus Christ, identify with The Episcopal Church, and are recognized by the ecclesiastical authority of the diocese. A congregation in union with Convention is a congregation duly admitted to the diocese in accordance with diocesan canons. Congregations include parishes, which are self-sustaining and call a rector, and missions, which are under the supervision of the bishop who appoints a vicar.

Convention delegate - A voting member of Convention. All canonically resident clergy serve as delegates. Lay delegates are elected to staggered terms each year by each congregation. The number of lay delegates is determined by the number of communicants in each congregation, as evidenced in the Parochial Report and as specified in New Hampshire canons. Delegates are expected to attend convocation meetings and report back to their congregations on Convention business.

Convocation - Each congregation in the diocese is assigned to a regional convocation, the membership of which consists of the clergy and lay delegates to Convention.

Curate - A newly ordained clergy serving in his or her first position, which is the "curacy." A curate may also be assisting clergy in a large parish.

Deacon - An ordained minister who serves as servant to those in need. A deacon also assists at the Eucharist by preparing the altar for the celebration, reading the gospel, and performing other liturgical actions. He or she may also have teaching and preaching functions.

Diocesan Convention - The ultimate organizational decision-making body of the diocese, comprising both clergy and lay members. Convention meets annually for one or two days in the fall. The Convention decides the diocesan budget (based on recommendations from the Budget and Finance Committee of the Diocesan Council), elects members of the diocese's various administrative, executive and judicial bodies, and votes on any resolutions—including those that amend or add to the Constitution or Canons—that may be brought before it. When necessary, it meets in special session to elect the bishop, the bishop Coadjutor and the bishop(s) Suffragan.

Diocesan Council - Group consisting of lay and clergy representatives that serves between annual diocesan conventions to oversee the mission and program of the diocese.

Ecclesiastical - A Greek word meaning an assembly of citizens. Used in our context to refer to matters

of the church, as opposed to secular, or worldly, matters, e.g., ecclesiastical architecture, ecclesiastical authority.

Episcopal - Relating to or involving church government by bishops. Episcopal is an adjective and Episcopalian in a noun: "I go to the Episcopal Church." "I am an Episcopalian."

General Convention - The deliberative and legislative body of the Episcopal Church in the United States, comprising a House of Bishops and a House of Deputies. General Convention meets every three years to worship and pass legislation for the Church, making broad decisions about policy and liturgy, as well as revitalizing the Christian community for ministry "back home." The House of Deputies is made up of an equal number of lay and clergy members elected by their respective diocesan conventions. The House of Bishops includes all bishops, active and retired. Every nine years, the House of Bishops elects and the House of Deputies consents to a Presiding Bishop who presides over meetings of the House of Bishops and represents the Episcopal Church in the Anglican Communion.

Lay member - A baptized member of the congregation who is not ordained is part of the lay order of the church, equipped by baptism for ministry in the world and in the life, worship, and governance of the church.

Liturgy - a word that come from Greek leitourgia meaning work of the people or public service. Comprises all the ceremonies, prayers, and sacraments for the congregation worshipping together. "Liturgy" includes to the content and ordering of the text and songs and movements of a worship service.

Minister - Meaning "servant" in Latin, the term refers to everyone who has been baptized and becomes a servant of God, spreading God's love and reconciliation. Some ministers are set apart through ordination to become bishops, priests and deacons.

Mission - a congregation in union with the Convention whose rector is the bishop. A

mission may be a new or recently admitted congregation, moving toward admission as a parish, or a congregation that the bishop determines will remain a mission for an indefinite period of time.

Parish - a congregation admitted into union with the Convention, whose rector is called by the congregation and approved by the bishop.

Parochial Report - Beginning with its very first Convention, The Episcopal Church has collected information about the state of the church. The Parochial Report does that by collecting annually, from every congregation, statistical information about church membership, worship services, attendance, stewardship, finances, and clergy.

Priest - Ordained minister who, by authority of the bishop, administers all the sacraments with the exception of Confirmation and Holy Orders, which are administered exclusively by bishops.

Rector - A rector is the priest in charge of a fully self-supporting parish. Rectors are chosen by the vestry and called by the bishop.

Sacraments - The Book of Common Prayer defines sacraments as “outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace, given by Christ as sure and certain means by which we receive that

grace.” The two great sacraments of the gospel are Holy Baptism and Holy Eucharist. There are five other sacraments that are means to grace, but they are not necessary for all persons is the same way Baptism and the Eucharist are:

Confirmation, Holy Matrimony, Reconciliation of a Penitent, Holy Unction, and Holy Orders.

Standing Committee - A group of people elected by the annual Convention consisting of three lay persons and three clergy persons. It serves as a Council of Advice to the bishop, serves as the ecclesiastical authority of the diocese in the case of the vacancy in the episcopate, and is assigned the task of filling the vacancy when one occurs. It reports to the Convention.

Vestry - The governing body in an Episcopal parish composed of the rector and a group of parishioners administering the temporal affairs of the parish. Members of the vestry are elected at the annual meeting. The rector is the presiding officer at meetings of the vestry..

Vicar - A priest in charge of a mission or congregation financially supported by the diocese and under the direct supervision of the bishop, whom the priest “vicariously” represents.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What are the requirements for serving on the vestry?

A: New Hampshire canon law stipulates that those who stand for election to the vestry be adult communicants (see Definitions) of the congregation. Wardens must also be confirmed. Any other requirements - terms of office, number of vestry members - are expressed as part of each congregation’s bylaws.

Q: How long do I serve?

A: The by-laws of each congregation determine the length of service, but a usual term runs for three years, with staggered terms among members, ensuring that the whole vestry isn’t

replaced in one year. Terms for wardens, treasurer and clerk are also in the bylaws.

Q: Can I be sued?

A: Vestry members are legal representatives and agents of the parish and must be aware that they can be held legally liable in certain instances - accidents on parish property or at parish events, violation of fiduciary duties relating to finances, violations of contracts and other legal agreements, employment practices and discrimination and sexual misconduct. Rarely, vestry members can be held personally liable for significant acts of willful misconduct. Check with

your clergy to see if adequate directors' and officers' insurance is in place.

Q: Who runs vestry meetings?

A: The rector or member of the clergy person in charge of the congregation presides at all meetings of the vestry and the congregation or designates another vestry member to do so.

Q: What are vestry meetings intended to accomplish?

A: Vestries are ultimately responsible for the leadership and management of the congregation they serve. To that end, the work at vestry meetings should reflect the mission of each congregation. Meeting agendas might include issues dealing with congregational planning - long-range and short-term, managing resources and stewardship, developing and managing programs and services, determining communication with the congregation and the community, and self-assessment.

Q: Can anyone attend vestry meetings?

A: Vestries are not required to open their meetings to others, but many vestries open meetings to members of the congregation to encourage transparency and communication. Visitors may also be allowed to speak to the vestry as appropriate. Of course, if the vestry discusses a particularly sensitive issue—such as personnel issues—it may and should do so in executive session from which visitors are excused.

Q: What if I don't agree with the vestry's decision?

A: Disagreements in church are wrong, right? We are taught to love our neighbor as ourselves, and we pass the peace every Sunday. So a good church shouldn't have a vestry at odds with one another, right? Wrong! We are human, and whenever people gather - whether in church or out - there will be differences of opinion or conviction. Struggling with these differences can be healthy and transforming. First, it's important to maintain direct, honest and loving communication, while keeping boundaries and confidences. The Vestry Resource Guide advises the following steps as mandated by Christ to prevent conflicts from escalating: pray and seek

the guidance of the Holy Spirit; share the concern directly with the other person and resolve the situation at that level, if possible; seek a trusted third party to participate in the discussion, if necessary. Our diocesan staff are excellent resources for helping congregations manage conflict and should be consulted early if disagreements linger.

Q: Why do we have to do background checks on certain people at church?

A: The Diocese of New Hampshire has established Safe Church Policy and Procedures in order "to make our Church a safe place, safe for those who worship, safe for those who minister, safe for those who come in need, safe for children and safe for all who seek or serve Christ. We believe that this policy helps us live out our Baptismal covenant to respect the dignity of every human being." It is the responsibility of each vestry or bishop's committee to ensure that wardens, lay employees, Eucharistic visitors, pastoral visitors, Stephen ministers, EFM mentors, Safe Church Ministers and volunteers who regularly work with children or youth attend the diocesan Safe Church training on how to prevent child abuse and promote healthy boundaries in church settings. Congregations are mandated to perform background checks on all employees, any volunteers who regularly work with children or youth, and all wardens. Background checks should also be done on 1099 contract employees who have regular contact with parishioners. Congregational background checks must include: a criminal background check, motor vehicle background check through the State of NH and Sexual Offender Registry check. Congregational background checks may also include the following: a written application, an interview and reference checks..

Q: Does the congregation vote on the budget at the annual meeting?

A: No. Typically, vestry members who are responsible for a particular mission focus will offer reports to the annual meeting, including the treasurer. But approval of a budget and other

financial decisions are wholly the responsibility of the vestry.

Q: What is Fair Share?

A: Fair Share is each congregation's financial support of the larger church, the amount of "the minimum level of giving necessary for the work of the diocese and The Episcopal Church. (NH Canon 2, Section 3.6). Income information from the previous year, based on parochial reports,, is used to determine Fair Share paid by congregations. The diocese also pays Fair Share to the national church. A report to the 2009 Convention by the Fair Share Task Force provides a wonderful explanation of the theological, biblical and spiritual basis for having a Fair Share assessment. The report explains that Fair Share helps "further the Episcopal spirit of Christ-like outreach, collegiality, and dignified worship for which this world craves." In 2010 diocesan Convention established a process for making adjustments to Fair Share assessments for congregations that are having difficulty meeting their Fair Share commitment. The goal of the process is to encourage a dialogue between congregations and diocesan organizations as well as provide an open and transparent means for granting adjustments.

Q: We want to add on to our building. Can the diocese help us in any way with financing this project?

A: The Diocesan Advance Fund (DAF) was established in the 1960s as the result of a diocesan-wide fundraising effort. Income from the Fund provides the capital used to make loans; loan repayments are, in turn, reinvested in the Fund. All churches in the Diocese of New Hampshire are eligible to apply for a DAF loan. The approval process for a DAF loan application has two phases. First, the Standing Committee reviews the application to evaluate its appropriateness, given the overall mission and ministry goals of the diocese. Upon the approval of the Standing Committee, the Diocesan Advance Fund (DAF) Committee reviews the application to evaluate the financial soundness of

the applicant as it relates to their ability to repay the loan. Approved loans are referred to the Finance Department of the diocese for disbursement and administration.

Q: I'm new to the vestry and don't have any business experience. Where can I learn to read a budget and the other financial reports we get at every vestry meeting?

A: First, don't be shy about asking questions during conversations about money. It's part of your fiduciary duty to be a good steward of your congregation's "treasure." Chances are, you're not the only one who has questions! Your treasurer should be able to help you understand all those line items and budget categories. On the diocesan website, you will find a link to the PDF of a Manual of Business Methods in Church Affairs, an excellent resource and a "should read" for all vestry members. It's extensive and well within the comprehension of the average vestry member. Plus, you can always Google "reading financial reports" to help with your learning process.

Q: What are my "fiduciary obligations" to the church?

A: Churches are considered nonprofit organizations under state and federal laws. In addition to following constitutions and canons of The Episcopal Church and the Diocese of New Hampshire, vestry members - considered by the law equal to a board of directors of any other nonprofit - are also bound by the following simple ethical rule: You must be faithful to the public good above your personal interests. This is not only an ethical duty, but also a legal duty that can be enforced under the law.

Vestry members, like others in leadership positions, have a fiduciary duty to their church. Part of a vestry member's fiduciary duty is knowing how to read and interpret financial reports given by the treasurer.

The fiduciary relationship isn't restricted to matters of finance, however. A fiduciary is in a special relation of trust, confidence, or

responsibility in certain obligations to others. This duty extends to other business conducted by a vestry: making sure Safe Church guidelines are followed, reviewing and enacting disaster response and preparedness plans and making sure any necessary insurance is in place. The New Hampshire Center for Nonprofits has several resources on its website to help vestry members understand how they can best carry out their legal duties and responsibilities.

The New Hampshire Business Committee for the Arts (NHBCA) publishes a guide that explains the duty of care and the duty of loyalty - two essential points in maintaining ethical boundaries. The duty of care requires a director to act in good faith and in a manner that the director reasonably believes is in the best interest of the organization. The duty of loyalty means that a director must always act in the best interests of and maintain an undivided loyalty to the organization.

Relevant Canons:

Diocese of New Hampshire

CANON 4. GOVERNANCE OF CONGREGATIONS

Section 1. Parish Register and Report

1.1 Definitions. For the purposes of this and all other canons, the terms “communicant,” “adult communicant,” and “communicant in good standing” shall be as defined by the canons of The Episcopal Church.

1.2 Parish register.

- (a) Every member of the clergy in charge of a congregation, or if there is none, a warden, shall keep a register of all baptisms, confirmations, marriages, and burials.
- (b) The register must be kept in the form of a paper book in addition to any records kept in electronic form. The register shall specify the date on which the rite was performed, the name and signature of the officiant, and, as appropriate:
 - (1) the name and birthdate of a person baptized and the names of the parents and sponsors of a minor baptized;
 - (2) the names of persons married;
 - (3) the name and age of **each** ~~the~~ person buried;
 - (4) the names of all persons confirmed or received, which list shall be signed by the bishop officiating at the rite.
- (c) The register shall also contain a list of the communicants, of the families and adult persons of the congregation, and of persons removed by letter of transfer.

1.3 Parochial reports.

- (a) The member of the clergy in charge of a congregation, or, if there is none, the wardens, shall present to the Secretary of Convention, annually on or before the first day of March, the parochial report required by canons of The Episcopal Church along with such additional information as may be required by the bishop.
- (b) Clergy without parochial charge shall report the occasional services they may have rendered, or if they have performed no ministerial duties, the causes or reasons which may have prevented them from officiating.

1.4 Episcopal visitations. At every visitation by the bishop, the member of the clergy in charge of the congregation, or, if there be none, the wardens, shall submit the parish register for the bishop’s review.

1.5 Register and reports prior to transfer of clergy. No member of the clergy in charge of a congregation shall be permitted to leave parochial service, by letter dimissory from this diocese or transfer from one charge to another within this diocese, until the ecclesiastical authority is assured that the records required in section 1 of this canon have been properly made in the register of the present charge and until the statistics required by this canon, beginning from January 1 of the year in which the transfer is to occur to the date of the transfer, have been presented to the ecclesiastical authority.

Section 2 Congregational meetings

2.1 Annual meetings.

- (a) An annual meeting of a congregation shall occur during the month of January, except in those congregations whose charter orders otherwise.
- (b) If a congregation has a compelling reason for petitioning to hold its annual meeting on a date other than in January, the bishop, with a two-thirds vote of Standing Committee, may authorize the congregation to hold its annual meeting on the date petitioned.
- (c) The bishop shall maintain a record of congregations thus authorized to hold annual meetings on dates other than January.

2.2 Elections. The wardens, vestry members, parish clerk, and the delegates to Convention shall be nominated by the congregation and shall be elected by ballot by the parishioners at the annual meeting of the congregation.

2.3 Vacancies.

- (a) Any vacancy occurring on the vestry or in another elected position between annual meetings of the congregation shall be filled by the remaining members of the vestry.
- (b) A vacancy occurring among delegates to Convention shall be filled by an elected alternate delegate.

2.4 Qualifications for office. Wardens shall be adult confirmed communicants of the congregation, and vestry members and other elected officers shall be adult communicants of the congregation.

2.5 Presider. The member of the clergy in charge of the congregation shall preside at all meetings of the congregation and the vestry. A warden shall preside in the absence of the member of the clergy in charge.

2.6 Rotating vestry members.

- (a) In all congregations having more than one hundred adult active baptized members and a vestry of five or more members, at least one of every five vestry members shall be ineligible for re-election at any annual meeting until the expiration of one year.

- (b) A warden shall be ineligible for re-election for at least one year after having served six consecutive years as a warden of the congregation.
- (c) Each congregation shall determine its own rules for carrying out this provision.
- (d) Any provision of this section that conflicts with the charter of any congregation now in union with Convention shall not be binding.

2.7 Qualification of voters. An adult communicant member of the congregation is qualified to vote at annual meetings of the congregation.

Section 3 Vestry meetings

- (a) No meeting of the vestry shall be held unless the rector or member of the clergy in charge requests it, or upon call of three vestry members, and unless at least three days notice has been given by the clerk to all clergy, officers, and members of the vestry.

- (b) The rector or member of the clergy in charge or one of the wardens and a majority of the wardens and vestry shall constitute a quorum.

4.1 Minimum annual compensation.

- (a) Every congregation of the diocese shall provide its clergy with at least the minimum annual compensation due them according to the terms of a resolution to be passed at each annual session of Convention of the diocese, such compensation to become effective at the beginning of the following calendar year.
- (b) Such "minimum annual compensation" shall include all the components used by the church pension fund to determine pension assessments.
- (c) For purposes of this canon, full-time employment shall be considered to be at least forty hours per week.
- (d) Where the employment of the member of the clergy is defined by letter of agreement as being less than full-time, the vestry or bishop's committee shall determine and provide at least the appropriate pro-rated level of minimum annual compensation.

4.2 Application of resolution. The clergy compensation resolution shall apply to all clergy

serving congregations in salaried positions as and to clergy who may be employed by the diocese in extra-parochial capacities.

4.3 Letter of agreement. Compliance with the clergy compensation resolution shall be so stipulated in the letter of agreement with each member of the clergy to whom the clergy compensation regulation applies. A copy of the letter of agreement shall be on file with the office of the bishop.

4.4 Congregations to Report. As part of its annual parochial report and as prescribed by the bishop, each congregation shall report to the bishop by March 1 of each year on the compensation of its clergy. The report shall be recorded in the next pre-convention journal.

Section 5 Duties of wardens and vestry members

5.1 Duties

- (a) Except as may be otherwise provided by the laws of New Hampshire, the wardens and vestry shall be agents and legal representatives of the congregation in all matters concerning its property and the relations of the congregation to its clergy.
- (b) The wardens, in concert with the vestry, shall:
 - (1) elect a rector subject to the bishop's call;
 - (2) assist the clergy in developing and maintaining a mutual ministry and trust to promote the spiritual well-being of the congregation;
 - (3) be responsible stewards of the property and physical assets of the congregation;
 - (4) ensure regular worship services for the congregation by securing, in accordance with the canons of The Episcopal Church and of this diocese, the services of clergy or qualified lay worship leaders or lay readers;
 - (5) transact the temporal business pertaining to the congregation;
 - (6) assist the preparation of and approve an annual parochial report; and

- (7) collect and pay to the diocese the moneys committed for the support of the budget of the diocese.

5.2 Absence of wardens. In the absence of the wardens, it shall be the duty of the vestry to perform the several duties specially pertaining to these officers.

5.3 Clerks to report names of delegates. The clerk of the vestry shall, immediately after the election of delegates to Convention or appointment of persons to vacancies among the delegates, report the names of such delegates to the secretary of Convention.

Section 6. Business methods

6.1 Standard business methods to be practiced.

- (a) Each congregation shall observe standard business methods as provided in the canons of The Episcopal Church and this diocese and as authorized by the chief financial officer of the Diocese of New Hampshire.
- (b) The chief financial officer shall from time to time issue written guidelines, conduct workshops and training sessions, and provide other programs and information as necessary to assist congregations in meeting the requirements of standard business practices.
- (c) Treasurers and custodians other than banking institutions shall be adequately bonded.
- (d) In accordance with the canons of The Episcopal Church, the accounts of all congregations and other entities under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of New Hampshire shall be reviewed annually.
 - (1) The manner and extent of this review shall be authorized by the chief financial officer of the diocese and may include audit by an independent certified or licensed public accountant; assessment by an appointed committee within a congregation; review by individuals appointed for the purpose by the chief financial officer.
 - (2) The review shall cover the financial transactions of the entity in the previous fiscal year.

- (3) A report of the review shall be filed with the chief financial officer of the diocese within thirty days following its completion and no later than September 1 of the current year.
- (4) The report shall include any comments made by the reviewer regarding controls, business or accounting practices, and a summary of corrective actions to be taken.

6.2 Failure to file report. A congregation that fails to file an annual review report for two consecutive years shall have seat and voice but no vote in all ensuing sessions of Convention until the reports are filed.

6.3 Insurance.

- (a) The trustees, the bishop of New Hampshire as corporation sole, each congregation, and any other entity of this diocese shall maintain adequate insurance covering all property, personnel, and activities under their jurisdiction.
- (b) The chief financial officer of the diocese shall issue guidelines concerning the level of insurance required for adequate coverage.

6.4 Church Indebtedness.

- (a) No congregation shall incur or renew any debt without the written approval of both the bishop and Standing Committee except:
 - (1) debt for permanent improvements, replacements, or additions to real estate or equipment where the amount of the debt, together with any and all debt already existing, does not exceed one hundred fifty percent of the average annual receipts of the congregation during the past three years and
 - (2) debt for current expenses where the amount of the debt, together with all debt previously incurred for current expenses and still

existing, does not exceed twenty percent of the total current receipts of the congregation during the preceding fiscal year and the payment of all such debt is provided for in the budget of the next ensuing fiscal year with reasonable expectation of its payment out of the receipts of the next two years.

- (3) In computing receipts under paragraphs (1) and (2) above, amounts from or for endowments or from or by bequests, except income from these not specially designated, and receipts for expenditures other than parochial, shall not be included.

- (b) In any circumstances under which approval is required, it shall be granted only when the payment of all indebtedness shall be provided for in a plan of amortization or other method of payment to be submitted to and approved by the same authority.

6.5 Property held in trust. In conformity and consistent with the provisions of the canons of The Episcopal Church, all real and personal property held by or for the benefit of any parish, mission, chapel, or congregation located in this diocese is held in trust for The Episcopal Church and the Diocese of New Hampshire. The existence of this trust shall in no way limit the power and authority of the parish, mission, chapel or congregation otherwise existing over such property so long as the particular parish, mission, chapel or congregation remains a part of The Episcopal Church and to the Diocese of New Hampshire, subject to the constitution and canons of each. A congregation in union with Convention shall be deemed to have irrevocably consented to this trust as to all property of whatever description, whether held in the name of the congregation or in any other manner.

The Episcopal Church

Canons 13, 14, and 17 in Title I

of the Constitution and Canons of 2012

Canon 13: Of Parishes and Congregations

Sec. 1. Every Congregation of this Church shall belong to the Church in the Diocese in which its place of worship is situated; a Member of the Clergy serving a Cure having Congregations in more than

one jurisdiction shall have such rights, including vote, in the Convention of the jurisdiction in which the Member of the Clergy has canonical residence as may be provided in the Canons of that diocese and may be granted seat and voice in the jurisdiction(s) in

which the Member of the Clergy does not have canonical residence.

Sec. 2 (a) The ascertainment and defining of the boundaries of existing Parishes or Parochial Cures, as well as the establishment of a new Parish or Congregation, and the formation of a new Parish within the limits of any other Parish, is left to the action of the several Diocesan Conventions.

(b) Until a Canon or other regulation of a Diocesan Convention shall have been adopted, the formation of new Parishes, or the establishment of new Parishes or Congregations within the limits of existing Parishes, shall be vested in the bishop of the Diocese, acting by and with the advice and consent of the Standing Committee thereof, and, in case of there being no bishop, of the Ecclesiastical Authority.

Sec. 3 (a) Where Parish boundaries are not defined by law, or settled by Diocesan Authority under Section 2 of this Canon, or are not otherwise settled, they shall be defined by the civil divisions of the State as follows: Parochial boundaries shall be the limits as fixed by law, of a village, town, township, incorporated borough, city, or of some division of any such civil district, which may be recognized by the bishop, acting with the advice and consent of the Standing Committee, as constituting the boundaries of a Parish.

(b) If there be but one Church or Congregation within the limits of such village, town, township, borough, city, or such division of a civil district, as herein provided, the same shall be deemed the Parochial Cure of the Member of the Clergy having charge thereof. If there be two or more Churches or Congregations therein, it shall be deemed the Cure of the Members of the Clergy thereof.

(c) This Canon shall not affect the legal rights of property of any Parish or Congregation.

Canon 14: Of Parish Vestries

Sec. 1. In every Parish of this Church the number, mode of selection, and term of office of Wardens and Members of the Vestry, with the qualifications of voters, shall be such as the State or Diocesan law may permit or require, and the Wardens and Members of the Vestry selected under such law shall hold office until their successors are selected and have qualified.

Sec. 2. Except as provided by the law of the State or of the Diocese, the Vestry shall be agents and legal representatives of the Parish in all matters concerning its corporate property and the relations of the Parish to its Clergy.

Sec. 3. Unless it conflicts with the law as aforesaid, the Rector, or such other member of the Vestry designated by the Rector, shall preside in all the meetings of the Vestry.

Canon 17: Of Regulations Respecting the Laity

Sec. 1 (a) All persons who have received the Sacrament of Holy Baptism with water in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, whether in this Church or in another Christian Church, and whose Baptisms have been duly recorded in this Church, are members thereof.

(b) Members sixteen years of age and over are to be considered adult members.

(c) It is expected that all adult members of this Church, after appropriate instruction, will have made a mature public affirmation of their faith and commitment to the responsibilities of their Baptism and will have been confirmed or received by the laying on of hands by a bishop of this Church or by a bishop of a Church in communion with this Church. Those who have previously made a mature public commitment in another Church may be received by the laying on of hands by a bishop of this Church, rather than confirmed.

(d) Any person who is baptized in this Church as an adult and receives the laying on of hands by the bishop at Baptism is to be considered, for the purpose of this and all other Canons, as both baptized and confirmed; also, Any person who is baptized in this Church as an adult and at some time after the Baptism receives the laying on of hands by the bishop in Reaffirmation of Baptismal Vows is to be considered, for the purpose of this and all other Canons, as both baptized and confirmed; also, Any baptized person who received the laying on of hands at Confirmation (by any bishop in apostolic succession) and is received into the Episcopal Church by a bishop of this Church is to be considered, for the purpose of this and all other Canons, as both baptized and confirmed; and also, Any baptized person who received the laying on of hands by a

bishop of this Church at Confirmation or Reception is to be considered, for the purpose of this and all other Canons, as both baptized and confirmed.

Sec. 2 (a) All members of this Church who have received Holy Communion in this Church at least three times during the preceding year are to be considered communicants of this Church.

(b) For the purposes of statistical consistency throughout the Church, communicants sixteen years of age and over are to be considered adult communicants.

Sec. 3. All communicants of this Church who for the previous year have been faithful in corporate worship, unless for good cause prevented, and have been faithful in working, praying, and giving for the spread of the Kingdom of God, are to be considered communicants in good standing.

Sec. 4 (a) A member of this Church removing from the congregation in which that person's membership is recorded shall procure a certificate of membership indicating that that person is recorded as a member (or adult member) of this Church and whether or not such a member:

(1) is a communicant;
(2) is recorded as being in good standing;
(3) has been confirmed or received by a bishop of this Church or a Bishop in communion with this Church. Upon acknowledgment that a member who has received such a certificate has been enrolled in another congregation of this or another Church, the Member of the Clergy in charge or Warden issuing the certificate shall remove the name of the person from the parish register.

(b) The Member of the Clergy in charge or Warden of the congregation to which such certificate is surrendered shall record in the parish register the information contained on the presented certificate of membership, and then notify the Member of the Clergy in charge or Warden of the congregation which issued the certificate that the person has been duly recorded as a member of the new congregation. Whereupon the person's removal shall be noted in the parish register of the congregation which issued the certificate.

(c) If a member of this Church, not having such a certificate, desires to become a member of a

congregation in the place to which he or she has removed, that person shall be directed by the Member of the Clergy in charge of the said congregation to procure a certificate from the former congregation, although on failure to produce such a certificate through no fault of the person applying, appropriate entry may be made in the parish register upon the evidence of membership status sufficient in the judgment of the Member of the Clergy in charge or Warden.

(d) Any communicant of any Church in communion with this Church shall be entitled to the benefit of this section so far as the same can be made applicable.

Sec. 5. No one shall be denied rights, status or access to an equal place in the life, worship, and governance of this Church because of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, disabilities or age, except as otherwise specified by Canons.

Sec. 6. A person to whom the Sacraments of the Church shall have been refused, or who has been repelled from the Holy Communion under the rubrics, or who has been informed of an intention to refuse or repel him or her from the Holy Communion under the rubrics, may appeal to the Bishop or Ecclesiastical Authority. A Priest who refuses or repels a person from the Holy Communion, or who communicates to a person an intent to repel that person from the Holy Communion shall inform that person, in writing, within fourteen days thereof of (i) the reasons therefor and (ii) his or her right to appeal to the Bishop or Ecclesiastical Authority. No Member of the Clergy of this Church shall be required to admit to the Sacraments a person so refused or repelled without the written direction of the Bishop or Ecclesiastical Authority. The Bishop or Ecclesiastical Authority may in certain circumstances see fit to require the person to be admitted or restored because of the insufficiency of the cause assigned by the member of the Clergy. If it shall appear to the Bishop or Ecclesiastical Authority that there is sufficient cause to justify refusal of the Holy Communion, however, appropriate steps shall be taken to institute such inquiry as may be directed by the Canons of the Diocese; and should no such

Canon exist, the Bishop or Ecclesiastical Authority shall proceed according to such principles of law and equity as will ensure an impartial investigation and judgment, which judgment shall be made in writing within sixty days of the appeal and which shall also specify the steps required for readmission to Holy Communion.

Sec. 7. No unbaptized person shall be eligible to receive Holy Communion in this Church.

Sec. 8. Any person accepting any office in this Church shall well and faithfully perform the duties of that office in accordance with the Constitution and Canons of this Church and of the Diocese in which the office is being exercised.

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SAVE THE DATE!

214th Annual Convention of the Diocese of New Hampshire

Saturday, November 5, 2016 at the Grappone Center, Concord NH



My Congregation

Church _____

Address _____

Rector/Vicar _____

Parish Office _____

Wardens _____

Clerk _____

Treasurer _____

Vestry members _____

Convocation _____

Convocation Co-chairs _____