

Congregational Governance

Below are some best practices for vestries and bishop's committees, including information regarding the organization and overall governance of congregations.

Vestry or Bishop's Committee Meetings

Talented individuals are more inclined to serve on vestries when they hear or find that the meetings are ones of accomplishment, and are not overly long. A great deal has been written about the conduct and effectiveness of meetings, the essence of which seems to be:

- The agenda and related materials should be distributed to all members in advance of the meeting, so that each member will be prepared to participate and contribute to the greatest extent possible. When appropriate, such advance materials should include background information, analyses, and a discussion of alternatives.
- The chairperson should study and apply proven techniques of planning for and conducting a meeting, in which all members are encouraged to participate in an orderly manner, and where appropriate conclusions and decisions are then reached.

Treasurer's Report

At each regular meeting, the treasurer should present a written statement of all monies received and expended and of such other data as may be deemed pertinent or essential to a showing of the then current financial condition of the congregation.

Congregational Budget

In the preparation of its budget each year, each congregation should provide adequate funds not only for deferred maintenance, but also for preventive maintenance and capital replacement.

Minute Book

This book is to contain a record of all meetings, the annual meeting, copies of parochial reports, and a current inventory of the real property of the congregation. It is the responsibility of the clerk or secretary to make certain that the book is maintained.

Authority to Make Commitments

The dollar limits of named persons authorized to make commitments on behalf of the congregation should be determined and reduced to written form, for such transactions as these:

- Capital projects
- Purchase and maintenance contracts
- Consultant's fees
- Fees of independent accountants
- Expense reimbursements
- Promotions, additions, salary increases
- Purchase of operating supplies
- Other operating expenses
- Investment of funds
- Changes in employee benefits
- Changes in insurance coverage

Position Descriptions

In all but the smallest congregations, it is recommended that position descriptions be prepared and updated periodically, so that each person has a clear and complete understanding of his/her duties and responsibilities. Descriptions should be prepared for all positions, including the rector and any other clergy, lay employees, and key volunteers.