

Vestry Norms and Protocols 2013

Proposed and accepted on February 9, 2013

Vestry of St Matthew's

The Vestry of St Matthew's is called and organized in accordance with Canon 25 of the Episcopal Diocese of Arkansas. See the attached canon or access it online at <http://episcopalarkansas.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/2010-Constitution-and-Canons-final.pdf>.

St Matthew's vestry offers oversight and leadership of the people of St Matthew's. We do this by praying together and using our gifts to guide the temporal business of the church. Vestry members in addition to their service as elected members frequently serve the church in other capacities as well, such as committee membership, representing the church in community outreach, and service within other lay ministries of the church. Often vestry members gather and report information on projects and programs that are current or upcoming, in order to create a shared knowledge base which the vestry can use to make informed decisions to the best of our ability with the grace of God.

Vestry Membership

Currently we have 7 vestry members , with one serving as Senior Warden, and one serving as Junior Warden.

The Senior Warden is appointed by the Vicar. The Senior Warden's responsibility is oversight of the vestry and the church in the event that the Vicar is not present or not able to fulfill the Vicar's duties. Often the Senior Warden works very closely with the Vicar.

The Junior Warden is elected by the Vestry. The Junior Warden is second in command after the Senior Warden. It is the Junior Warden who watches over the building and grounds and monitors their upkeep, replacement and improvement. Often the Junior Warden works very closely with the Vicar and Senior Warden.

The Treasurer and Scribe may be vestry members or they may be appointed from the congregation by the Vestry. The Treasurer and Scribe are not given the power of a Vote on Vestry matters unless they are current vestry members.

The Vicar, presides at the Vestry meetings. The Vicar votes only when there is a need for a tie breaker.

Vestry Meetings and other times the Vestry Gathers.

Our vestry meets on the last Monday of each month, 12 times a year. Our meetings begin at 7 PM and we try to end by 8:30 PM. Upon occasion we move a vestry meeting to another time other than the last Monday, in order to accommodate holidays and vacation schedules of vestry members so that we can maintain a quorum. Upon occasion special meetings will be called beyond the 12 regularly scheduled meetings to address church business that has an immediate importance. These meetings are generally brief.

The vestry plans up to two retreats a year, or as needed. A retreat typically occurs shortly after new vestry members are elected in January, and the other occurs in late summer. Vestry retreats normally are hosted at the home of a church member, and the vestry members bring food to share with each other during the course of the retreat. Normally the retreats run about 6 hours, but the specifics of the retreat are planned in accordance with the topics to be explored. Attendance at Vestry retreats is considered very important. We schedule the retreat date in accordance with the date that will allow the largest number of vestry members to attend.

It has been our tradition as the Vestry to host a New Comers dinner at the vestry's convenience, for individuals that have been worshipping with us for less than a year, or since our last New Comers dinner. The Vestry plans the dinner and prepares and serves the items on the menu. Vestry spouses/ partners / significant others are encouraged to attend.

All vestry members are strongly encouraged to attend worship and reception when the Bishop makes a yearly visitation. The Bishop schedules the time of the visitation.

Order of the Vestry Meeting

Most often Vestry work is done informally through discussion, however when there is an official action to be taken we follow Robert's Rules of Order.

We open each meeting with prayer, usually using The Daily Office of Evening Prayer or Compline in our Books of Common Prayer. Vestry members are encouraged to lead the prayer and read the scripture lessons. The Vicar and other vestry members will happily teach anyone, how to lead the Daily Office.

The Agenda, Minutes, Financial Report and Attendance Report are emailed to all members and/or posted on line at <http://www.stmatthewsar.org/vestry->

[reports](#) before the Vestry meeting. We try to have these to the Vestry a week in advance of our meeting for their review and update.

The vestry agenda is usually developed by the Vicar and Senior Warden, and sent out about a week ahead of time. The agenda serves both as a reminder to vestry members of any report preparation that is needed and to solicit other agenda items that require the Vestry's attention.

Minutes, Financial Reports, Attendance Reports, and Agendas for past and upcoming Vestry meetings are also posted on our website at <http://www.stmatthewsar.org/vestry-reports>.

Vestry members are encouraged, for the sake of keeping the vestry meeting within its time constraints, to have read the minutes and the financial reports before the Vestry meeting, so corrections and questions can be expediently addressed. Copies of the last month's Minutes, the (partial) Financial Report and the Agenda are made available for you at the meeting.

Vestry members are sometimes asked to serve on committees, or other church organization, both formally and informally beyond that of the Vestry. When vestry members serve on a committee normally we ask for an update report from that committee's business.

For the Vestry to proceed with official business there must be a quorum; with a seven member Vestry that would mean four members must be present for official business to be completed. Thankfully, the Vestry most often works with more than the minimum of four members.

If vestry members know they cannot attend a scheduled meeting, or will be arriving late, it is a courtesy to inform the Vicar or the Senior Warden of this so proceedings are not delayed in anticipation of your attendance.

Communication within the Vestry beyond our monthly meeting.

The vestry communicates within their membership via email, phone calls, and in person.

Sometimes the vestry is polled via phone calls or email when a timely decision needs our attention. Normally the Scribe of the Vestry helps to monitor these sessions, and records them as a 'Special Vestry Meeting'. This work is then recorded in the official minutes.

The Vestry norms should be reviewed at least once a year, so that the norms stay current, and all serving vestry members can uphold them as part of their call to serve.

Vestry and the church membership

It is by your baptism that you are empowered to discern where God is calling you to lead St Matthew's. However you are encouraged to keep up an active relationship with all the members of the church.

Each week vestry members will be assigned to greet people beyond that of the scheduled greeters before and after church. Vestry members will be provided a name badge identifying them by name and as vestry members.

Each month a different Vestry Member will be assigned to make phone calls to multiple people or multiple family units of the church, and ask them if they have a prayer request for the next gathering of St Matthew's Vestry. During the worship time of our monthly vestry meetings, these prayer requests will be offered by the Vestry as part of our worship.

During the warmer months of the year the Vestry has hosted Sunday Hospitality after worship at both 8:30 and 11:00 AM. Vestry person(s) usually encourages person of the congregation to host, bringing beverage, and snack for fellowship immediately following the service. The Vestry person(s) in charge of Sunday Hospitality are responsible for reminding families of their turn to host, and keeping the hosting list updated. (This has been added in the January 22 update).

Communication with the church body at times may be in person, by phone or through email as appropriate. Communication is encouraged. If vestry members make the effort to respond to each member of the congregation at St. Matthew's in a personal way, the congregation is more likely to be involved in the work of the church as well – lessening our work as vestry members!

Cannon 25 of the Episcopal Dioceses of Arkansas

CANON 25. Of the Powers and Duties of Parish Vestries

Section 1. As soon as may be after their election, the persons elected to the parish vestry shall assemble at such time and place as the Rector or priest-in-charge shall appoint or as shall be designated by any two members of the vestry, the Rector or priest-in-charge and each member of the vestry being notified, and proceed to organize the vestry. The proceedings of this and every meeting of the vestry shall be opened with prayer by the Rector or priest-in-charge or if absent by any member who may be chosen to preside over the meeting.

Section 2. Every person elected to the vestry shall, in order to qualify as such, subscribe to the following declaration and promise: "I believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, and to contain all things necessary to salvation; and I do yield my hearty assent and approbation to the doctrine, worship and discipline of The Episcopal Church; and I promise that I will faithfully execute the office of a member of the vestry of Parish, or Church, in County, according to my best knowledge and skill." No person shall act or vote as a member of the vestry without first subscribing to this declaration and promise in a public service of the Church.

Section 3. A Senior Warden shall be appointed annually from among the vestry by the Rector or priest-in-charge, or if there be none, then by the Bishop. The vestry shall elect annually, from among its members, a Junior Warden. The vestry shall likewise elect annually a Secretary and a Treasurer, who need not be chosen from among the vestry. All persons so appointed or elected shall continue in office until their successors shall have been chosen and qualified.

Section 4. All vestries shall meet at least once a month except for good cause. With the agreement of the Wardens, the Rector or priest-in-charge may postpone or combine regularly scheduled meetings, but in no event shall less than 9 meetings be held in a given year. The Rector or priest-in-charge if present, shall preside at all meetings of the vestry, and be entitled to give the deciding vote in case of a tie. In the absence of the Rector or priest-in-charge the Senior or Junior Warden may preside. All vestry meetings shall be subject to call of the Rector or priest-in-charge; but in case of failure, at the request of members of the vestry, to call a meeting, such members of the vestry, if they deem it necessary, may themselves call a meeting, giving notice thereof to the Rector or priest-in-charge and to each member of the vestry. A majority of the vestry who have qualified, exclusive of the Rector or priest-in-charge shall constitute a quorum.

Section 5. Vacancies occurring in the vestry shall be filled within a reasonable time by vote of the remaining members and the person so elected shall serve for the remainder of the unexpired term of the person succeeded. The failure of any member-elect of the vestry to qualify within a reasonable time; the continued neglect of any member to attend the meetings of the vestry without adequate reason; the failure of a member to maintain the requirements for Vestry

Members set forth in Canon 24, Section 6(c); or the failure of a Vestry Member to comply with the oath set forth in Canon 25, Section 2 may, after due warning, be deemed to create a vacancy. Any person so elected for an unexpired term of one year or less shall be eligible for re-election by the Annual Meeting for a successive three (3) year term. Whether or not a vacancy exists shall be determined by a majority vote of the vestry present at a meeting at which there is a quorum, after receiving the recommendations of the Rector. Any member of the vestry who resigns or is removed from the vestry shall not be eligible for election to the vestry either by an Annual Meeting or by the vestry until more than one (1) year has expired following the date of such removal or resignation.

Section 6. It shall be the duty of the vestry to determine upon and elect a Rector or priest-in-charge; to cooperate in promoting the spiritual welfare of the cure; to support the Rector or priest-in-charge properly, to see that the salary is paid regularly and punctually; to make and execute all contracts for the erection, furnishing, preserving and insuring the Church edifice and other property; to make all necessary provisions for Church music, with the advice and consent and subject to the control of the Rector or priest-in-charge; and generally, as the constituted agent of the parish or congregation, to transact all its temporal business.

Section 7. It shall be the duty of the Wardens to keep watch over all Church property, to see that it is duly prepared for every occasion of public worship; to provide out of the parish funds, under the direction of the vestry, a sufficient supply of vestments and books to be used in public worship, and also the elements for each celebration of the Holy Communion; to attend to the accommodation of the congregation with seats, and to maintain order and decorum in the time of public worship. Real property and interests in real property held or to be acquired by the Parish shall be acquired in the name of the Rector and Wardens of the Parish and their successors in interest or in the name of the Bishop of the Diocese and the successors to that office as determined by the Vestry. In accordance with Title I, Canon 7.4 of the Canons for the Government of The Episcopal Church, all real and personal property owned or held by the Parish shall be held and administered by the Wardens and Vestry as trustees for the benefit of the Diocese and the Episcopal Church.

Section 8. In case there shall be a non-parochial presbyter or deacon of the Church residing within the parish whose conduct is unbecoming or contrary to the Canons of the Church, the Wardens shall, in writing, give notice thereof to the Ecclesiastical Authority.

Section 9. It shall be the duty of the Secretary of the vestry to keep correct entries of all proceedings of the vestry in a well bound book to be provided for that purpose.

Section 10. It shall be the duty of the Treasurer to take charge of all parish funds, except Communion alms and other special offerings and funds, to disburse the same under the direction of