

Senior Warden Job Description

Qualifications and Gifts:

- Have a love of God and demonstrate a commitment to following the way of Christ
- Be active in and knowledgeable about the congregation, its programs and governance
- Be known as someone who is fair, interacts well with people and is respected by members of the congregation
- Have respect and, preferably, affection for the rector
- Have an ability to "check one's ego at the door," to be a servant of the people without a need to be the "most important person" in the congregation or to be the one with the right answers to everything
- Have an enthusiasm and vitality for this vocation

Time Commitment:

- Vestry meetings
- Vestry retreat (if applicable)
- Weekly worship services (rotating occasionally if more than one)
- Parish events: coffee hours, meals, fundraisers, adult education programs, etc.
- Weekly meetings with the rector (Junior Warden and other staff), if required
- Diocesan meetings, as necessary
- Annual Meeting
- Consistent communications and coordination regarding church business with the vestry

Responsibilities:

- Meet regularly with the rector to review the life and work of the congregation, plan ahead, anticipate and resolve problems
- Provide leadership in the vestry to identify the vision, mission and goals of the congregation, make and implement plans, assess progress and celebrate achievements
- Provide leadership in the congregation by demonstrating a consistent positive attitude that seeks to solve problems and learn from mistakes, recognizes accomplishments and gives thanks for those things that build community and further the mission of the church
- Pray regularly for the rector, leaders and members of the congregation

- Be available to discuss any and all concerns with the rector; maintain confidentiality where appropriate
- Be available to discuss any and all concerns with members of the congregation; avoid making hasty judgments, encourage complainants to speak to those involved, discuss problems with the rector
- In cases where the rector, staff or vestry is beleaguered or unfairly criticized, foster understanding and reconciliation, distribute accurate information, etc.
- Ensure that policies and procedures regarding employee and volunteer misconduct are in place and enforced; take any questions, complaints and concerns to the rector and/or appropriate authorities immediately
- Take action to intervene promptly (with others as appropriate) in the event that the rector is charged with misconduct, has problems with drugs or alcohol or is acting inappropriately; speak with the rector and the bishop as necessary and appropriate
- Support the rector in taking action when employees or volunteers are charged with misconduct or inappropriate behavior
- In cases where conflict imperils the pastoral relationship between the rector and congregation, the rector or a majority vote of the vestry may ask the bishop, in writing, to intervene; the senior warden traditionally makes this petition on behalf of the vestry
- In cases where the rector is overworked, disregarding his or her health and well being, and that of the family, encourage the rector to take corrective steps, solicit the vestry's support in reducing workload, adding staff, funding a sabbatical, etc as appropriate
- Assist in identifying persons for leadership roles; may also participate in inviting them to serve in those roles
- Be prepared to assist the rector or to step in and do what is necessary (make an announcement, turn up the heat, write a letter, etc.)
- With the rector, announce the bishop's pending visit and prepare a report on the spiritual and temporal state of the congregation to be discussed with the bishop during the bishop's visitation (Canon III. 14.1. e)

In the Absence of a Rector:

- If the congregation's rector leaves, notify the bishop promptly and make provisions for worship services (Canon III. 17.1);
- If the congregation is without a rector, lead the congregation, ensuring that the worship services, program and pastoral care needs of the congregation are met, that the selection process for a new rector is established, that employee relations and communications with the diocese are maintained;

- Prepare a Letter of Agreement with the proposed new rector;
- Ensure that the name of the person proposed to be called as rector is submitted to the bishop thirty days before the election is to be held; deliver written notice of the election of a rector to the bishop (Canon III.17.2 and 3).

Accountability: A covenant in which both the rector and warden agree on the roles and responsibilities of the warden is developed in conversation with the vestry. A yearly mutual ministry assessment process should be established for the warden along with the rector, vestry members and other leaders.

Additional responsibilities:

These responsibilities may apply in some congregations. Often they are more applicable in smaller congregations, especially those without full-time clergy. In cases where the clergy primarily provide Sunday services and pastoral care, the wardens may provide the primary leadership in the congregation. There are also congregations where there is a tradition of the senior warden providing more leadership or clergy who desire a more shared ministry and thus choose to ask the senior warden to take on some of the leadership roles traditionally or canonically assigned to the clergy.

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