**Ascension & St. George’s**

**Rector Position Description**

**Objective**

The Rector will lead the members of the church as well as those who live in the communities which constitute the parishes to know and share the Good News of Jesus Christ. The Rector will help empower the parishes to adopt effectively a multi-site model of church, deepen the discipleship practices of current members, and build relationships with those who live in the immediate communities so that more people will come into a transformative relationship with Jesus Christ through Ascension and St. George’s Churches.

**Role of the Rector**

The Rector is the Executive Director of the parishes, an ordained Priest of the church and a colleague in ministry with all the baptized. An ordained Priest, the Rector serves as Principal Pastor, Teacher, and Minister of the people among whom s/he works.[[1]](#footnote-1) On behalf of the Bishop of Washington, the Rector exercises primary oversight of the parishes, in accordance with the Canons of the Church and together with the Vestries, over which the Rector presides.

**Responsibility & Accountability of the Rector**

The Rector serves under the authority of the Bishop of Washington. With the bishop’s consent, the Rector and Vestries will agree more specifically how the Rector will exercise her/his ministry within the community and how, in turn, the parishes will support the ministry of the Rector.[[2]](#footnote-2) The Church Wardens and vestries will meet regularly with the Rector to provide specific feedback. The Rector and Vestries, together, will annually conduct a Ministry Review of their shared responsibilities to inform and direct their work.

The work of the Rector is governed by the Constitution & Canons of The General Convention of the Episcopal Church and of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Directly reporting to the Rector are the several part-time staff members of both congregations. The Rector works with the Vestries, including their officers and committees.

The Rector functions in relation to other organizations of the parishes as a recruiter of volunteer leaders, consultant on process and content, and educator and enabler, when needed, of each organization in its efforts to define and carry out its tasks. S/he may exercise the right of veto on all matters relative to the spiritual welfare of the parish. There may be other duties, not outlined here, that fall to the Rector in the normal course of parish life.

**Essential Responsibilities of the Rector**

**General Responsibilities**

* Share with the Bishop in the the oversight of Patuxent and William & Mary Parishes.
* Sustain the community of the faithful by the ministry of Word and Sacrament, presiding at the celebration of the Holy Eucharist and other worship services as mutually agreed.
* Grow disciples and nuture their development, supporting the ministries of the priesthood of all believers.
* Encourage church growth with efforts toward spiritual and numerical growth.
* Work with regional, diocesan, national and ecumenical efforts of the church.

**Local Responsibilities**

* Deepen, develop and nurture the covenantal relationship by a common vision and strategy.
* Develop, equip and empower the priesthood of all believers through various ministries.
* Identify opportunities for shared ministries and help create relational ties between the parishes.

**Particular Responsibilities**

**Leadership & Oversight**

Grow both congregations by enhancing their overall disciple-making capacity in order to more effectively impact St. Mary’s County in the name of Christ.

* Oversee parish administration.
* Develop a strategic plan to help both congregations flourish and thrive collaboratively.
* Support stewardship of money, time and resources.
* Maintain or cause the maintenance of parish register, calendar, and other records.

**Membership & Mission Development**

Develop new, more effective parish systems in order to deepen discipleship and reach new members.

* Spend sufficient time in the community to ascertain unmet needs and ministry opportunities.
* Instruct, support and lead as the identified evangelist, helping parishioners talk about their faith and creating opportunities when/where these stories can be shared.
* Develop and clarify the standards of membership, working together with leadership bodies of the parishes.
* Make space for investment in new ministries and worship opportunities in order to reach beyond existing membership.
* Develop and oversee newcomers integration programs and ministries.

**Worship & Music**

Lead the church in growing both traditional and emerging expressions of worship in order to praise God and evangelize the local communities.

* Ensure that at least one service of Holy Eucharist is offered at each parish church on Sunday when the Rector is in residence.
* Attempt to maintain two Sunday worship services at each parish church with additional clergy/lay staff as enabled by the vestries. (Covenant)
* Develop new worship opportunities.
* Provide oversight in the selection of service music, Eucharistic prayers and other liturgical resources.
* Oversee and help develop a wide network of lay participation in all forms of worship ministries.

**Christian Formation**

Support all persons in the exercise of their ministry as baptized persons in order to equip and empower evangelists.

* Preach sermons that instruct, inspire and apply to daily life, usually with a biblical basis.
* Maintain and/or develop opportunities for lifelong Christian formation, available for all members of the church.
* Nurture new believers.
* Offer baptism, marriage, burial, confirmation and other Rites of the church, along with suitable preparation and formation.
* Supervise the ministry of childcare during worship.
* Develop and help coordinate other formational offerings as appropriate.

**Pastoral Care**

Care alike for young and old, strong and weak, rich and poor, and help develop effective networks of pastoral care.

* Oversee the care of individuals and families, and develop a regular pattern of visitation.
* Equip the priesthood of all believers to extend pastoral care to one another.
* Make necessary referrals for counseling and other services.
* Model good self-care.

**Communications**

Create dynamic communication which articulates the mission-purpose of ministries.

* Identify, develop and use technologies that advance the mission of the parishes.
* Create a vision and strategy for effective communication within the parishes.
* Oversee the incorporation of technology.

**Management of Parish Assets & Finances**

* Ensure that parish assets serve the mission of God, not their own maintenance.
* Oversee and manage use of all buildings and furnishings therein.

**Community Engagement & Outreach**

Paying special attention to the poor, the weak, the sick, the lonely, and the marginalized, building relationships with all who live in the local communities in order that more people will come into a transformative life with Christ through Ascension and St. George’s Churches.

* Become familiar with outreach ministries of the parishes as well as the greater community.
* Provide oversight and support of all outreach ministries.
* Develop a long-term strategy for transformative justice-based ministries which will build up The Episcopal Church St. Mary’s County.
* Represent the parishes to the community and the wider church by taking her/his part in community organizations, ministerial associations, regional, diocesan, and church involvement.

**Stewardship**

Increase generosity of time, talent, and treasure in the parishes in order to support the congregations’ budget(s), vision(s), and goal(s).

* Educate by word and example that stewardship is a spiritual practice.
* Uphold in personal practice the church’s standards of giving.
* Instruct members that they should make a will, and that they should give prayerful consideration to including the church in their bequests.[[4]](#footnote-4)

**Other Duties as stated in the Canons**

* Announce the bishop’s visit and provide the bishop with information about the spiritual and temporal states of the congregations.
* As determined by each parish, apply contributions to charitable uses.
* Read communications from House of Bishops at worship.
* Record all Baptisms, Marriages, Confirmations and Burials in the parish register.

**The Parishes, The Congregations & The Call**

After several years of discussion, two Episcopal parishes in southern St. Mary’s County, eight miles apart, have agreed to ‘yoke.’ This agreement is for an initial three-year period. Each parish is of similar size in terms of average Sunday attendance and has roughly equivalent financial resources. Both are approaching a time when neither can afford a full-time priest and both find it in their mutual best interest to share a clergy person so that a full-time pastoral presence can be maintained. For this initial three-year period, the two parishes are maintaining their individual identity, to include separate finances and vestries. One of the hopes for this initial three-year period is that the Rector will be able to identify opportunities for shared ministry and where economies of scale can be achieved with shared resources.

One parish is an historic church with adjacent cemetery, founded before the American Revolution. Its context is rural and its early morning Sunday service tends to be the better-attended worship offering. This parish has deep and intertwining roots with St. Mary’s County. It began as a local chapel of ease, and in its long 300+ year history, has had a full time priest for only 60 of those years.

The other parish was established post-World War II to serve the growing naval base. In its seven-decade history, it has become known and depended upon for its outreach ministries and music programs. Indeed, its outreach programs are an essential part of its identity. The parish initially served the surrounding neighborhood; however, the neighborhood is in transition with fully one-third of the housing stock vacant or in the midst of foreclosure. The majority of parishioners live five or more miles away from the church, now regarded as being in the middle of the “hood.” In this regard, the parish is the church, serving a population that is not included in its membership. In terms of weekly worship, its later morning service with music is the better-attended service.

St. Mary’s County is growing and has grown significantly since the Patuxent River Naval Air Station was commissioned in 1943. Ascension & St. George’s are set in a comfortable middle class community where most working residents are employed within the County. While education level on the whole is not especially high (40.2% of residents over the age of 25 had bachelor’s or graduate degrees in 2013), income is above midrange (median household income was $78,233 in 2013), and St. Mary’s is the 14th wealthiest county in the United States. Because of a significant median income gap between those who work ‘on base’ versus those who work ‘off base’, however, there is much income disparity throughout the county but localized in the particular context of Lexington Park. Both congregations capitalized on the growth of the 1950’s, built adequate physical plants, and have developed good pools of lay leadership. However, prosperity for the congregations peaked not long after they created new, stand-alone parish entities. Church membership is ethnically and economically homogeneous. Church membership is growing older.

The Rector must have skill as a pastor and preacher, previous parochial experience, a high degree of social affability and awareness, and ability to deal creatively with change and conflict. The Rector must feel called to learn about existing congregational cultures and be interested in helping each body adapt to new model(s).

Typical challenges the Rector will face in meeting his/her objective are: A sense of loss from some who feel the collaborative model is an admission of ‘failure.’ A minority view which resists change. A financial crunch brought on by decreasing membership base, lack of systematic stewardship development, and a feeling that we can ‘fundraise’ our way out of deficit spending. The Rector will also invariably face challenges which come from being the first person in a long time to serve two separate congregations through one call.

In meeting these challenges, the Rector will continually reiterate the vision behind this collaborative call and seek to deepen the engagement of lay leadership. The Rector works closely with each Vestry, which helps the Rector oversee all aspects of managing the physical and financial resources of the parish as well as providing the central point of lay coordination of parish goals, priorities, and programs. To assist in the oversight of the shared call, the respective Vestries have appointed representatives to a Joint Executive Committee (JEC) so that a mechanism is in place to resolve the inevitable issues that will arise in such a shared arrangement.

1. See the ordination liturgies in *The Book of Common Prayer*. As Pastor, the Rector declares God’s forgiveness to penitent sinners, pronounces God’s blessing, shares in the administration of Holy Baptism, celebrates the mysteries of Christ’s Body and Blood, and cares alike for young and old, strong and weak, rich and poor. As Teacher, the Rector builds up the family of God, strengthening them through intentional formation in the Holy Scriptures, the sacraments, church doctrine, the order and history of The Episcopal Church, and Christian stewardship to glorify Christ. Because the Rector exercises the bishop’s oversight for the ministry of The Episcopal Church in Patuxent and William & Mary Parishes, s/he will participate in the life of the Diocese of Washington and wider church. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Careful attention to local congregational cultures will initially be given high priority. Some work must be done on parish grounds, and the Rector will strive to make his/her presence known as often as possible. Overall, the Rector will strive for a work/time balance in equal parts between the two campuses. The respective Vestries will help both the Rector as well as the congregation adapt to the new model. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Essential functions of the Rector are organized under the duties specified in the *Constitution & Canons of the Episcopal Church*, III.9.6. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. From *The Book of Common Prayer*, p.445: “The Minister of the Congregation is directed to instruct the people, from time to time, about the duty of Christian parents to make prudent provision for the well-being of their families, and of all persons to make wills, while they are in health, arranging for the disposal of their temporal goods, not neglecting, if they are able, to leave bequests for religious and charitable uses.” [↑](#footnote-ref-4)