

A few questions...

- Are you familiar with the concept of behavioral norms for meetings?
- Does your vestry currently have a behavioral covenant in place?
- Are you aware of the difference between “rules” and “covenants”?



Webinar technical notes

- ECF may need to mute all participants to limit background noise and audio interference
- To start your web cameras, press the “Start my Web Cam” button and “Start Sharing”
- If you have questions, please type them into the chat box on the right-hand side of the screen
- PDFs of the slides and resource list are available for download
- This webinar is being recorded and will be made public



Vestry Covenants: A Foundation for Future Vitality

Presented by Miguel Escobar and Brendon Hunter
January 24, 2017



The Episcopal Church Foundation (ECF)

Independent, lay led organization, founded in 1949

Empowers congregations through visioning and planning, leadership development, and raising financial resources for ministry

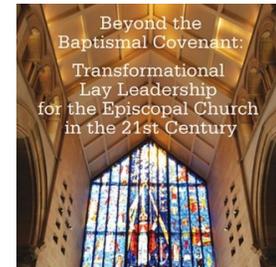
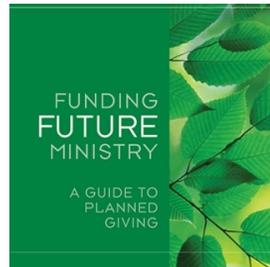
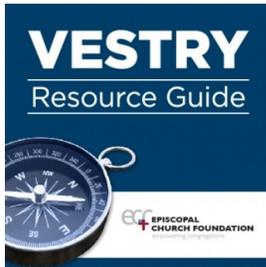


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- Lay and clergy leaders work together to transform the Church
- Healthy, vital, vibrant Episcopal communities of faith
- Meaningful opportunities for Christian stewardship and effective fundraising
- Innovative, mission-based ways to be the Church of the future



ECF Publications



ECF publications are distributed by Forward Movement,
www.ForwardMovement.org or by calling 800-543-1813.



Prayer

Almighty God, you sent your Son Jesus Christ to reconcile the world to yourself: We praise and bless you for those whom you have sent in the power of the Spirit to preach the Gospel to all nations. We thank you that in all parts of the earth a **community of love** has been gathered together by their prayers and labors, and that in every place your servants call upon your Name; for the kingdom and power and glory are yours for ever. Amen.

Book of Common Prayer, Page 838



Presentation Overview

1. Covenants in congregational life
2. Practices for creating strong covenants
3. Covenant examples and resources
4. Discussion on practical next steps



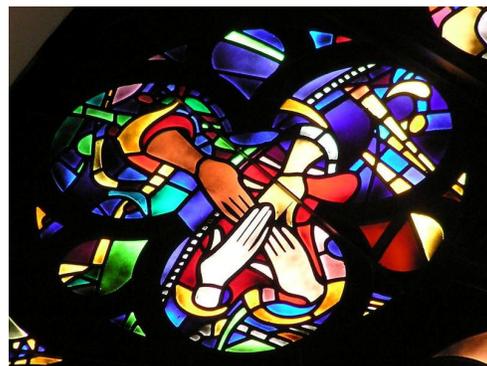
What is a covenant?

Covenant

“a formal and serious agreement or promise”

comes from Anglo-French, *covenir* to be fitting

Source: Merriam-Webster; <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/covenant>



Covenants in scripture

- Jeremiah and the promise of a new covenant
- Jesus and the blood of the new covenant
- Covenants between people:
Abraham, Isaac, Abimelech, Jacob,
etc.



Covenants in congregational life: Two examples

Vestry covenant:



Covenant for starting a new
worship service:



How covenants differ from rules

“When a legal rule is broken, we seek compensation. When a covenant is broken, we seek understanding and recommitment. We want to know what went wrong. What are we having trouble with? How do we try again?”



Focusing on issues and behaviors, not personalities

- Understanding the “behavioral” in behavioral covenant
- Behaviors are negotiable; persons and personalities are not
- Example of meeting member who doesn’t allow others to speak



Questions?

Practices for creating strong covenants

Covenants make implicit practices,
explicit – and therefore open to
review and discussion

Addresses “But we’ve always done
it this way...”



Starting the year off right and staying on track

- Creating a covenant during the first vestry retreat
- Making the covenant visible throughout the year
- Reviewing the covenant quarterly



Helpful elements in covenants

- Emphasis on work of vestry as spiritual leadership
- Agenda and meeting preparation
- Affirmation of specific behaviors such as starting and ending meetings on time, regular attendance, rules around cell phone usage
- Framework for criticism: behaviors, not persons, describing a situation versus evaluating a situation, Using “I” statements versus “some people”
- Confidentiality balanced with the need for transparency

Questions?

Conversation prompts:

- What are some “implicit practices” that govern how things are done at your vestry meetings?
- Are there positive things that your vestry is currently doing that a covenant could reaffirm?
- Can you imagine a scenario when a covenant has to be significantly changed mid-year? How would you go about doing this?

Examples and Resources

Examples of strong vestry covenants:

- <http://www.ecfvp.org/tools/vestry-covenants-and-norms/>
- Church of Transfiguration in Dallas, TX
- St. Stephen's in Severn Parish, MD
- St. Andrew's in Ayer, MA



Examples and Resources

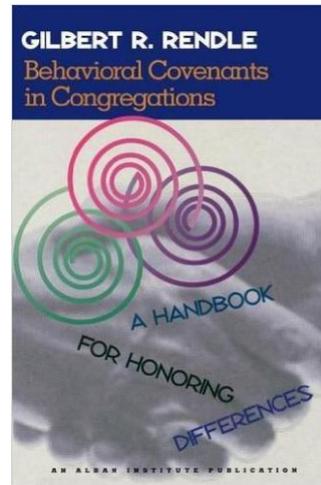
Examples of strong vestry covenants:

- <http://www.ecfvp.org/tools/vestry-covenants-and-norms/>
- St. David's in Austin, TX
- Congregational Covenants from Episcopal Diocese of GA



Examples and Resources

- Behavioral Covenants in Congregations: A Handbook for Honoring Differences by Gil Rendle
- Moravian Covenant for congregations and entire denomination



Practical next steps

- Consider how a covenant can be used outside the vestry, including starting a new service
- Practice offering feedback about behaviors rather than persons
- Start to name the implicit norms of how the vestry meets
- Use the first vestry retreat to draft the coming year's behavioral covenant



Practical next steps



- Make sure to include key elements such as “vestry work is that of spiritual leadership”
- Review the strong examples of vestry covenants on ECF Vital Practices
- Consider purchasing Gil Rendle’s book “Behavioral Covenants in Congregations: A Handbook for Honoring Differences”

Contact us

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