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- PDF's of the slides and resource list are downloadable
- This webinar is being recorded and will be made public



Senior Warden Ministry: Mission Impossible?

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The Episcopal Church Foundation?



Independent, lay led organization, founded in 1949

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

Through our programs, ECF is building a Church...

- 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

Senior Warden Ministry

- Roles and Responsibilities
- Challenges and Pitfalls
- Typical Questions of an Incoming Senior Warden
- Top Five Tips to Ensure a Rewarding Term



Church Roles: Similes to Real World

- Rector is like the Chief Executive Officer – daily responsibility for all operational matters, including staff supervision
- Vestry is like a Board of Directors – focused on mission, vision, and governance; support of operations, but not in charge of operations
- Senior Warden is like the Chair of Board of Directors – responsible for interaction with CEO, leading Board, public face

Roles – continued

- Traditional Senior Warden role: “Rector’s Warden”
 - Junior Warden role as “People’s Warden” and facilities-focused
 - Senior Warden worked with Rector to “run” the parish
- Modern Senior Warden role
 - Larger parish: shared partnership with Junior Warden
 - Medium to small parish: maintain traditional roles

Responsibilities

- **Rector support – operational and pastoral**
 - Health and family
 - Life-work balance
- **Sounding-board for Rector**
 - Mission
 - Vision
 - Goals
 - Staffing or congregational issues

Responsibilities - continued

- **Heightened focus**
 - Governance
 - Balancing long-term focus with short-term needs
- **Run/organize the Vestry**
 - Run Vestry meetings – depends on rector
 - Committee structures – talent recognition and team approach
 - Candidates for lay leadership
 - Distribute and source resources/information

Challenges and Pitfalls: Rector

- **Mutual Ministry Review**
 - Be open and honest: two-way review
 - Consider use of outside facilitator
- **Departure/Transition**
 - Communication is critical – Diocese, Vestry, and Parish
 - Wardens become temporary CEOs, in part
 - Role with Search Committee

Challenges and Pitfalls: Staff

- **Critical focus**
 - Make sure staff ministry reviews actually occur and are documented
 - Make sure accountability occurs
 - Encourage candor and deadlines when changes are needed
 - Help do what needs to be done – especially when it is hard
- **Remember that you are responsible to an entire congregation**

Challenges and Pitfalls: Parish

- Simple equations:
 - aligned clergy + aligned staff + aligned vestry = healthy parish
 - dysfunctional clergy, staff OR vestry = unhealthy parish
 - gossiping clergy, staff, OR vestry = unhealthy parish
- Basic statistics:
 - Vast majority people attend church 1-2 times a week, at most; these people want no drama in their experience
 - A select few attend virtually every church event and nearly all of their relationships/life are church-based; these people can cause the drama and thrive on it

Challenges and Pitfalls: Parish

- Get out there with the congregation
 - Town halls
 - Go to events
 - Be visible – nametags, email address
 - Monthly email blast or article
 - Encourage conflict management and resolution

Challenges and Pitfalls: Budget

- **Operational budgets**
 - Proper allocation of funds and audit
 - Grow areas
 - IT budget
- **Capital needs**
 - Plant study
 - Schedule of improvements
 - Multi-use space
- **Fundraising campaigns (annual and projects)**
 - Is the time right?
 - What does success look like?
 - Donor fatigue?
 - Generational differences
 - Use of former senior wardens
 - Lessons learned
 - Help in fundraising efforts

Typical Questions of a Newly Appointed Senior Warden

- **Partnership and collaboration**
 - Meet with rector
 - Meet with junior warden
 - Non-Negotiables: trust, confidentiality, commitment
- **Demand an orientation for yourself and new vestry members!**
 - Ask what is expected
 - Provide written materials

Typical Questions of a Newly Appointed Senior Warden – cont.

- **Election timing and transition of wardens**
 - Timing of election – invite new vestry members (or candidates) to 3-4 meetings
 - Rector should have warden succession plan (suggest it, if not)
 - Meeting of incoming and outgoing wardens is essential
- **Read! Read! Read!**
 - Good resources from diocese and TEC
 - Read governance and other key docs (notebook)
 - Remember you are a fiduciary – act like it! You have potential legal liability.

Top Five Tips to Ensure a Rewarding Term as Senior Warden

1. Set three goals AND only three goals – focus on them at each meeting
2. Communicate! Do it often and be as transparent as possible
3. Establish a Vestry Covenant and ensure people follow it
4. Know key parish policies or governance issues
5. Do everything you can to ensure an orderly leadership transition via proper orientation

**“ And, as always, should you be captured,
the Rector and Vestry will disavow and
knowledge of your actions. This Webinar
will self-destruct in five seconds ”
following completion. Good luck!**

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