

What do you bring to the table?

There are certain core abilities needed for a vestry to be most effective: proficiency in Episcopal spiritual practices, ability to work as part of a team, understanding and acceptance of Episcopal Church polity regarding the parish church, skill in areas of work that are routine for the vestry of this parish.

Assess yourself and the vestry as a whole in each area

1. Proficiency in Episcopal spiritual practices – This is central because it has to do with those responsible for aspects of parish oversight “getting the business we are in.” It doesn’t mean that vestry members should be experts in pastoral and ascetical theology but that the vestry will work most effectively if members live the Christian life -- have a stated spiritual discipline, are at the Sunday Eucharist weekly, pray the Daily Prayers of the Church in some form, have ways of being reflective about their life and responsibilities, participate in some aspects of parish community life (e.g., coffee hour), and can articulate the relationship between faith and their daily life (in workplace, family and friends, civic life)

a. My proficiency in Episcopal Spiritual Practices

Needs attention	1	2	3	4	5	Is adequate or strong
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Notes:

b. My impression of the proficiency of the vestry as a whole

Needs attention	1	2	3	4	5	Is adequate or strong
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2. Ability to work as part of a team – All groups have three interdependent elements to manage; there’s a task to work on, relationships to manage, and individuals come into a group with their own needs and wants. Each element has associate behaviors and skills that help effectiveness. The three elements that may work together in harmony or may come into tension. A group that is excessively task-oriented may get the job done but may build up resentments among its members because relationship and individual needs are not adequately addressed. A group that is overly relationship -oriented may enjoy being together, but let its task drift. The most effective groups are those that learn how to attend to all three aspects of the group’s life.

a. My skills for helping a team accomplish its task, manage its relationships and attend to individual needs and wants.

Low skill	1	2	3	4	5	High skill
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Notes:

b. My impression of the skill of the vestry as a whole

Low skill	1	2	3	4	5	High skill
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3. Understanding and acceptance of the Episcopal Church's polity regarding the parish

church – For example, the role of the diocesan bishop in relationship to the parish and the rector/vicar, national and diocesan canon law in regard to the parish, the authority of the Book of Common Prayer, the parish in relationship to the diocese and diocesan convention, that a vestry is not a board of directors, etc.

a. My understanding and acceptance

Low	1	2	3	4	5	High
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Notes:

b. My impression of the understanding and acceptance of the vestry as a whole

Low	1	2	3	4	5	High
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Notes:

4. Clarity regarding the role of the vestry in this parish - Is the role the basic work of overseeing property and finances (as required in the canons)? To what extent is the vestry going to be involved in setting and monitoring the overall direction of the parish or participate in the strategic management task of navigating the parish toward its goals and through its politics? Is this vestry willing/able to give

the time needed given the extent of involvement desired? How much centralization do we want? – is everything to come through the vestry? Is there acceptance of legitimate independent action by the rector/vicar? What degree of self-management do we want from working groups and committees?

a. My clarity

Low	1	2	3	4	5	High
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Notes:

b. My impression of the clarity of the vestry as a whole

Low	1	2	3	4	5	High
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5. Competence in areas of work that are routine for the vestry of this parish – The specifics of this will depend on how this vestry approaches the issues of role and centralization noted in #4 above.

a. My competence – the extent to which I bring skills that fit the work of the vestry in this parish

Low	1	2	3	4	5	High
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Notes:

b. My impression of the vestry as a whole - the extent to which we collectively bring skills that fit the work of the vestry in this parish

Low	1	2	3	4	5	High
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6. Overflowing into the parish's life - Being effective at doing its work and managing its own internal life are the most obvious things for a vestry to engage. Beyond all that the vestry has another significant impact on parish life – it is the spirit that overflows from the vestry's life and manifests, or not, the Holy Unity of the church. In an October 2006 “Dearly Beloved” letter to the parish, Father Richard Downing, of Saint James Parish, Capital Hill, DC, wrote this (Note: I have slightly edited his words for this document.) *Leadership and sharing of gifts and talents, however, is not the sole task for our vestry. The whole is much greater than the sum of its parts as each carries within us a piece of a solution to a problem, a perspective that someone else doesn't know, unique experiences that inform our creativity and our compassion. The challenges in working together lie in shaping our actions and our words in consonance with our faith and belief in this communal strength, for it requires great personal discipline, an awareness of our own failings, and time and energy that we may often feel we do not have to give because of other very real demands at home and on our jobs. ...This act can set our hearts free in new ways that could be quite surprising individually and corporately. It extends well beyond just keeping St. James alive but makes it a place where as soon as a person enters our door, they will know Christ is alive, God is worshipped, and human beings are valued.*

My impression of the degree to which this happens in regard to this vestry and parish

Not much	1	2	3	4	5	Very much so
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7. The Purpose of the Parish Church – There are three generally understood purposes of the parish church 1) the worship of God, 2) the formation of the People of God, and 3) a sanctifying relationship with the external “public” the parish is most connected with (usually the neighborhood around the parish, sometimes an entire town or city, other times a particular community, e.g., the performing arts. In practice each has its own integrity and also overlaps with the others.

a. My understanding of, and proficiency in, the ways of liturgy and common prayer

Rather poor	1	2	3	4	5	Rather strong
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Notes:

- b. My understanding of, and proficiency in, the ways in which adults are formed into mature Christians in the Anglican tradition

Rather poor	1	2	3	4	5	Rather strong
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- c. My understanding of, and proficiency in, the ways in which parish churches live in relationship with their external “public” (usually the neighborhood)

Rather poor	1	2	3	4	5	Rather strong
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Robert A. Gallagher, OA & Michelle Heyne, OA , 2015, 2017