

OFFICE OF CHURCHWARDEN

A Diocese of Niagara Manual for Wardens

Revised: May 2012

The Office of Churchwarden has been recognized in the Church for centuries as a position of dignity and responsibility. It dates from the 14th Century, and its importance has increased rather than diminished in modern times and conditions.

The name is derived from the one duty that originally belonged to the office: the custody and oversight (wardenship) of the Church property. Many other duties have been added in later times and, in the faithful and wise discharge of these duties, the laity have contributed valuable service to the Church.

The aim of this manual is to give a clear and concise statement of the duties attached to the Office of Churchwarden in the Diocese of Niagara today.

Please note that the terms "Rector" and "Incumbent" are used interchangeably in this document, as well as the terms "Churchwarden" and "Warden."

Qualifications

A Churchwarden must be of the full age of 18 years, a member of the Vestry, a duly qualified voter and a communicant. (See Canon 4.1 on Vestries and Churchwardens)

Appointment and Status

Appointment: At the annual Vestry meeting of each congregation, one Churchwarden is appointed by the Incumbent. One other is elected by a majority of those present and entitled to vote. The two Churchwardens so elected hold office until the next annual Vestry meeting. They are eligible, one or both, for re-appointment. Many parishes chose to have a Deputy Warden move into the position of Warden, to provide people with an opportunity to learn about the issues before the parish at a given point in time.

In case of the office of Churchwarden becoming vacant during the term of office, the Rector shall, in the case of the Rector's Warden, appoint a successor at a special Vestry meeting or at a public service. In the case of the People's Warden, the Rector shall summon a special Vestry meeting for the purpose of filling the vacancy, in the usual manner.

Designation and Working Relationships: The Wardens are usually known as "Rector's Warden" and "People Warden," but this does not imply any priority or distinction of duties. While they may, for convenience, divide the duties of the office between them, their powers can only be exercised together since they are the joint trustees of the parish.

Together with the Rector, the Wardens form the Corporation of the parish, with perpetual succession under the name of 'The Incumbent and Churchwardens of the Church of _____.' It is this phrase which should be used in all legal documents such as wills, etc., made in the name of the parish.

Duties

While it is necessary to indicate certain distinctions between the rights, duties and responsibilities of Clergy and Churchwardens, it is assumed, as a matter of course, that normally there will be overlapping and that they will work in close co-operation and harmony.

Church Finances: The primary concern of the Wardens is to do everything in their power to ensure that adequate financial support is provided for the Church and that the financial and physical concerns of the parish are efficiently managed. It is important that in matters financial, that the Rector will not incur anything other than sundry expenses on behalf of the parish without consultation with the Churchwardens, nor may they commit the parish to expenditures without the Rector's knowledge.

Relationship to Rector: It is assumed that the relationship between Rector and Wardens be that, wherever possible, of mutual support in the work of ministry within the parish. In addition to the work that they share in the administration and management of the parish, conversations should from time to time be held to ensure the self care of the cleric. For example, each year, the Wardens should have a conversation with the clergy regarding plans for sabbatical leave for which clerics are eligible every seven years.

Offerings, Envelopes and Pre-Authorized Payments: An attempt should be made to encourage all families and individuals to give regularly to the Church proportionally with their income. Every opportunity should be taken to keep the people fully informed of the work of the whole Church – in the Diocese, in Canada and beyond, which they support in their giving. Pre-authorized payments as a form of giving are encouraged as a convenient way of maintaining income throughout the year. The Finance Department in the Synod Office can assist people in setting this up.

Budget: It is required to present to the annual Vestry meeting a budget setting forth clearly the expected expenses for ordinary maintenance, repairs, desirable improvements and expected sources of revenue to finance these costs.

Financial Records: The Wardens shall be responsible for maintaining a proper set of books which reflects at all times the financial position of the parish. They should submit a quarterly statement of expenditures to date compared to the budget authorized at Vestry, to the Parish Council. The books shall be open to the inspection of the rector at all times. They must be presented to the parish auditors to make a proper review. It is the audited financial statements, as defined in the Treasurer's Manual that must be presented at the annual Vestry meeting.

Bank accounts: The bank account (or accounts) should be under the direct control of the Churchwardens. Both Wardens should be signing officers at the bank and, for convenience, there should be a third signing officer, frequently a Deputy Warden. Some parishes also have the Rector designated as an additional signing officer.

Treasurer: If it is deemed advisable, the Churchwardens may themselves appoint or request the Vestry to elect a treasurer, but such an appointment or election does not release the Wardens from their entire responsibility for the finances of the parish.

Signing of cheques: All cheques should be signed by two persons, one of whom must be a Warden. Under no circumstance should individuals become accustomed to signing blank cheques. No Warden or other signing officer may sign a cheque payable to themselves.

Appointment of Parish Staff: The organist and/or choirmaster, and the sexton shall be appointed by the Churchwardens with concurrence of the Incumbent. Any salary of parish staff, determined by the churchwardens, shall be paid from the general church account of the parish, having been processed by Diocesan Payroll Staff. Some staff may serve on a contract basis, but the Diocesan Payroll Administrator can be contacted for an explanation of the legal requirements in paying "contract staff". The office of Vestry Clerk which is usually without remuneration is appointed in the same manner, by the Wardens and with the agreement of the Incumbent.

It is recommended that all Wardens, and parish employees obtain Police Record Checks. The Police Record Checks of clergy of the Diocese are administered through the Office of the Bishop.

The Diocese strongly discourages the appointment of family members of other employees to a paid position in the church, because of the potential of "conflict of interest"

Insurance: At each Vestry meeting, the Churchwardens shall make a full and detailed report of all insurance carried by the parish, and see that the details are recorded in the minutes. It is the duty of the Wardens to see that insurance coverage on church buildings is adequate in the light of a recent evaluation of the church properties.

Parish records: It is the duty of the Wardens to see that a register is kept in which shall be recorded the dates and hours of all services held in the church, names of officiating clergy, number of those present, number of those communicating, etc. The Wardens must also provide the Rector with a register or registers in which to record all weddings, funerals, baptisms and confirmations. It is the duty of the Wardens to ensure that the number of those present at the regular services is entered in the proper register. When registers have been completed, Corporations of the Diocese have the option to have them become part of the Diocesan Archives at McMaster University. The Diocesan Archivist can be contacted for information.

Requisites for worship and sacraments: It is the duty of the Churchwardens to see that all things necessary for the proper and reverent conducting of the worship of the Church and the administration of the sacraments are provided.

At regular services: In the absence of the parish clergy, the Wardens should receive and welcome any visiting clergy or lay readers, visitors and newcomers and, if possible, obtain their names and addresses for the parish records. Sides persons may be appointed to assist the Wardens in these duties.

Clergy vacations: Every Incumbent is entitled by Canon to one calendar month of vacation without any diminution of salary. The Wardens are responsible ensuring that the expenses and honorarium of clerical or lay supply during this time be paid promptly through the parish books. Depending on years of service, some clergy are entitled to additional holiday periods.

Rectories: It is the duty of the Churchwardens to see that the Rectory is maintained in proper condition and that improvements, where necessary, are made at the earliest opportunity. In the annual budget, there should be a provision for the maintenance of the Rectory. If a parish does not own a Rectory, in lieu of providing a rectory, an appropriate housing allowance (typically equivalent for the provision of a three bedroom house) will be provided to the Incumbent.

Volunteer Management and Screening in Faith

It is our desire that the Church be a safe and holy place for all whom our ministry affects. Unfortunately, there have been times in the past when people in positions of trust and authority have caused harm to those who were seeking their help. In seeking to reduce and eliminate abuse or harm within our churches, the purpose of an effective screening and management program is two-fold:

- To help ensure that people in positions of trust and authority are well suited to their positions in terms of skills, interests and attitudes, so that they do not cause harm to others.
- To provide people with the proper training, support, supervision, follow-up, and recognition to ensure that their ministries are life-giving to themselves and others.

In the Diocese of Niagara, we feel that a program of good management and screening for all staff and volunteers is a necessary, important and worthwhile step in maintaining safe and vibrant ministries. In 2001 Niagara began the process bringing all parishes and associated ministries on board with an up to date policy that outlined a 10-step process for implementing a screening and management process. The diocesan policy clearly outlines the expectations that all parishes and associated ministries were expected to be in full compliance with the policy. Although every three years the Diocese has a Volunteer Management and Screening audit, we encourage you to keep this program up to date for ease of administration.

Relationship to Parish Council

The Canon on Parish Councils will act as a guide to Wardens and Parish Councils as to their respective duties. It is as follows:

1. At the annual meeting of the vestry of each congregation of the Diocese, a committee shall be constituted to be known as the Parish Council, and composed of:
 - (i) The Rector or Incumbent
 - (ii) The Churchwardens
 - (iii) The Lay Delegates, or representatives to Synod
 - (iv) Such other members of the congregation as may be elected at the annual Vestry meeting, not fewer than two in number, and
 - (v) Such members of the Vestry as may be appointed by the Rector or Incumbent, not to exceed the number elected under (iv) above.

2. The Parish Council should hold regular meetings, at least quarterly, and its functions should be to consider whether and to what extent the Church in the parish or mission is fulfilling its purpose among its own members, in the community at large, and as part of the Church as a whole. In these deliberations, the work of the parish should be evaluated under the values and initiatives of our current Diocesan Vision for Ministry:



The Parish Council should recommend such steps as will further these ends, the following being particularly recommended.

- (a) To consult with, advise and assist the Rector or Incumbent and Churchwardens and to co-ordinate the activities of the various local church organizations.
- (b) To assist the Churchwardens in securing the funds required for the purposes of the Church.
- (c) To make recommendations with regard to insurance and maintenance of Church property.
- (d) To assist the Rector or Incumbent and Churchwardens in informing the congregation fully of the plans, activities and needs of the whole Church.
- (e) To assist the Churchwardens in preparing for the annual Vestry meeting estimates of receipts and expenditures for the coming year.
- (f) To assist in organizing the congregation for visiting the sick and poor, calling on newcomers, making surveys and canvasses and promoting generally the welfare and progress of the congregation and Church at large.

The Parish and its relationship to Synod

Real Estate: Real Estate can only be purchased, sold or mortgaged pursuant to all the requirements of the Canon on Purchasing, Selling or Mortgaging Church Property; it being understood that any real estate transaction can take place only with the consent of the Bishop and the Synod Council.

(Please note: The Canon on Purchasing, Selling or Mortgaging Church Property requires the approval of two vestry meetings held not less than two weeks apart.)

Building projects: Plans for any new Church building or alterations to church-owned property must be approved in writing by the Bishop or the Bishop's designate, after initial consultation with the Regional Archdeacon. Requirements regarding the process of building projects should first be thoroughly reviewed in consultation with the area Archdeacon.

Memorials: Any windows, furnishings or equipment given as memorials must be approved by the Bishop before being accepted by the Incumbent.

Diocesan Mission and Ministry Assessment: The amount of the DM&M is the congregation's share of the Church's work outside the parish including the work of mission, education and justice. The total amount required is apportioned to the congregations on the basis of the average total income of the congregation for the previous three years, in accordance with the Canon on the Diocesan Budget. It should always be borne in mind that the total amount is the bare minimum required to carry on the existing work of the Church. Some parish income is exempt from the basis of calculation. For specific details, inquire of the Diocesan Treasurer.

The Diocesan Assessment is a primary and direct obligation of the parish.

The Diocesan Assessment payments of the parish should be forwarded monthly to the Synod Office.

Payments to Synod: Cheques sent to the Synod Office whether for assessment, payroll, endowment funds, etc. should be made payable to "The Synod of the Diocese of Niagara". How the amount of the cheque is to be applied should be itemized on an attached memorandum.

Leases and Licensing:

Where a parish intends to offer a lease of property for a term in excess of three years, inclusive of all renewals, consent is required by the Vestry affected, the Bishop and the Synod of the Diocese of Niagara.

A parish is not prohibited to offer a lease or a license of space for property for a term less than three years, provided that before such offer, the Vestry of the parish affected authorizes, by a majority vote at a meeting called for such purpose, and the Rector and Wardens execute all documentation necessary. A template for documentation is found on the Diocesan Website at: www.niagara.anglican.ca under "Synod of Niagara" (Policies and Documents).

Safe Church / Misconduct Policy:

The Diocese of Niagara undertakes to ensure that all activities, work and pronouncements, with which it is engaged, uphold the values of love, truth and justice and are demonstrably free from violence, coercion, and discrimination.

- It is our policy that sexual assault, sexual harassment, or sexual abuse of any kind, whether to an adult, adolescent or child, male or female, by or to any staff person, contract employee or volunteer, will not be tolerated.
- We will actively try to prevent such occurrences and deal with any accusations promptly, seriously and systematically, in cooperation with proper authorities where appropriate.
- Particularly in relationships of trust where power and authority and confidentiality are dynamic, the greatest of care will be exercised to avoid taking advantage of trust, or abusing power and the responsibility of authority.
- At all times an ethic of mutual respect, responsibility and caring, as well as modeling wholeness and healthy sexuality in relationships will be the goal. We will practice, advocate and educate to that end.

The appropriate contact for Safe Church is the Bishop's Office, or the Safe Church Co-ordinator, who at the current time is Canon Marni Nancekivell

Vacancies in the Parish: In case of a vacancy in the incumbency of a parish, the lay delegates and wardens constitute the Parochial Committee who consults with the Bishop with reference to a new appointment. If or when vacancy occurs, we encourage you to contact the Bishop's Office for information about "first steps".

Vestry Meetings

Annual meetings: Canonically, an annual Vestry meeting is to be held at a date determined by Synod Council every year (usually before February 28); after giving advance notice for two Sundays. If there is more than one church in the parish, the Vestry Meetings should be held in separate weeks.

Special: Special Vestry meetings may be called by the Incumbent, if necessary, by giving notice thereof during Divine Service on two Sundays preceding such meeting, also specifying the business or purpose for which the meeting is being called.

Qualifications of voters at Vestry: All baptized persons who have reached the age of 16 and who have at least six months preceding the holding of the vestry meeting been identifiably involved with the congregation through worship, fellowship and financial support of such church and who have not voted at the Vestry meeting of another church during the said six months are eligible to vote. A list of those qualified to vote at the Vestry meeting should be posted thirty days before the Vestry meeting is to be held. Those names of those in the parish that are eligible to vote at Vestry will be determined by the Certification Committee, composed of the Rector, Wardens and Synod Delegates. For more information on this, see Canon 4.1.

The following declaration shall be signed by all voters at a Vestry meeting:

DIOCESE OF NIAGARA

Parish of _____

Congregation of _____

"I do solemnly declare that I am baptized Christian of the full age of 16 years, who for at least six months preceding the holding of this Vestry meeting has been identifiably involved with this congregation, through worship, fellowship, and financial support. Further, I declare that I have not voted as a member of any other vestry within the said six months."

(As amended, 1986)

Lay Delegates: Any member of the vestry, of the full age of 16 years or over, is eligible for the election as lay representative to Synod. Each congregation, at every second annual vestry meeting (on even numbered years) shall elect such lay representatives to Synod for a two-year term. This began in 1978. Wardens may be elected as lay delegates if necessary. The number of representatives to be elected from each congregation shall be determined according to the number in the congregation eligible to vote at a vestry meeting as set out in the Canon on Vestries and Churchwardens.

The answers to questions or policies not covered in this Diocesan Wardens Manual may be found on our Diocesan website: www.niagaraanglican.ca

This Church Wardens Manual is a “work in process” which will eventually be available on our Diocesan website, therefore it is marked as a “Draft” copy.

There is, in your folder, a list of contact names and telephone numbers for Synod Office Staff, should you have specific questions that need response about specific areas of the work of the Diocese.

If you have questions or comments, you may contact me, as follows:

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