

What every Vestry & Mission Committee Member should know

RULES AND RESPONSIBILITIES THAT APPLY
TO ALL VESTRY/MISSION COMMITTEE
MEMBERS

WHAT ARE THE CANONICAL AND FIDUCIARY
RESPONSIBILITIES OF SERVING ON THE
VESTRY/MISSION COMMITTEE?

Workshop Leaders

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Our goals for this session

1. **Empower you** to find information to help you serve well
2. **Answer questions** and highlight things especially needing your attention
3. Help you know the **legal & financial implications of your service**
4. **Provide tools** to smooth things out when you hit a pinch

Format of this session

- How government is structured in our denomination
- Governing Documents
- Fiduciary Responsibility
- Legacy Society/Planning Giving tips and information
- Q&A time

Governing Structures in The Episcopal Church

NATIONAL

The Episcopal Church

REGIONAL

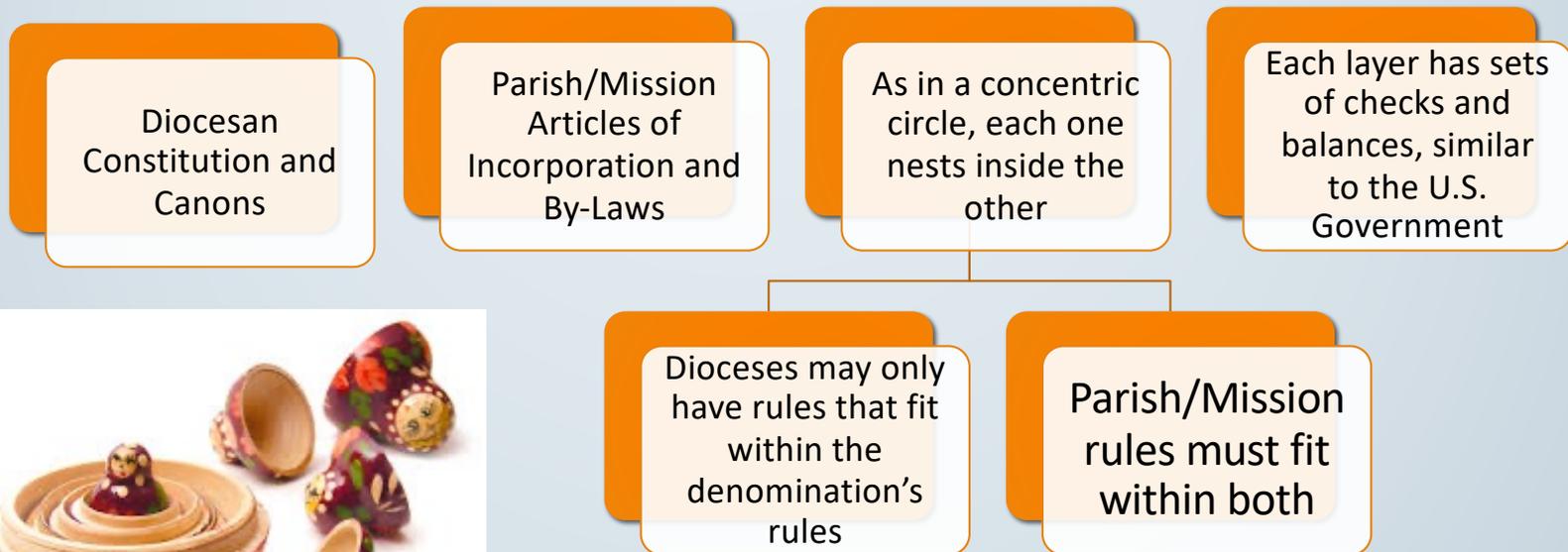
The Diocese of Northern California

LOCAL

Your Congregation



THE CONSTITUTIONS AND CANONS OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH SUPERSEDE:



Denominational Leadership

The **General Convention**, meets (usually) every 3 years, and is made up of two bodies:

- The **House of Bishops**, led by the Presiding Bishop (The Most Rev. Sean Rowe)
- The **House of Deputies**, led by Ms. Julia Ayala Harris (elected at GC 2024)



House of Bishops =
All Bishops in The Episcopal Church





House of Deputies

=

Elected delegations of lay
and clergy leaders from
every diocese

Together, these two bodies make,
update, debate, revise and pass all
rules regarding the governance and
practice of The Episcopal Church.

Diocesan Level

Bishop

The Rt. Rev. Megan M. Traquair

(elected by lay and clergy representatives of the Diocese of Northern California, with the consent of Standing Committees across TEC)

Responsible for the day-to-day running of the diocese

Represents the authority of TEC to the Diocese

Member of the House of Bishops

President of the Diocesan Board of Trustees



Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees is the Governing Body of the Episcopal Diocese of Northern California. Members are elected by Diocesan Convention in staggered 3-year terms. Deans have voice but no vote.

The trustees **help develop Diocesan policy and strategy** in support of mission priorities and operations priorities established by Diocesan Convention, **and contribute to strategic planning for the diocese**, by looking ahead and developing policy options to meet changing circumstances.

Subcommittees of this board meet to deal with issues of **finance, congregational development, diocesan audits, and property.**

2026 Board of Trustees

The Rt. Rev. Megan Traquair, President
Ms. Margie Harrison-Smith – Vice President
The Rev. Geri Cunningham, Secretary
Mr. John Nykamp, Treasurer
Mr. Kevin Donohue, Chancellor
The Rev. Maryly Adair
Ms. Robin Cardona
The Rev. Diana Deen
Mr. Fernando Dizon
Mr. Jim Evans
The Rev. Delia Fay
Mr. Stan Forbes
The Rev. Bret Hays
Mr. Steve Mershon
Mr. Don Taylor
Ms. Daphne Vernon
Ms. Jo Ann Williams
The Very Rev. Jana Branson, Dean
The Very Rev. Dr. Pamela Dolan, Dean
The Very Rev. Cliff Haggengjos, Dean
The Very Rev. Lesley McCloghrie, Dean
The Very Rev. Brian Rebholtz, Dean
The Very Rev. Bob Scott, Dean
The Very Rev. Tammy Smith-Firestone, Dean

Standing Committee

The Standing Committee is the Bishop's Council of Advice and performs governance functions, including:

- **consenting to** transfer of ownership or mortgaging of church or institutional property
- **recognizing new missions** and missions becoming parishes
- **consulting** upon differences between a rector and vestry
- **approving the progress** of individuals in the process for ordination as clergy
- **approving the release and removal** of individuals from the ordained ministry
- **consenting to** the de-consecration of churches
- **consenting to the election of bishops** of other dioceses or filling a vacancy in the office of presiding bishop. This is done along with other standing committees (the consent of a majority of standing committees is required).

The Standing Committee also serves as the **ecclesiastical authority** for the exercise of specified episcopal functions when no bishop is authorized to act by reason of vacancy in office, bishop's absence from the diocese for more than six months, request of the bishop, or bishop's incapacity or suspension.

2026 Standing Committee

The Very Rev. Matthew Woodward, President
Mr. Mark McMillen, Vice President
Ms. Donnie Wallace, Secretary
The Rev. William Glenn
Mr. Bismark Maddy
The Rev. Anne Pierson
The Rev. Nancy Streufert
Mr. John Torres
Ms. Donnie Wallace

Diocesan Convention

is where rules and procedures are set for our diocese.

Who has a vote:

- Lay delegates from each congregation
- Clergy physically and canonically resident in the diocese



Governing Documents

- I. The Episcopal Church (TEC)
- II. The Episcopal Diocese of Northern CA
 - i. Constitution & Canons
 - Each "layer" – denominational and diocesan – has its own set.
 - Find them here:
<https://www.norcalepiscopal.org/site/constitutions-and-canons/>



What are these?

The official set of governing rules for The Episcopal Church's bodies

- **Constitution** establishes **foundational principles**
- **Canons** define **how those principles are implemented**

**What is the difference between TEC (The Episcopal Church)
and Diocesan Canons & Constitutions?**

- ❖ TEC overview “guardrails” for all the dioceses in TEC
- ❖ Diocesan Canons and Constitutions set guidelines for each diocese, must fit within the guardrails of TEC

Governing Documents: Congregation

Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws

Templates available on our website

<https://www.norcalepiscopal.org/site/property-and-risk-management/>

Questions? Chancellor, DOO

Keeping Current and Keeping Track

- Who has a copy of your parish's documents?
- When were they last updated and reviewed?
 - Articles of Incorporation
 - Bylaws
 - Statement of Information
 - Personnel Manual
 - Policies
 - ❖ *Remember to send any updates to OOB*

More on Keeping Track...

We recommend that you have at least one or two people on your vestry that have a propensity towards legal framework. (Don't have to be a lawyer, if they are, NO legal advice to your vestry!

- These are your go to people
- They will speak up

You also have the resource of the **Chancellors of the Diocese.**

- Currently, Kevin Donohue is our primary chancellor.

Establish a pattern of checking your church bylaws and the Diocesan canons:

- Are they included in your vestry binders that you give your new vestry members?
- Make it a pattern for new members to acknowledge they have read and understand these documents.

Fiduciary Responsibility

A Fiduciary is someone who is **providing advice or managing the assets of another person or organization and stands in a special relationship of trust, confidence and/or legal responsibility.**

For Example; Vestry Members, Clergy, Financial Staff, and any individuals handling money for events or fundraising.

The Parish or Mission should have **written policies and procedures** in place for the following categories:

- Restricted Donation and Gift Acceptance Policy
- Investment Policy Statement (if applicable)
- Confidentiality Policy
- Whistleblower Policy
- Conflict of Interest Policy

<https://www.norcalepiscopal.org/site/church-accounting/#policies>

Helpful General Rules

The vestry/mission committee **reviews the above policies on an annual basis** and retains documentation showing that they are following the policies.

The congregation **has procedures in place to document that the use of restricted donor funds adheres to the donor's restrictions**

The vestry/mission committee **understands the legal process required to change a restricted gift's purpose to another purpose or need**

The congregation follows the **document retention guidelines** outlined in the **Episcopal Church's Manual of Business Methods**

<https://www.episcopalchurch.org/finance-office/manual-of-business-methods/>

You are covered by Directors & Officers' liability insurance,

AND you also retain some personal liability:

So, it is important that
the Vestry and financial staff understand
(and have acknowledged in writing)

that they **understand and accept their fiduciary responsibilities** and **retain personal liability** for a breach or abuse of the following duties:

- Financial review:
 - **All** organizations under the umbrella of the church
- Donor Restricted & Designated Funds
 - How to manage, and the differences between them
- Check signers (who should and who should not)
- Discretionary Funds
- Spending Policy for Investments

Planning Ahead, Financially

- We encourage all congregations to have a **legacy society (planned giving program)**.
- Help your members be **good stewards** by promoting planning ahead: **wills, trusts, estate plans**.
- There are **free local and national resources** to help your congregation establish an easy-to-understand process for planned gifts.

Why plan ahead?

Everyone dies. On average, about 3 people per year per church.
If each of those people left a gift, it would add up quickly!

Undesignated gifts do the most good.

(Ever had to deal with an outdated restricted gift? Not fun.)

Creative ways to help fund the church's future:

- Leave enough to pay your pledge for a year (or two +)
- One local church "tithes" 10% of all undesignated gifts to the endowment

Resources for Planned Giving

Episcopal Foundation of Northern California (EFNC)

<https://norcalepiscopalfoundation.org/>

Vine and Branch Society. Guidance on planned giving. Workshops!

Episcopal Church Foundation (ECF)

<https://www.ecf.org/>

ECF360 - subscription for stewardship, planned giving and capital campaigns, all in one. Other free resources.

Q & A

WHAT ELSE? PLEASE LET US KNOW!

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