

# EFFECTIVE MEETINGS & COMMUNICATION

---

**How To Run Your Vestry/Mission Committee Meeting...**

**So It Doesn't Run You Ragged**

**How to effectively communicate your work to the congregation**

Presenters: The Rev. Julie Wakelee, Canon to the Ordinary; Ms. Lisa Taylor, Director of Communications; The Rev. Dr. Steve Hassett, Missioner for Church Vitality

# IN THIS SESSION:

---

We will look at tools for effective meetings:

- Sample Agendas
- Using a Consent Agenda
- What is Executive Session and who can attend?
- Recording and Reporting: taking minutes and keeping records
- Where and when to post information, tools for doing this
- How to keep the congregation engaged with the work of vestry/mission committee
- What about AI tools for recording meetings?
- Effectively communicating your work to the congregation & beyond

# KEYS TO EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

---

- Time (How long do you really need?)
- When to meet (Day, time ...did you get a snack?)
- Clarity of Purpose and Work (Know why you are meeting!)
- Send out agenda, materials and reports ahead of time  
(Ideally the week before, but be sure to leave time for folks to read notes/reports before the meeting)
- Use written reports
- Use consent agendas

# HOW LONG? WHEN?

---

- If members read materials ahead of time, there is a clear agenda, and a consent agenda is used, 90 minutes should be plenty of time to share a bible study/ discuss a book and conduct business.
- Choose a day/time most convenient for all, and at a time when members will have energy to be focused and productive. (Maybe not after a long day at work?)



# NORMS

More than just a funny guy from Cheers

---

- Good to set at an annual retreat or extended first meeting of the new team
- You are models for the congregation with the tone you are setting as leaders
- Establish shared expectations
  - Might include things like attendance at meetings, respect for difference, use of time, etc.
  - May be helpful to read at the start of each meeting, especially if there are challenging topics
  - Helpful resources in *The Vestry Resource Guide* (available from the Office of the Bishop)

# WHAT'S THE POINT?

---

- Vestry meetings should include:
  - Time for leadership development (bible study or book study: 20 - 30 minutes)
  - Conduct essential business (approve minutes, accept financial reports)
  - Resolve old business
  - Forward planning (check in about goals, status of projects, new business)
  - Time to pray for one another and the congregation

# CONSENT AGENDAS

---

Items to be read ahead of time, and approved all at once:

- Minutes (if read ahead of time, corrections may be sent before the meeting)
  - Financial Reports (ditto)
  - Simple spending requests
  - Written Reports (rector/vicar, wardens, other ministries)
- ▶ Any member may request to pull an item from the consent agenda for further discussion before voting. In this case, the other items are still voted on in one vote, with the remaining issue/s discussed and voted on under regular business.

# SAMPLE AGENDA – WITH CONSENT ITEMS

Consent agendas work great ...when everyone receives and reads materials ahead of time.

---

- Opening Prayers
- Bible/Book Study
- Consent Agenda (prior minutes, financial reports, officer reports, parochial report, report from the rummage sale)
- New Business
  - Outreach opportunity: should we do this? (presenter provides background info ahead of time)
- Old Business
  - Is rummage sale worth continuing? (provide report ahead of time with clear parameters for conversation)
- Closing Prayers

# SAMPLE AGENDA – WITH TIMELINE

A good idea if you have trouble with getting side-tracked, meetings running too long

---

- 10 am Opening Prayers
- 10:05 am Bible/Book Study
- 10:35 am Consent Agenda (prior minutes, financial reports, officer reports, parochial report, report from the rummage sale)
- 10:40 am New Business
  - Outreach opportunity: should we do this? (presenter provides background info ahead of time w meeting packet)
- 11:00 am Old Business
  - Is rummage sale worth continuing? (provide report ahead of time with clear parameters for conversation)
  - Short things – updates, etc. can go in a report in the consent agenda
- 11:15 am Closing Prayers

# TAKING MINUTES

Some things belong, but not all things are necessary – what's extraneous, and what's essential

---

- Minutes do not need to record conversation details  
(i.e. **NOT**: Bob suggested we move to his bank, he really likes the teller in window one. Sue disagreed, her bank has nicer carpeting. Mary remembered when her mom's bank was on the corner where the school is now.)
- Record action taken (ex: “After conversation, Vestry/MC approved moving checking account from Bank A to Bank B”)
- Should be clear enough that anyone reading can get the basic idea.
- If details are desired, give facts: due to poor customer service/higher interest rates, etc. vestry/mc voted unanimously (or vote passed) to change banks.

# TAKING MINUTES...

What must be in the minutes?

---

Your church is a non-profit corporation. As such, minutes should include:

- Name and address of the church; meeting location (esp. if not at the church)
- Names of members present (including clergy)
- Names of those absent
- Names of visitors
- Approval of minutes and financial reports
- Recording of votes on action items

(if a consent agenda is used, “items on consent agenda approved”)

# WAYS TO APPROACH THE BIG TIME-CONSUMING TOPICS

---

- Put most complicated items first (where you want folks to spend the most energy) with consent items at the end
- Or: all “easy” items first, leave space at end for longer discussion items.
- Limit to one (at most 2) big discussion items per meeting. Otherwise, there is not enough energy to do topics justice (and people get tired and frustrated)
- If you know it will be a difficult conversation, take a breather, say a prayer together before approaching the topic.
- Do “homework”/read materials, other preparatory work ahead of time.

# WHAT IS “EXECUTIVE SESSION”?

---

- Vestry meetings are open to all church members, except during executive session.
- In Executive Session, topics related to personnel may be discussed (compensation, staff evaluations, COLAs, hiring/firing, choosing a rector, vicar or PIC)
- They are not “secret” – they are confidential, to respect those involved, and to protect you as board members from potential legal action.
- Basic outline notes should be taken but kept separate from regular vestry notes (perhaps in a file in the clergy person’s office). They are NOT to be published to the congregation.
- Vestry minutes should say, “At TIME, the vestry went into Exec. Session.” “At TIME, vestry returned from Exec. Session.” Regular minutes then describe only action taken (i.e. COLAs were approved at the rate of 3.5% for 2026; Vestry agreed upon the hiring of The Rev. Jane Smith as rector.)



# COMMUNICATING YOUR WORK

---

- Vestry minutes and financial reports should be shared with the congregation.
- Minutes should be posted in a public place (Parish Hall bulletin board, hallway “news center,” etc.) Also: include in electronic newsletter to members.
- You may post full financial reports or a summary (varies by the size of the church).
- Be proud to share your good work!

# HOW ELSE TO COMMUNICATE WELL

---

- Have a “vestry/mission committee minute” during church announcements to highlight important steps
- Put a vestry/mission committee update in your church newsletter
  - Different vestry members can take turns! Or wardens regularly report. Or ??
- Include a link to agendas, minutes, and financial reports in your electronic newsletter
- Share occasional stories about what it means to you to serve on the vestry
- List current vestry members on your website
- Have a vestry bulletin board in a gathering space: photos, minutes, goals, norms...

# RESULTS OF GOOD MEETINGS AND GOOD COMMUNICATION

---

- You will enjoy your service more and find it easier to work together
- Your church will run more smoothly
- Parishioners not in leadership positions will have a better idea of what is happening and have a clearer understanding of how to approach challenging topics.
- People will be more interested in serving and will have a better idea of what it entails
- Good leaders are always looking at how to raise up new leadership – succession planning!

# TOOLS AND RESOURCES

---

- AI tools (options, plusses and minuses)
  - On Zoom, on Canva, translation tools
- How we can help you communicate your good news
  - Enews (use this link: <https://form.jotform.com/240104904854048> )
  - TEC Press Releases (free!) (<https://episcopalnewsservice.org/submitpressrelease/>)
- Church Websites (how we can/cannot help) ([webmaster@norcalepiscopal.org](mailto:webmaster@norcalepiscopal.org))
- Social Media
  - Power of video, photos
  - Samples

# SAMPLES

Whether y  
through th  
this holy s  
Your prese  
meeting us  
Blessings

St. George's Episcopal Church, Carmichael  
on Wednesday

🙏 Thank You for Joining Us for Ashes to Go!  
A heartfelt thank-you to everyone who came out today for Ashes to Go at St. George's.  
Whether you drove through on your lunch break, made a special trip, or paused on your way through the neighborhood, we are grateful for the chance to share a blessing with you as we begin this holy season of Lent. Your presence—rain or shine—reminds us of the beauty of community, connection, and God's love meeting us right where we are. Blessings on your Lenten journey. 🙏💜



Way  
we b  
God's

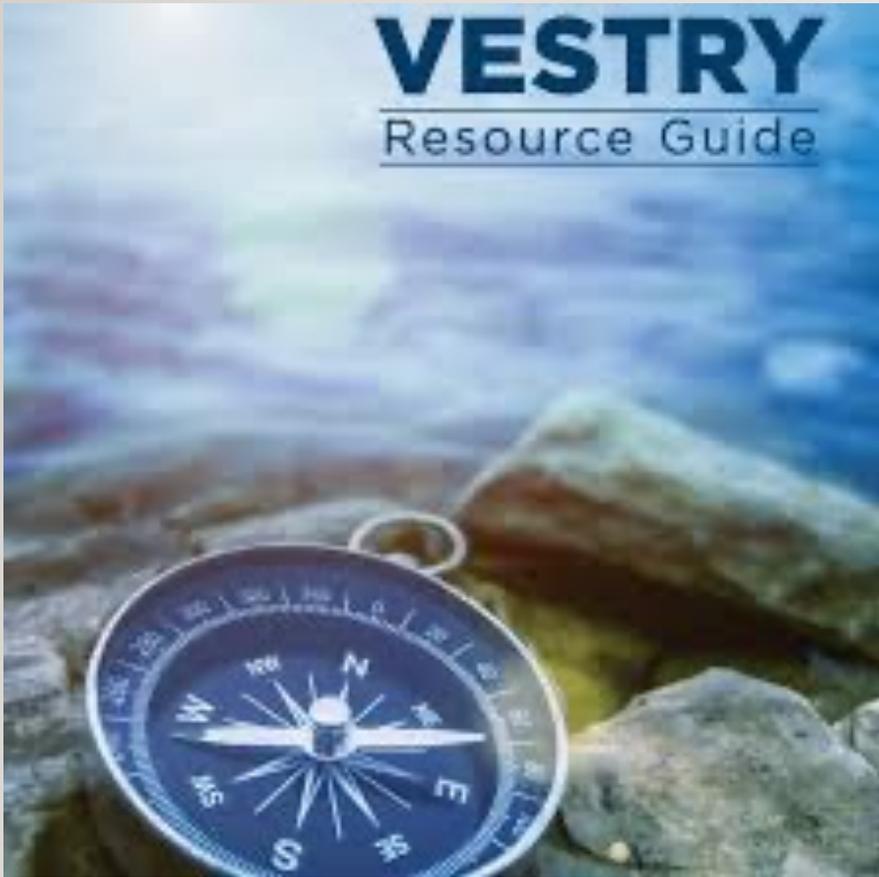
+2



# SAMPLE VIDEO

---

- <https://www.facebook.com/reel/655319937669479>



## Vestry Resource Guide

A great resource re vestry norms, reporting and all things vestry/mission committee

Available FREE from the Office of the Bishop (in English and Spanish)!

Please email [Chloe@norcalepiscopal.org](mailto:Chloe@norcalepiscopal.org)



Questions?

Comments?



Contact us!

[Julie@norcalepiscopal.org](mailto:Julie@norcalepiscopal.org)

[Stephen@norcalepiscopal.org](mailto:Stephen@norcalepiscopal.org)

[lisa@norcalepiscopal.org](mailto:lisa@norcalepiscopal.org)