

Vestry Agreement 2016
St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Baltimore

The Vestry of St. Paul's Episcopal Church gathered on Saturday, March 5th, 2016 for its annual retreat. As part of the program, members reflected on a sample Vestry Covenant from the Church in the Fields, in the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh (Vestry Resource Guide, 2015, Episcopal Church Foundation). Vestry members discussed the following norms, expectations, and guiding principles for their role as leaders in the Church. At the vestry meeting on March 15th, 2016, the following final draft of the Vestry Agreement was unanimously adopted by the vestry of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Baltimore.

Recognizing the directive to Timothy (1 Timothy 4:12) concerning his role as a church leader to be "an example to the believers in speech, life, love, faith, and purity," we therefore agree to the following norms.

To be an example to the congregation by striving to:

Seek God's will for this congregation.

Offer our own gifts and talents to support the congregation's ministry.

Be active in and knowledgeable about the parish, its programs, and governance.

Express appreciation for each other, as well as the clergy, staff, and leadership in the parish.

Demonstrate that every person has great value and is beloved in God's eyes, especially as we relate to the children in our church.

Model generosity, engagement, thankfulness, and hope for new life through Christ.

Participation, involvement in the community, and follow through:

Worship regularly by attending Sunday services.

Attend to our own adult spiritual growth and development in a variety of ways.

Participate in The Forum at least monthly to be part of these important conversations.

Build relationships in the parish by attending fellowship events.

Show leadership in your giving and enthusiasm for the annual pledge campaign.

Joyfully help with the vestry's annual stewardship campaign.

Attend all vestry meetings and be on time unless there is an emergency.

Notify the Rector or Business Manager, (and sometimes the whole vestry) in advance whenever it's not possible to attend meetings

Note that the Senior Warden would be happy to fill you in about what happened at a vestry meeting if you ever need to miss a meeting.

Attend the Annual Meeting on January 29 at 9:30 am.

Sign up to help with one of the vestry task groups.

Participate in the meetings of the appointed task groups.
Follow through with vestry tasks and committee work.

To love one another by:

Creating a safe and trusting atmosphere at vestry meetings and church events.
Inviting all vestry members to express their thoughts and opinions.
Seeking to validate, appreciate, and understand the gifts of others.
Supporting other church leaders as they carry out their ministries.
Nurturing a servant attitude recognizing that the vestry's role is that of serving God and God's church.

Treating the members of our church with respect by:

Speaking and acting in ways to build up and support one another.
Serving as agents of reconciliation in the church.
Working toward the church's mission to "restore the unity of all people with God and each other in Christ," (The Book of Common Prayer, 1979).
Working for transparency and direct, open communication in the congregation.
Respectfully sharing opinions even when they are different from the majority.
Encouraging people to be creative by supporting them as they take risks.
Recognizing that certain vestry discussions are of a confidential nature, and following through in respecting that confidentiality.
Avoiding "triangulation" by not speaking on the behalf of others.
Not passing along gossip and anonymous feedback.
Trying to welcome, include, and involve as many people as possible.
Taking note that email is useful for setting up meetings and sharing information. It tends to be less helpful in dealing with conflicts, complaints, and disagreements.

To seek God's will by striving for unity in all matters through:

Supporting the final decisions of the vestry even when I may disagree.
Consciously seeking to abandon personal agendas and self-serving attitudes so that the best course of action is always for the good of the overall church.
Demonstrating your support for the mission, identity, and goals of the church.