

VESTRY HANDBOOK

The Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta

(REVISED AS OF MARCH 2006)



NOTICE

Your parish has provided this handbook for the ongoing use of its vestry members.

This handbook can also be downloaded by going to The Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta at www.episcopalatlanta.org

The copy of record is located on our website. Changes will be made there and notification sent to the Rectors. It will be your responsibility to keep up with the changes.

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REVISIONS TO THE VESTRY MANUAL

The Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta

Our Vestry Manual is meant to be a fluid document. As changes are made from the Diocesan Office, notifications by e-mail/website will be sent to the Rectors/Parish Administrators and the revised pages then can be downloaded off the Vestry Manual Section of our website www.episcopalatlanta.org

The revision dates for the page will be listed in the bottom left hand corner of each page.

A copy of the latest changes will be listed on this page below

Revision Change	Date of Revision
Updated Vestry Manual	03/01/06

VESTRY HANDBOOK

INTRODUCTION- VESTRY HANDBOOK (role of the vestry & resources)

More than any other church in the worldwide Anglican Communion, the Episcopal Church is deeply rooted in a representative form of church government. The birth of the Episcopal Church in America coincided with the birth of the nation. The constitution of this church was signed in the same year in which the Constitution of the United States was ratified. It was also signed in the same city (Philadelphia) and in the same building (Independence Hall). Lay participation in the governance of the church is a hallmark of our identity. Authority is conferred through representatives duly elected by the people. **Vestry** members are elected at the annual parish meeting; the vestry elects parish representatives to the annual diocesan **Council**; and the diocesan **Council**, made up of all canonically resident clergy and lay representatives from each parish, elects deputies (four clerical and four lay) to the **General Convention** of the Episcopal Church, which meets every three years.

It is important to remember that the Episcopal Church has a **representative** form of government and is not a pure democracy. Decisions on parish matters are not made by congregational meetings, except to elect vestry representatives. The vestry, along with the rector, is charged with making the decisions affecting the life and ministry of the parish. Authority, whether of the bishop, the rector or vicar, or the vestry, is conferred by the representatives of the church assembled in council at the various decision-making levels. This is a unique form of government for a church which through the centuries has vested almost absolute authority in a hierarchy.

You were chosen by a majority of the members of your parish to serve on the vestry. It is both an honor and a great responsibility. A vestry member is a servant-trustee, a steward over the household of faith.