

Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist

“Guidelines for Leaders” - Chapter 3



Vestry Meetings

We live in an age of transparency and democracy, and Vestry Meetings are an opportunity for all the members of the church to seek God’s will and make important decisions together.

Vestry Meetings in the Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist take place first in the Chapelries and then at Parish level. This guideline explains what should take place in these meetings, and how to prepare for them. For details, it will be necessary to consult the Rules of the Diocese, and the relevant Rule numbers are given in brackets.

If at first you find that you cannot live up to all these expectations, don’t give up! Do your best, and see it as a challenge to do even better next time.

†Martin: St Mark the Evangelist

1. Chapelry Vestry

1.1 All Chapelry Vestry Meetings

1.1.1 Notice

Each year, at least two Chapelry Vestry meetings must take place, and more may be called if necessary (24.1,4,10-12,15-16). The Chapelwardens set the dates (24.4) after liaison with the Parish Executive. Together with the Rector or Priest in Charge (incumbent) they sign a written notice of the meeting (24.14). This notice must be posted at least 15 days before the meeting, and must give the date, time, place and objects of the meeting.

1.1.2 Attendance

All Chapelry members aged 18 or above may participate - but no one may belong to more than one Chapelry at a time (24.6-8).

1.1.3 Chairperson

Normally one of the Chapelwardens presides, but the Incumbent may choose to do so. If none of these is available, the meeting may elect a Chairperson. However, the Bishop or Archdeacon has the right to appoint a Chairperson at any time (24.1).

1.1.4 Minutes

Remember to keep good, clear minutes of all Chapelry Vestry Meetings (24.18).

1.2 Easter Chapelry Vestry Meeting

The Easter *Chapelry* Vestry Meetings *must* take place before the Easter *Parish* Vestry Meeting can be held.

1.2.1 Documents and Preparation

In order to prepare for the Vestry, the outgoing Chapelry Council should prepare the following documents, and submit them to the *Parish* Executive 21 days before the meeting (24.4.1 and 24.10):

- ✦ **Minutes** of the previous year's Chapelry Vestry Meetings
- ✦ "Audited" **Financial statements**
- ✦ A **report** of the life, mission and ministry of the Chapelry
- ✦ A list of members of the **outgoing Chapelry Council** and their attendance record at Chapelry Council meetings
- ✦ The **register of members** of the Chapelry
- ✦ The **Agenda** of the meeting.

1.2.2 Agenda of Easter Chapelry Vestry

The Easter Vestry Meeting is a good opportunity to review the life of the Chapelry, by considering reports from the Chapelwardens and Incumbent. It may also make decisions about "worship, ministry, education, evangelism, unity and development" (24.9). These items should be included in the Agenda in appropriate and relevant ways.

However, the following business *must* be on the Agenda (24.11):

- ✦ Chapelry **Financial Accounts** (24.11.1)
- ✦ **Elections** (24.11.2-8 and 28.1).

1.2.3 Elections at Chapelry Vestry

One of the most important items at this meeting is to elect the people God wants to serve the Chapelry in various capacities. Here they are:

- ✦ Two **Chapelwardens** and one **Alternate Chapelwarden** (24.11.3) who also serve as members of the Parish Council (24.11.6)
- ✦ A suitably qualified **Chapelry Treasurer** (24.11.4)
- ✦ One or more of the **Licensed Lay Ministers** to represent them (24.11.5)
- ✦ Decide how many more members to elect to the **Chapelry Council**, and elect them (24.11.2)
- ✦ From the newly elected members, elect one or more additional representatives (depending on the size of the Chapelry) to **Parish Council** (24.11.6)
- ✦ An alternative representative to Parish Council (24.11.7)
- ✦ In independent and suitable person as "**Auditor**" (24.11.8).

The results of all these elections must be forwarded to the Parish Easter Vestry Meeting for confirmation (25.3.2).

1.3 November Chapelry Vestry Meeting

1.3.1 Agenda

The main purpose of the November Chapelry Vestry Meeting is to prepare for the coming year by communicating with the Church membership about financial and property matters. Although other items may be included on the Agenda, the Rules require the following:

- ✦ **Chapelry Budget** for the Coming Year - including projected income and expenditure (24.12.1). This must include Chapelry contributions to the common funds of the Parish.
- ✦ **Property Report** - including maintenance of buildings and any building plans (24.12.2).

1.3.2 Preparation Needed

These items will only be ready if the Chapelry Council has done a lot of work in preparation, such as a stewardship campaign, and consultations with the Parish Council about Parish priorities for buildings.

2. Parish Vestry

2.1 All Parish Vestry Meetings

2.1.1 Notice

Each year, at least two Parish Vestry Meetings must take place, and more may be called if necessary (25.1-4 & 25.8-9). The Incumbent and Parish Wardens (also known as Churchwardens) give written notice of the meeting, which must be published in all places of worship in the Parish at least seven days beforehand (25.7). If one of them is unable to fulfil this duty, the Bishop or Archdeacon may appoint people to do so. The notice must specify the date, time, place and objects of the meeting.

2.1.2 Membership of Parish Vestry

Although members of all Chapelries and Congregations in the Parish may attend Parish Vestry meetings, only Members of Vestry may speak and vote. Members of Vestry are (25.1):

- ✦ All Licensed Clergy in the Parish
- ✦ All Chapelwardens and Chapelry Council members
- ✦ One representative from each recognised Congregation that is not a Chapelry.

2.1.3 Chairperson

The Incumbent (Rector or Priest in Charge) normally presides at Parish Vestry Meetings, or may request the meeting to elect a Chairperson (25.1). If there is no

Incumbent, or if the Bishop or Archdeacon believes it is necessary, then either of them may appoint another person to preside over the meeting (25.10).

2.1.4 Minutes

Remember to keep good, clear minutes of all Parish Vestry Meetings (25.12).

2.2 Easter Parish Vestry Meeting

This meeting can only take place after the Easter Chapelry Vestry Meetings have been completed, but must be completed by the 6th Sunday after Easter.

2.2.1 Documents and Preparation

In order to prepare for Parish Vestry, the outgoing Parish Council should prepare the following information and documents:

- ✦ A list of the members of the **outgoing Parish Council** and their attendance record at Council meetings (25.3)
- ✦ The audited financial statement of the **Parish accounts**, including financial statements of all Chapelries (25.3.1)
- ✦ The names of those who have been elected as **Chapelwardens and Chapelry Councillors** at Chapelry Vestry Meetings (25.3.2)

2.2.2 Agenda of Easter Parish Vestry

The Easter Parish Vestry Meeting is expected to review the life of the whole Parish. It can do so by considering reports from the Parish Wardens and Incumbent. It should also make decisions about the common “worship, ministry, education, evangelism, unity and development” of the Parish (25.3.5). These items, including issues that arose from Chapelry Vestry Meetings, should be included in the Agenda in appropriate and relevant ways.

The following items must also be on the Agenda:

- ✦ **Auditor’s or Independent Verifier’s Report** and Parish Financial Accounts (incorporating those received from the Chapelries) (25.3.1)
- ✦ **Confirm the Elections** at Chapelry Vestry Meetings (25.3.2)
- ✦ **Elections** (25.3.3-4 and 29.3).

2.2.3 Elections at Parish Vestry

The Easter Parish Vestry Meeting elects people who will serve and represent the whole Parish. They must elect (25.3.3-4):

- ✦ Two **Parish Wardens** and one **Alternate** from their number
- ✦ Lay (2) and alternate (1) **Lay Representatives** to Diocesan Synod and DSC, who also serve as members of the Archdeaconry Council.
- ✦ Appoint a suitably qualified person to serve as **Independent “Auditor”** of the Parish books.

The Incumbent or Parish Secretary should forward the names of those serving on the Parish Council, together with the results of these elections to the Archdeacon and Diocesan Office as soon as possible after the Vestry Meeting.

2.3 November Parish Vestry Meeting

This meeting must take place by the 1st Sunday in December. Its main purpose is to finalise the Parish budget for the coming year, and to agree on building and property maintenance priorities within the Parish.

2.3.1 Agenda

Although other items may be included on the Agenda, the Rules require the following:

- ✦ **Parish Budget** for the coming year, including all common or shared funds and finances. The Vestry Meeting will approve the Diocesan Assessment to be paid by the Parish, as well as the contributions to the Parish Budget from each Chapelry and Congregation (25.4.1).
- ✦ **Property building and maintenance plan** for the coming year. Any Chapelry building plans, major alterations, or important maintenance work that will need to take place should be considered at this meeting (25.4.2).

2.3.2 Preparation Needed

This can be a very helpful and creative meeting if the Parish Council and Executive have prepared well! For example, Chapelry contributions to the Parish Budget should depend on their relative strength and ability to give, and will need to be carefully negotiated in a spirit of love and generosity. We are all serving the Kingdom of God!

This becomes especially relevant when the Parish Rector lives in a house that “belongs” to one of the Chapelries. Then, all of the Chapelries have to negotiate carefully how to contribute to the accommodation and other needs of the Rector.

Again, the property maintenance plan is an opportunity for Chapelries to support one another, especially when a new church is being planted.

3. Help is Available

Please remember, the resources of the Diocese are there to support, help and guide you! Your Archdeacon has experience in these issues. The Diocesan Administrator and Development Officer have a great deal of knowledge and wisdom. Diocesan Finance Board has established a Task Team to train and mentor Parish and Chapelry leaders. Don't be afraid to ask!

Above all, remember God's word: “I can do all things through him who gives me strength.” (Philippians 4:13)