

The Diocese of Edmonton
Church Wardens' Handbook

2017

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Notes to the reader:

Throughout this document the word *responsible* is used when defining a warden's functions and duties. This does not mean that the warden must carry out a specific function or duty; rather, the warden must ensure that the function or duty is carried out.

It is our intent that this document will be reviewed and updated at a minimum of every 10 years.

What is a Church Warden?

The office of church warden dates back to the 14th Century, when the church in England was still under the Roman See. The wardens were, and still are, the chief liaison persons between the parish and the incumbent, and the chief administrative assistants of the parish. There is biblical authority for the establishment of this office.

When Paul wrote to Titus, he said, “This is why I left you in Crete, that you might amend what was defective, and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you” (Titus 1:5). Recognizing that elder is not clearly defined, and seems to refer more to bishops and/or priests, the one thing that stands out is that these elders would have been several.

In Acts 14, it is recorded that Paul and Barnabas, upon visiting Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, after preaching the Gospel and making disciples in Derbe... “appointed elders for them in each church, [and] with prayer and fasting, they entrusted them to the Lord in whom they had come to believe.” (v.23). Later, James exhorts his readers to call for the elders if they should be sick.... “and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord” (James 5:14)¹.

It seems then, that if the modern Church is based on the structure of the New Testament Church, a number of ministers is needed in each congregation. It is not satisfactory, and certainly not biblical, for the priests to assume responsibility for the entire ministry. As members of the Body of Christ, we are all members of the priesthood of believers. But there are those selected by the body for specific ministries. In the Anglican Church some of these men and women comprise the vestry, with two or three of the vestry members being the church wardens. The members of vestry, we might suggest, could function as elders in the local congregation, performing that ministry which they assume when they accept their high position. This ministry necessitates a relationship with Jesus Christ, a desire to please Him and an openness to the infilling of the Holy Spirit, so that God may be truly glorified through His Church. Out of this relationship will come a desire to worship Him in all

¹ NRSV Bible

aspects of our daily life, while sharing His love with others in the community and beyond. While wardens are, to some degree, members of the vestry, they are recognized as chief among the elders. This uniquely Anglican office can, and should be, an important part of building our church.

What Kind of People Make Good Wardens?

A good warden can be a stimulus, example and spiritual leader for the whole life of the parish:

- A baptized, confirmed, person of faith who attends church services regularly
- A person who knows many of the congregation, and in whom others have confidence
- A person who has had previous experience handling parish matters as a member of the vestry
- A person willing to work closely with, to support, and to help the incumbent
- A person whom the incumbent can take closely into his/her confidence
- A person who can be sympathetic and tactful in relating to members of the congregation, particularly in handling complaints
- A person who can really reflect the love of Jesus, through encouraging others within the Body, offering prayers and assistance to those who are suffering, and serving to the best of his/her ability in keeping God's property in top condition, as a witness to the wider community
- A person who is willing to be subjected to a police check.

Eligibility

To be eligible for election or appointment as a warden, a parishioner must be a communicant and of the full age of majority.

What Do Wardens Do?

1. Wardens, together with the incumbent and vestry members, are responsible for all aspects of parish life. They must work with and support the Incumbent, be loyal to him/her, and respect his/her confidence.
2. Wardens must be available to the members of the congregation for information, complaints, or suggestions.
3. Wardens are responsible for the holding of regular services, and for the provision of all things requisite for Divine Service. If there is neglect or inability on the part of the Incumbent to perform his/her responsibilities, the church wardens must notify the Bishop of the situation.
4. Wardens should be in attendance for the visitation of the Bishop or an Archdeacon.

Duties of a Warden

The duties of a warden are outlined briefly in Canon 5.61. The list that follows provides more detail.

Church Finances:

The primary concern of the wardens is to do everything in their power to insure that adequate financial support is provided for the church and that the financial and physical concerns of the Parish are efficiently managed.

Wardens are responsible for the collection and receipt of all monies contributed to the church, and with the incumbent, have joint responsibility for the disposal of all monies, stipends, and debts, and for keeping a complete record of all transactions.

The clergy's priority is the spiritual care of the parish and, as much as possible, they should be relieved of temporal concerns by the work of the wardens and vestry.

A rector has no right to incur expenses on behalf of the parish without consultation with the wardens, nor may the Wardens commit the parish to expenditures without the rector's knowledge.

Charitable Returns

Wardens are responsible for ensuring that an annual return is filed with Canada Revenue Agency.

Meeting Records:

Wardens are responsible for the minute book of all parish and vestry meetings, and for the book containing all parish accounts and the annual balance sheets.

Budget and Offering Envelopes:

It is required by Canon 5.111 to present to the vestry for its approval and commendation to the annual meeting of parishioners a budget setting forth clearly the expected expenses for ordinary maintenance, repairs and desirable improvements.

It is required by Canon 5.113 that an annual campaign be held to encourage every family unit to give regularly to the church in accordance with their incomes. Every opportunity should be taken to keep the people fully informed of the work of the whole church—in the diocese, in Canada and beyond—which they support in their giving.

Large or Extraordinary Expenditures:

Wardens must seek the consent of vestry before incurring any unusual expense.

Wardens should have parishioners' consent, either before committing a large outlay of money, or when there are insufficient funds and money must be raised by means such as a bank loan.

Accounting Records:

The wardens are responsible for maintaining a proper set of accounting records that reflect, at all times, the financial position of the parish. They should submit regular statements to the vestry. The books must be open to the inspection of the rector at all times. They must be presented to the parish accounts examiner in sufficient time for a proper annual examination and to present a statement at the annual meeting of the parish.

Bank Accounts:

The bank account (or accounts) should be under the direct control of the wardens. Both wardens should be signing officers at the bank, along with the Incumbent and Treasurer.

Treasurer:

If it is deemed advisable, the vestry may appoint a Treasurer, **BUT** such an appointment does not release the wardens from their responsibility for the finances of the parish.

Signing of Cheques:

All cheques must be signed by two persons, one of whom must be a warden or the Incumbent.

Appointment of Parish Staff:

The vestry appoints the organist, and/or choirmaster and the vestry Clerk. Salary and wages of parish staff, determined by the vestry, shall be paid from the general account of the parish, and shall generally be administered by the diocesan financial officer.

Insurance:

At each annual meeting, the wardens shall make a full and detailed report of insurance carried by the parish, and see that the details are recorded in the minutes. It is the duty of the wardens to see that insurance coverage on church buildings is adequate in light of a recent appraisal by an independent firm in the business of doing property appraisals.

Parish Registers:

The wardens shall ensure that a register is kept in which shall be recorded the dates and hours of all services held in the church, names of officiating clergy, number of those present, number of those communicating, etc. They shall also provide the rector with a register or registers in which to record all weddings, funerals, baptisms and confirmations. The wardens are responsible for ensuring that the number of those present at the regular services is entered into the register.

Requisites for Worship and Sacraments:

The wardens shall see that all things necessary for the proper and reverent conducting of the worship of the church and the administration of the sacraments are provided.

At Regular Services:

In the absence of the parish clergy, the wardens should receive and welcome any visiting clergy or lay readers, visitors and newcomers and, if possible, obtain their names and addresses for the parish records. Sidespersons may be appointed to assist the wardens in these duties.

Clergy Holidays:

All full and part time clergy are entitled by canon to at least four weeks vacation without any diminution of stipend in accordance with the diocesan vacation policy. The parish, through the office of the wardens, is responsible for the expenses and honoraria of clerical or lay supply during this month.

The wardens must report vacation plans of the parish clergy to the diocese, and ensure that the clergy actually take the vacation they are entitled to.

Incumbent Vacancy:

If a vacancy occurs, the Bishop and Archdeacon will confer with the wardens and the vestry or parish council with respect to choosing a new incumbent.

Church Property:

Wardens are responsible, jointly with the incumbent, for the care of all property of the parish including the rectory and grounds and any other buildings on the grounds, ensuring that all property is kept in good repair and insured.

Wardens should keep an inventory of all property grounds, buildings, and contents.

Wardens should also ensure that any specific requirements with respect to maintaining a church's historic designation are dealt with in a timely and appropriate manner.

Building Projects:

Any project of a major nature, involving extension, considerable alteration or repair, or the sale, purchase, or erection of new buildings, or the sale or purchase of property is to be reviewed by the diocesan property and planning committee. Any project exceeding \$10,000 requires approval by property and planning. This initial review should occur early in the process, and when approved by this committee, then, and only then, should it be submitted to the parish. To obtain a copy of the Diocese of Edmonton Property and Planning Committee Procedures for obtaining diocesan approval, contact the Synod Office.

Becoming a Church Warden

There are two ways to become a church warden: by appointment or by election.

The incumbent appoints the rector's warden.

The peoples' warden is nominated and elected at the parish annual meeting, usually by a show of hands, although a ballot may be called for. There may also be an assistant warden, elected in the same manner as the peoples' warden at the parish annual meeting.

Per Canon 5.53, if either the incumbent or the parishioners fail to fill a vacancy in the office of church warden, then the vestry may appoint the rector's warden to fill the vacancy and the incumbent may appoint a people's warden to fill the vacancy.

Subject to Canon 5.47, the tenure of office of a church warden at any time shall not normally exceed three consecutive years.

In a two-warden parish, wardens should be elected or appointed for a two year staggered term; that is, both wardens should not be elected/appointed at the same time. In a three-warden parish, most often

the assistant warden is elected in anticipation of serving for a three year term: one year as assistant warden (elected), one year as peoples' warden (re-elected) and the third year as rector's warden (appointed). Note that this 'progression' is not automatic.

A warden may be re-appointed or re-elected to office after a break of two years from his/her term of office.

Help! I'm a Church Warden

What Do I Do First?

Try to arrange a meeting with the incumbent to talk over your duties, and to discuss the state of the parish.

It is also helpful for new wardens, previous wardens, and the incumbent to meet at the beginning of the new term of office so that information about the parish can be passed on together with hints and suggestions about carrying out your new duties.

You Are an Important Link between the Incumbent and the Parish Members

It is important that you spend some time listening to members of the congregation. There will be some people who phone you about various concerns, but it is also helpful to keep your ears open to what members are saying about the Parish in meetings, parish gatherings, and even casual conversations, and to report back to the Incumbent.

Meetings between the wardens and incumbent should be held on a regular basis to discuss the total ministry of the parish. Frequent phone calls are useful in keeping the lines of communication open.

Dealing with Criticism

Do not be disturbed or discouraged if someone criticizes the parish, the incumbent, the organization or any other leader. Keep a smile handy and use it. Listen attentively. Allow the person to talk freely without interruption. Agree where you can. Do not compromise just to be polite, but do not argue. Point out the strengths of the parish. Report back to the

incumbent, always respecting the confidentiality of the person(s) concerned if that has been requested. Alternatively, you may ask if the person has spoken to the priest about the concern.

When the Incumbent is Away

The wardens should be informed if the incumbent is to be away more than a day. They should know if and where the incumbent can be reached if there is an urgent need for a priest, or they should know who is covering for the Incumbent in such an emergency, while he/she is away for a longer period.

Wardens are often the first people to be contacted when the incumbent cannot be reached. If the incumbent is away for a long period of time (such as a vacation), it is essential to know what arrangements have been made in regard to the keys for the church, the parish hall and the rectory.

In some larger parishes with a regular office secretary, he/she may be able to handle the above tasks.

Be Visible and Accessible

It is important for the wardens to be accessible to the members of the congregation. Each person has his/her own way of doing this. Some wardens stay behind after church services so that people may come and talk to them. Some get to know all the formal and informal parish leaders. Some visit the different church groups throughout the year. Some parishes hold regular visitations every year and wardens use this opportunity to listen to what people have to say.

Relationship Between the Wardens and the Treasurer

It is good practice for the wardens and incumbent to meet regularly with the parish treasurer to keep in touch with the financial condition of the parish, to discuss ways and means of meeting the church budget, and means of communicating financial concerns to the congregation.

In some parishes, the wardens are expected to keep the books.

What If ...

The Parish Priest Resigns?

All clergy resign in writing to the Bishop with a copy to the wardens. At this point, a letter from the Bishop will then be read to the congregation announcing the resignation. A Canonical Committee will be struck and will work closely with the Archdeacon and Bishop to select a new parish priest. During this time an interim priest may be assigned to the parish by the Bishop.

The Parish Priest Becomes Ill?

The wardens work closely with the Bishop and Archdeacon while the priest is unable to continue to maintain continuity within the parish, and assist with finding supply clergy if the priest is unable to do so. It is the responsibility of the wardens to arrange payment for the supply clergy. The wardens or treasurer should contact the diocesan executive officer or financial officer regarding reimbursement for supply clergy in cases of absence due to illness or injury that is longer than four weeks.

Inappropriate Physical or Sexual Behaviour Occurs?

If the case involves a child, the wardens or parish priest must immediately call the Child Abuse Hotline and then advise their Archdeacon and the chair of the diocesan advisory and response team (DART). All other cases must be considered to be very serious issues and should be dealt with in consultation with the Archdeacon and DART. There is a diocesan policy that must be adhered to for the safety of all!

A Member of the Congregation is Upset About Worship or Parish Concerns?

A situation like this involves the two most difficult tasks of any warden: maintaining requested confidentiality, while being as open as possible; and helping people to see that not all persons within the parish want the same things. A joy to one person, may be a burden to another. If you believe that the concern is felt by a number of parishioners, you should discuss it with your parish priest and the other warden(s) without necessarily indicating who actually voiced the concern. If you feel that the majority of the parishioners are happy with the way things are, you

must try to explain this without hurting the parishioner's feelings. The parishioner may just want to be heard.

While the parish priest has the responsibility for worship, it is a concern for the whole church community. If a worship concern is expressed, it may be suitable to ask the parishioner if you can ask the priest to get in touch with him or her to discuss the issue. This could indicate whether the person has already spoken to the priest and wants to make this an issue or is just not comfortable taking the concern directly to the priest.

Whatever the problem, it cannot be swept under the rug or ignored in the hope that it will go away. If you cannot reach a conclusion that is satisfactory to everyone, seek help. Bring in someone from outside the parish who may be able to view the problem from a different perspective. Depending on the situation, there are members of the diocesan staff who might be able to help, or the Regional Dean or Archdeacon will be able to make arrangements for assistance.

I Start to Dread Sunday Mornings?

There are times when every warden feels that he or she is running a gauntlet just to get to the service. Remember that you are not alone—you are part of a team of at least three: two wardens and the parish priest. Work with your fellow warden(s) to develop the best routine for dealing with the ongoing concerns of parishioners. Don't forget that prayer is of enormous help to everyone involved.

Our Parish Priest Seems Overwhelmed?

If you see that the parish priest is being overwhelmed, don't hesitate to talk about arranging for a supply clergy once in a while so the priest can have a vacation or study-leave week. Remember that the parish priest is entitled to one week's education leave yearly and should be encouraged to take it regularly. Accumulation of education (study) leave should be discussed and agreed to by both wardens and the priest involved and should be reviewed with the Bishop.

I Can't Say "no"?

This is something you will have to practice—diligently. It can be very easy to get into a situation where you spend the entire week running from

one meeting to another. This is exhausting whether you are working in or outside the home or supposedly are retired. Your family starts to feel that they never see you, and you start feeling that you should just move into the church hall. This is not good for anyone! You are part of a team—you have to learn to communicate well within the team, and delegate. You are a leader—not the only doer in the parish. If you need someone to do a certain job, see who is waiting to be asked. You will be amazed at how many people will say yes to a short-term job or even sit on an interesting committee if asked. If another meeting has been called, ask if it is really needed or if it could be an agenda item at a regular committee meeting, or if it could be handled by phone or e-mail.

We Can't Agree?

There are times when even good communication and teamwork just cannot solve a problem. Remember that you have a large group of people who can and will help you in any circumstances. You have a Regional Dean, your Archdeacon and the diocesan staff to assist. We have been worshipping in this diocese since 1914, in over 50 parishes; it's likely that your situation has come up in some form in the past. And if it is entirely different to anything that has come before, it will be a new challenge for everyone.

We Need to Hire New Parish Support Staff?

Advertise, describing the job, expectations, responsibilities and remuneration. It is required that a police check be undertaken for all new support staff, and that the results be communicated to the diocesan office. This can be arranged through the local police department.

I Would Like to Suggest Improvements/Updates to this Handbook?

Please contact the Diocesan Executive Officer at the Synod Office at 780-439-7344 or 1-877-494-8890.

Appendix

The Diocese

The Diocese of Edmonton encompasses a narrow portion of Alberta, running east to west on either side of Highway 16: from Cold Lake and Wainwright in the east to Jasper in the west, and from Ponoka in the south to Whitecourt in the north. It contains 50 parishes.

A parish is an area of the diocese, established by the Bishop pursuant to Canon 5.

Parishes are grouped together into a unit known as a Regional Deanery under the leadership of a Regional Dean both for facilitation and administration purposes and in order that they may work together solving problems of mutual interest.

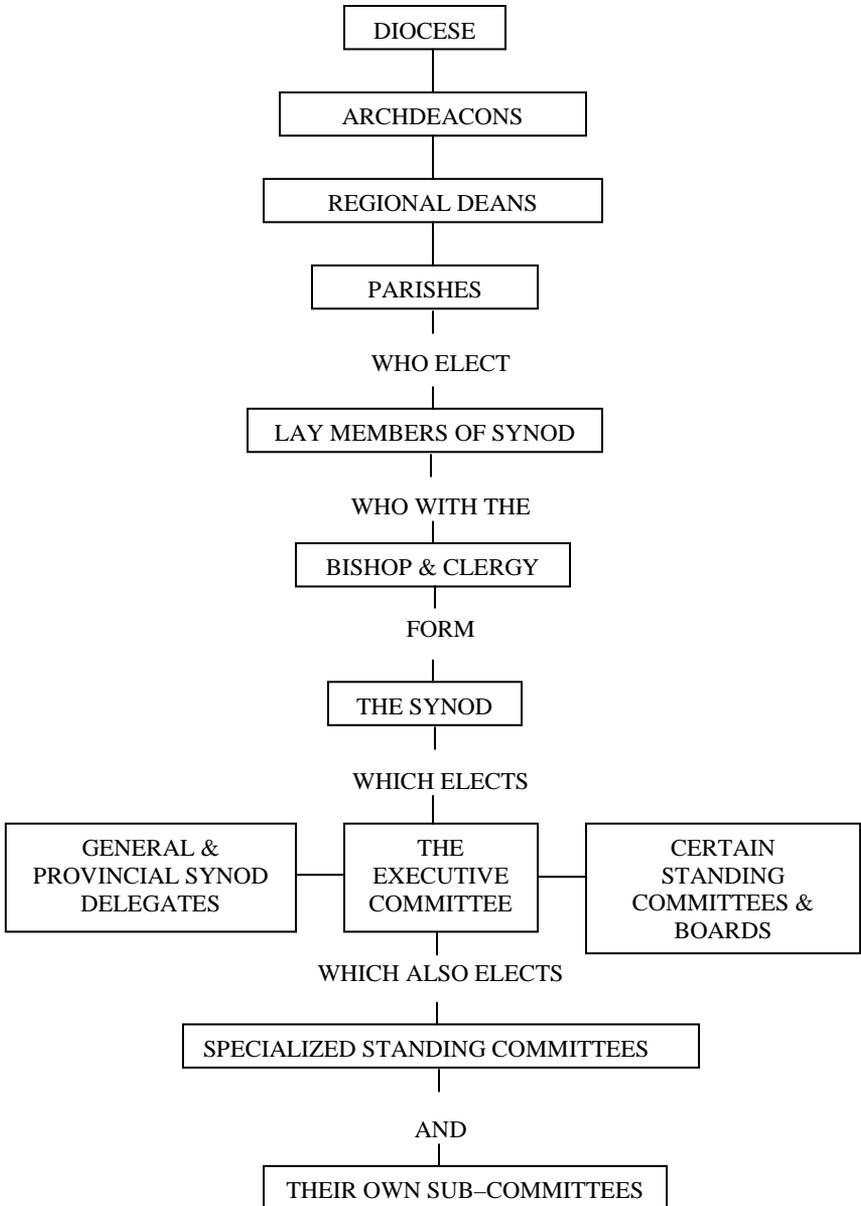
The Regional Deaneries, in turn, are grouped into Archdeaconries under the leadership of an Archdeacon.

The Synod

The Synod is the governing body of the diocese. The Bishop chairs the Synod, which consists of the Bishop and clergy of the diocese, lay members elected by the parishes at the parish annual general meetings, and several ex-officio members.

Synod typically meets every two years for the purpose of considering the reports of committees charged with particular responsibilities, electing new committees, enacting or amending legislation, and taking what steps may be deemed advisable for strengthening the work of the church in the diocese.

In addition to the Diocesan Synod, there are Provincial and General Synods.



Resources

Diocesan workshops are offered on a variety of topics of interest to wardens: from social justice roundtables and refugee sponsorship, to stewardship, to communications, to spiritual direction. Watch for advertisements in the *Synod Scene* and on the diocesan website and please share the information with your parish. These workshops are intended to bring parishes together to share experiences, knowledge and resources. If you have an idea for a workshop, contact the Synod Office.

Installation of Church Wardens

The usual form of installation takes place after the election of the people's warden in a quiet moment of prayer for both wardens and vestry, during the parish annual meeting. If a more formal installation is desired, the following short service for the first Sunday after the annual meeting may be used.

Immediately following the second hymn, or at some other point in the service deemed convenient by the incumbent, the wardens to be installed are asked to proceed to the chancel steps.

INCUMBENT: (addressing the standing congregation, may say:)

We are here to install into office the church wardens of this congregation, to ask God's blessings upon them in their newly accepted responsibilities, and to pledge them our prayers and support in the extension of God's Kingdom. Let us, therefore, pray that God may richly bless those who are about to assume this office.

The following lesson may be read: Numbers 11:16–17

Let us pray:

Incumbent: Lord have mercy upon us.

Response: Christ have mercy upon us.

Incumbent: Lord have mercy upon us.

The Lord's Prayer:

Collect: O Eternal God, the fountain of all wisdom, enlighten with Thy Grace the Wardens of this church, and so rule their minds and guide their counsels, that in all things they may seek Thy Holy Will; through Jesus Christ, Our Lord, Amen.

Prayer for Christian Service: O Lord, our Heavenly Father, whose blessed Son came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, we beseech Thee to bless all who, following in His steps, give themselves to the service of their fellow worshipers. We pray especially for those who are about to assume office in the government and work of this parish. Endue them with wisdom, patience and courage to strengthen the weak and raise up those who fall; that, being inspired by Thy Life, they may worthily minister in Thy Name to the suffering, the friendless and the needy; for the sake of Him who laid down His life for us, the same, Thy Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

(Name), you have been appointed Rector's Warden, and
(Name), you have been elected People's Warden of this congregation,
[(Name), you have been elected Assistant Warden of this congregation.]

I would remind you that the office of church warden is an ancient and honourable one, and carries with it not only dignity, but great responsibility. Each of you is possessed of equal authority, and yours is a joint and mutual responsibility.

Together with the Incumbent and the vestry, it will be your duty to make provision for and to manage the temporalities of this church in accordance with the canons and bylaws of the Diocese of Edmonton.

I would add, also, that on account of the office you now hold, this congregation will look to you, not only for leadership in all that pertains to the good management and welfare of the temporalities of the parish, but also for Christian example and encouragement in all efforts to promote the spiritual and moral well-being of the congregation.

In order that you may have fuller and more detailed knowledge of the duties and responsibilities that pertain to your office, I commend to you to study the Canons of this Diocese.

Before investing you with the symbol of your office, may I ask if you accept this office of church warden in this church and the responsibilities pertaining thereto in accordance with the principles set forth in the canons of this Diocese?

WARDEN: I do.

INCUMBENT: The Lord, who hath given you this good will, grant you grace to perform your duty to His glory and the welfare of this church and congregation.

I present you with a copy of the *Constitution, Rules and Canons of the Synod of the Diocese of Edmonton*, and install you as rector's (and/or peoples' and/or assistant) warden of this parish church of N. for the ensuing year, until a successor has been appointed or elected.

May you look well to the important duties of your office and may God's richest blessing rest upon you in your efforts to discharge the same.

To the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who has only the gift of immortality, dwelling in the light which no one can approach, be ascribed all right, majesty, dominion and praise, henceforth and for evermore.

Amen.

Notes and Reminders