

Saint Paul's Church

Kinderhook, New York

a parish of the Episcopal Diocese of Albany

The Reverend Tom Malioneck, Rector



Qualifications, Duties, and Expectations of a Warden

Introduction

New York State law provides for two equal Wardens, who may share or distribute any responsibilities among them in the best interests of the parish. "Senior"/"rector's" warden and "junior"/"people's" warden are not mentioned in the law. Wardens are officers of the parish for certain legal and business purposes, but because a parish differs from a social service agency or fraternal organization, the most important mission of the wardens is to promote the spiritual life of the parish by forming a spiritual partnership with the Rector, clergy, and vestry.

"Warden" means "steward" or "guardian," and wardens are the chief stewards and servants of their congregations. Wardens have a special and public ministry, and must lead by example as faithful churchgoers and visible donors of time, talent and treasure. They must be willing to listen, able to delegate, and, above all, able to engender trust in relationships with the rector and the congregation.

Diocese of Washington, *Wardens: Chief Stewards and Servants*

<https://www.ecfvp.org/vestry-papers/article/71/wardens-chief-stewards-and-servants>

[T]he primary role of the warden is to serve as the lay partner of the rector ... in articulating the mission and vision of the parish, managing its day-to-day operations, identifying and nurturing leaders, and empowering members of the congregation to live out the Gospel in their daily lives. The role requires an open, honest, and trusting relationship between warden and rector.

Donald Romanik, *You're a new warden: Now what?*

<https://www.ecfvp.org/vestry-papers/article/68/youre-a-new-warden-now-what>

Historically, one warden takes primary responsibility for the support of the Rector, while the other exercises oversight over physical plant. Though widely practiced, this arrangement poses a danger that a warden may focus narrowly on specific responsibilities but neglect personal discipleship in community and spiritual leadership. While all good gifts can be harnessed to the mission of the church, leadership requires more than just skill and experience; the healthier approach is to cultivate spiritual life, corporate worship, and discipleship as a shared value.

Qualifications

- age 18 or older
- baptized
- recorded in the parish register of baptisms or communicants
- has not transferred registration to another parish
- faithful, regular attendance at worship on Sundays and at other times of common prayer
- contributes to the support of the parish for twelve months prior to election in a manner that is regular; verifiable; and greater than a token amount

The qualifications above are the same as for vestry service and voting. In addition, a Warden must be

- confirmed in the Episcopal Church *or* received formally into the Episcopal Church after having been confirmed in a denomination whose sacrament of Confirmation is recognized by the Episcopal Church as valid.

Spiritual Qualities

[S]uccessful ministry as a warden depends on keeping oneself spiritually and physically whole. Wardens need to take time to nourish themselves and call upon the talents of other members of the congregation to get things done. While challenges may stretch the patience and tax the time and spirit of a warden, this ministry should be one of fulfillment and gratification.

Diocese of Washington, *Wardens: Chief Stewards and Servants*

Like vestry members, Wardens publicly and visibly exemplify mature Christian faith and life as depicted in the Bible, creeds, and formularies of the Church. Qualities commended by Saint Paul are needed of Wardens:

patience • kindness • not envious • not boastful • not arrogant • not rude • not insistent on having one's own way • not irritable • not resentful • does not rejoice at wrongdoing • rejoices at the truth • forbearing • willing to take others at their word • hope • endurance (I Corinthians 13:4-7)

The fruits of the Holy Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23 are also positive indicators for productive Warden service: love • joy • peace • patience • kindness • goodness • faithfulness • gentleness • self-control

Time Commitment: same as for vestry, plus:

- periodic meetings with the Rector (ordinarily weekly)
- meeting with committees as needed

Responsibilities of both wardens: same as for vestry, plus:

- encourage and lead the vestry to make ministry happen in the parish; lead in implementing plans, assessing progress, and celebrating achievements in line with the vision and mission of the congregation;
- lead the congregation by demonstrating a consistently positive attitude;
- seek to solve problems, recognize accomplishments, and give thanks for all that builds community and furthers the mission of the Church;
- work closely with the rector to plan for and exercise overall leadership of the congregation;
- advise and assist the Rector in recruiting for specific offices, functions, projects, ministries;
- work together, and with the Treasurer, Office Coordinator, and other staff, on employment matters;
- prepare and sign applicable portions of the Parochial Report;
- sit *ex officio* on Executive, Personnel, and Finance committees;

In the absence of the Rector or during times of vacancy:

- chair vestry meetings;
- arrange for regular services and the administration of the sacraments;
- contact the diocesan Transition Ministry Officer to arrange for a self-study and search;
- lead the parish in the search.

Accountability

- Wardens are elected by the Annual Meeting.
- Wardens may provide reports to the Vestry, but are not agents of, or accountable to, the Vestry.
- The Wardens' ministry should be considered as a part of the mutual ministry review.

When Warden responsibilities are differentiated:

Warden with responsibility for care and support of the Rector and operations:

- Understand state, diocesan, and national church policies and procedures for the employment of clergy.
- Understand benefit and pension plans.
- Help and encourage the Rector and his or her family to exercise appropriate self-care.
- Seek out and help arrange professional development opportunities for the Rector.
- Provide moral support, consultation, and advice to the Rector on confidential matters and pastoral care.

Warden with responsibility for physical plant

- Understand property maintenance needs.
- Work effectively with contractors; recruit and motivate members of the congregation to join responsibility for maintenance.
- Ensure regular seasonal maintenance of all equipment (air conditioning, plumbing, kitchen facilities).
- Ensure annual safety checks (fire safety, uneven walkways, etc.).
- Establish and oversee a process for obtaining contracted services as needed (three quotes for work over \$500 if possible).
- Chair or work with the Buildings and Grounds Committee. Some of the above responsibilities may be delegated among members of the Building and Grounds committee with the warden providing primary oversight on behalf of the vestry.