



Episcopal Diocese

— OF CENTRAL FLORIDA —

Transition Ministry

Senior Warden & Vestry Leadership During a Vacancy

Canon Law Guidance

According to **Title III, Canon 9, Section 3** of the Episcopal Church Canons:

When a congregation is without a rector, the Wardens and other officers (of the vestry) are responsible for the continuation of worship, including the calling of a new rector.

Senior Warden Responsibilities

The **Senior Warden** becomes the primary lay leader of the parish for certain purposes during a clergy vacancy. Their duties include:

- **Presiding at Vestry Meetings:** In the absence of a priest, the Senior Warden leads vestry meetings and may also preside over the annual meeting of the congregation.
- **Maintaining Worship Services:** Ensuring that worship continues, often by coordinating with the diocese to arrange for **supply clergy** or lay-led services.
- **Communication:**
 - With the **diocese**, especially the **Canon to the Ordinary**, regarding clergy needs and the search process.
 - With the **congregation**, to keep members informed and engaged.
 - With **parish staff**, to maintain operations.
- **Search Process:**
 - Initiating and coordinating the **search for a new rector**, in consultation with diocesan leadership.
 - Assisting in preparing the **Letter of Agreement** for the new priest.
- **Administrative Duties:**
 - Reading and responding to diocesan correspondence.
 - Completing and reviewing the **Parochial Report** with the vestry.
 - Overseeing pastoral care and program continuity.

Vestry Responsibilities

The **Vestry** functions as the parish's governing body and assumes broader responsibilities during a clergy vacancy:

- **Legal and Financial Oversight:**

- Acts as the **legal representative** of the parish in all matters concerning property and finances.
 - Ensures compliance with **business methods** outlined in the Episcopal Church's Manual of Business Methods.
- **Worship and Ministry Continuity:**
 - Responsible for the **continuation of worship services**, including arranging for supply clergy or lay leadership.
 - Supports ongoing ministries and programs.
- **Calling a New Rector:**
 - Initiates and manages the **search and call process** for new clergy, often forming a search committee in consultation with the diocesan Transition Officer.
- **Pastoral Support:**
 - Provides pastoral care and leadership to the congregation.
 - Maintains morale and unity during the transition.