



January 2009

**Re: Survey Results on Changes in Composition of the Vestry**

Dear Members of Saint Mark's Parish:

Thank you very much for your completing the questionnaire on the advisability of making changes to the composition of the Vestry. Here's what you told us.

**Would you prefer to see the Vestry structure remain as it is now or change?**

Question	No. of Responses	Response Ratio
Remain as it is now	8	6.7%
Change to 12 parish and 3 diocesan reps; no community reps.	97	81.5%
Change to an entirely different structure	4	3.3%
Other	6	5.0%
No response	4	3.3%
Total	119	100%

**Do you feel you have enough information about how governance works at Saint Mark's?**

Yes	96	80.6%
No	19	15.9%
No response	4	3.3%
Total	119	100%

**If you answered NO, what information would be helpful to you?**

21 responses (more on this later)

**Would you like to be more involved in leadership at Saint Mark's?**

Yes	22	18.4%
No	91	76.4%
No response	6	5.0%
Total	119	100%

**If you answered YES, what has stopped you from becoming more involved?**

Don't have enough time	15	12.6%
Don't have enough experience	6	5.0%
Haven't been here long enough	6	5.0%
Don't know whom to talk to or how to get information about opportunities	3	2.5%
There seems to be an "in" group and I don't belong	9	7.5%
Have tried and been ignored or not happy with response	4	3.3%
Other	14	11.9%

In addition to the statistical response, several questions were asked about the roles and responsibilities of the Vestry. Many of you asked the same questions, although phrased differently. We have tried to synthesize. Most of these answers can be found on and are taken from Saint Mark's website.

1. (a) What are the duties & responsibilities of the Vestry? (b) To whom are they responsible?

(a) The Canons of the Diocese of Olympia state: "The Vestry shall aid and support the Rector to promote the spiritual welfare of the growth of the parish. The Vestry shall transact the temporal affairs of the Parish." All Vestry members are elected to serve a three-year term. They are expected to attend monthly Vestry meetings, the meetings of the Vestry committee(s) to which they have been assigned, two Vestry workdays (Fall and Spring), and Cathedral events. They are responsible for understanding and carrying out the vestry governance plan.

Vestry members are encouraged to take part in a range of Cathedral activities during their period of Vestry service and to act as a bridge between the Vestry and the parish. They are expected to demonstrate leadership in supporting Cathedral fundraising projects, such as the Annual Campaign and Saint Mark's Celebrates Seattle, in order to motivate and raise the sights of subsequent donors.

In summary, Vestry members responsibilities are to:

- Attend all Vestry meetings.
- Participate actively and regularly in Vestry meetings and on Vestry committees.
- Be prepared to set policy for the Cathedral and to take action on budgetary and fiscal proposals.
- Attend the two Vestry workdays ("retreats") scheduled each year.
- Demonstrate leadership in supporting Cathedral fundraising projects, such as Saint Mark's Celebrates Seattle and the Annual Campaign, in order to motivate and raise the sights of subsequent donors.
- Serve as an advocate of the Cathedral in the wider community.
- Make Annual Campaign calls and carry out other fundraising activities, as requested by the development office.
- Adopt an annual budget for the Cathedral.
- Participate in a mutual ministry review with the Rector/Dean.
- Participate in an annual Vestry self-evaluation and an annual evaluation of the Vestry as a whole.
- Avoid conflict of interest and the appearance of conflict of interest in all activities on behalf of the Cathedral.
- Pray for the Cathedral.
- See also "Roles & Responsibilities" on the Vestry page of St. Mark's website. (The answer to question 2 will tell you how to get there.)

(b) Vestry members are charged with the responsibility of assisting and supporting the Rector/Dean but are ultimately accountable to the members of the parish.

2. Where can I find a list of the responsibilities of each of the 12 parish members?

On Saint Mark's website, a heading at the top of the page says "Governance"; click on "Governance," and then on "Vestry." On the Vestry page, click on "Roster of Vestry Members" and you will see the names and pictures of each vestry member as well as the specific responsibilities of each member.

3. (a.) What is the division of labor between the Dean and the Vestry?

Broadly speaking, the rector/dean is responsible for worship, teaching, and management of staff. The Vestry is responsible for financial and property management. During this interim period, before a new Dean is called, a focus has been placed on clarifying roles and responsibilities in order to increase the Vestry's effectiveness.

(b.) Do staff members work for the Dean or for the Vestry? Staff members work for the Cathedral and are supervised by the Dean. The Dean is responsible for hiring and firing assistant clergy and other staff. Often parish members participate in the hiring process of key staff members. Staff members assist the Vestry and parishioners, as they are able, under the direction of the Dean or the Dean's designee.

4. (a) Are Vestry meetings open? Yes, all Vestry meetings are open unless an Executive Session is called.  
  
(b.) Are the agendas and minutes of Vestry meetings available on the website? Yes, both are available on the Vestry page of the website.
5. Why can't the Vestry focus more on fundraising and less on "trivia"? The Vestry Stewardship Committee (on which several Vestry members serve) spends a great amount of time on fundraising, both for the annual pledge drive and throughout the year. The entire Vestry is kept apprised of the work of the Stewardship Committee (whose chair for the past two years has been Junior Warden, Randy Revelle) and of the work of the Canon Missioner and of others involved in fundraising. Other aspects of fundraising, its connection to the budget, length of the annual campaign, and other like matters are discussed and deliberated upon by the entire Vestry.
6. How much time is really required to be a helpful member of the various governing groups at Saint Mark's? Attending monthly Vestry meetings requires about three hours of time each month. Attending the two annual retreats requires two additional days; additional time is required to attend and prepare for at least one or two extra meetings per year. All Vestry members also serve on one or more committees (e.g. Stewardship, Governance) and time spent varies greatly. In addition, all Vestry members are expected to attend a number of public events throughout the year and keep abreast of various issues by reading the minutes for all committee meetings and doing other things to keep up-to-date and informed. It is difficult to give a number, but the conscientious Vestry member makes a considerable investment of time and energy for the three years of Vestry membership.
7. Are diocesan representatives symbolic positions or do they do actual work in support of building up the cathedral and parish church? These positions were not set up to be symbolic positions. They were intended to help build closer and stronger links between other parishes in the diocese and Saint Mark's and to bring the insight and experience of these representatives to further the mission of St. Mark's. As with all jobs, some people in these positions have done that very effectively; others not so much. We recognize that many representatives in these positions have to travel quite a distance to attend Vestry meetings and other committee meetings on which they serve. And sometimes the issues Saint Mark's is dealing with are not as relevant to them as they are to members of our parish. We have asked them for ways to make their participation more meaningful to them and for suggestions about how they can best convey their insights to us. We have received several excellent suggestions and are working to implement them.

8. What is important about Episcopal Church structure? How is it different from other denominational structures? Bishop Rickel has written an excellent explanation of three of the main models of Protestant church governance: episcopal, presbyterian, and congregational. It's posted on our website. Click on "About Us," then on "Governance;" look under the heading "About the Polity of the Episcopal Church."
  
9. What is the timeline for searching for a Dean? When the Canon Missioner was hired, the Bishop indicated that the Canon Missioner would serve for approximately three to five years until he felt that the parish was ready to begin the call process. Recently, the Bishop said that he would not state a specific timeframe but that he felt we were on target with the original time line.

---

*In addition to the questions you asked, several of you expressed concerns about various aspects of parish life and also gave us many excellent suggestions. Most of the suggestions and concerns were about need for more communication between members of the parish and the Vestry. Others gave suggestions about ways to foster stronger relations between Saint Mark's and the wider Seattle community and for ways to assist new members of the Vestry.*

*All of these are important. We agree there is a need for more interaction between Vestry members and parishioners. So does the Vestry. We are planning to set up forums, perhaps on a quarterly basis, to foster this kind of communication. We also plan to discuss with you many of the ideas and concerns you raised in your survey feedback. And if a question you submitted was not answered here, raise it again in our discussion forums. For reasons of space, some of the answers are not as full as they deserve to be. They can be discussed more fully in a forum.*

*Vestry members are always happy to answer questions or discuss issues with you—feel free to contact them. And remember, you are also welcome to attend Vestry and Vestry Committee meetings at any time.*

*In view of the survey results, we are moving forward to recommend proposed amendments to our Constitution and our Bylaws to eliminate community representatives and increase the number of parish representatives.*

*Please watch for upcoming information on the forums.*

We really appreciate your thoughtful feedback. We have read it carefully.

Again, our thanks,

The Governance Committee