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INTRODUCTION

The roles of incumbent (clergy appointed by the bishop to serve in a parish) and churchwarden in the Anglican Church were established centuries ago. Each parish has one incumbent and two churchwardens. The responsibilities of a churchwarden are outlined in the [canons](#) (laws) of the diocese. This manual is not a substitute for the canons but instead should be considered in tandem with them. Together, the incumbent and churchwardens form a leadership team that provides the core leadership for the parish.

This leadership triumvirate is quite Anglican in its creation; it is a pragmatic form of governance. The churchwardens, by and large, look after the “temporal” affairs of the congregation: money, property and governance. They always act jointly, never one without the other.

The bishop has the chief responsibility for oversight of ministry in all parishes in the diocese. The incumbent, as the bishop’s representative in the parish on a day-to-day basis, has primary responsibility for the “spiritual” affairs: liturgy, music, education and pastoral concerns.

That might seem like a clean and simple way of delegating responsibilities and authority. However, often there is not such a simple or easy separation of duties. There is very little, if anything, we do in our churches that can be separated from our mission and God’s holy work. Therefore, the churchwardens will always work very closely with the incumbent as nothing we do is totally temporal and everything we do here on earth is at least in part spiritual. As you proceed through this manual you will find quite a few areas of shared responsibility.

STRUCTURE & RESPONSIBILITIES

The Anglican Synod of the Diocese of British Columbia (also now legally known as the Diocese of Islands and Inlets) is a legal corporation created by a private act of the BC legislature in 1889 and governed by the constitution that is appended to that act. The legal rules and principles governing the diocese are, therefore, the 1889 Act, the constitution as it has been amended by Synod from time to time, and the canons, regulations and policies adopted by Synod and diocesan council. All of these are available on the [diocesan website](#). Of course, as a regional expression of the Anglican Church of Canada, part of the worldwide Anglican Communion, we are also governed by provincial and national canons, and by the general principles of canon law. If you have a question about these canonical rules and their application, contact the executive archdeacon or the chancellor.

For more information about Anglican history, beliefs, traditions, practices and terminology please consult the [Being Anglican](#) section of the diocesan website.

Parishes

A parish is generally associated with a defined mission field or geographic area set apart by the diocesan bishop. Parishes have a relatively independent form of governance and management. However, the parish always exists in the context of and works on behalf of the mission of the whole diocese. As such, it ministers to the local community on behalf of the diocese and exists as the diocese in its local context.

Appointment of wardens and deputy wardens

One warden is appointed by the incumbent and is often referred to as the “rector’s warden.” The other is elected by the vestry (the congregation) at the annual general meeting and is often referred to as the “people’s warden.” If the incumbent fails to appoint a churchwarden, the vestry shall elect two. It is sometime understood that these titles indicate a difference of responsibilities between the two wardens, but that is not the case; the titles only refer to how the warden became a warden. Churchwardens must always act jointly; they cannot exercise their powers separately, nor can one act without the consent of the other. Additionally, they must always function in concert with the incumbent.

The canons for the diocese are silent regarding deputy churchwardens. By practice, several parishes have elected and or appointed deputy churchwardens. They assist churchwardens in the performance of their duties. During the temporary absence or incapacity of a churchwarden and during a vacancy until such vacancy is filled, a deputy churchwarden, as requested by the incumbent, may fulfill the duties of a churchwarden.

Appointment or election as a churchwarden does not imply the assumption of any personal liability in the due performance of the duties of churchwardens as such.

Qualifications

- Must be a member of the congregation or parish.
- Must be at least eighteen years old.

DUTIES

As part of the parish leadership team, churchwardens are expected to:

- Maintain and develop their own spiritual life and live out their baptismal covenant.
- Be supportive of parish life by attending congregational events whenever possible.
- Be supportive of the incumbent and other staff, ensuring they take appropriate time off and maintain work-life balance.

The duties of churchwarden are outlined in the canons under Regulation 6.8.01—Churchwardens.

Regulations 6.8.01

Source: *Constitution, Canons and Regulations of the Anglican Synod of the Diocese of British Columbia*

- The specific duties of the churchwardens in the Diocese of British Columbia, whether chosen by the incumbent or the parishioners, shall be the same:
- See that the divine service is regularly and decently performed by the persons licensed by the bishop or holding the bishop's permission to officiate and ensure that all things requisite for divine service are provided.
- Set an example of regular attendance and hearty response on the part of the congregation, and generally assist and support the incumbent by zeal and moral support in all matters affecting the welfare and advancement of the parish; to take care that order is preserved in the church, and to see that the parishioners are sufficiently accommodated in the church.
- Supervise all financial matters of the parish and ensure that a financial statement is drawn up each month for presentation to the parish council.
- Ensure that the incumbent's stipend is paid in full regularly each month.
- Ensure that the yearly accounts, duly examined and reviewed, are laid before the parishioners at the annual meeting; and that a copy of such accounts is sent to the diocesan finance officer, as well as the parish annual return form sent from the synod office.
- Hand over to their successors in office any cash balance in hand after the approval of the accounts, together with the church goods and inventory.
- Ensure that all properties belonging to the parish are in repair and insured; and all premiums and taxes are paid (See Canon 6.6—Insurance).
- Execute contracts normally entered on behalf of the parish, having obtained the previous consent or subsequent ratification of the parish council.
- Undertake, with the incumbent, the management and control of the church cemetery or cemeteries within the parish, subject to the terms of any trust affecting the same, and subject to the regulations on cemeteries.
- At the beginning of the year assist the incumbent in preparing and promptly submitting a table of statistics on a form provided by the diocesan office.
- Provide for the care of the parish during the annual holiday of the incumbent.

- Report to the bishop the death of the incumbent, or the inability from any cause to fulfill the duties of the incumbent.
- Take care of the rectory.
- Assist the incumbent in the appointment of all lay employees.
- Assist in the timely completing, signing and remitting of filings under the Income Tax Act, so that the parish's standing as a registered charity is maintained.

Record keeping

The following books or records are to be kept by the parochial authorities:

- Register book or books of baptisms, confirmations, banns, marriages, and burials.
- A register of all services that take place in the church, with the names of the officiating ministers and the offerings received.
- Minutes and resolutions of the vestry meetings and parish council.
- Parish accounts.
- Constitution, canons, and regulations of the diocese, to be retained permanently in the parish, in addition to any other copies required by the incumbent and other officers.
- An inventory of all church goods and lands.

Managing building leases and contracts

As the property owner the synod of the diocese owns all properties and buildings, and thus must be informed of the contracts being entered into and the terms of those contracts. For this reason, Regulation 6.3.01, under Canon 6.3, provides that all major construction, purchase and sale, leasing or mortgaging relating to lands or buildings requires approval of diocesan council.

Parishes entering into a lease, sublease or rental contract that is more than a year in duration or exceeds the value of \$5,000 per annum, must submit the proposed agreement and supporting information to the finance officer for approval. The finance officer, in turn, will involve the asset advisor, the chancellor and finance committee prior to submitting the proposal to the diocesan council for consideration. If warranted, further consultation with the parish will take place during those reviews. Any proposal to mortgage, sell or purchase lands or buildings must be approved by the bishop and diocesan council.

Term of office

A churchwarden holds office for one year from the time of their appointment, or until their successor is appointed or elected. For continuity, some congregations wish for their wardens to take on the roles for more than one year, but to do so, they must be re-elected each year at the vestry (annual general meeting). It is also common for parishes to elect deputy or assistant churchwardens to provide continuity in the office. It cannot be assumed that such assistants will automatically move on to the position of churchwarden; they must be elected or appointed in the usual manner at the vestry (annual general meeting).

If a churchwarden wishes to resign the office, notice in writing shall be given to the incumbent or if there is no incumbent, to the bishop or the commissary.

If the office of churchwarden chosen by the parishioners becomes vacant, a meeting of the parishioners shall be called as soon as conveniently may be, to elect some other qualified person to the vacant office. If the office of churchwarden chosen by the parishioners becomes vacant during the year with less than six months of the normal term remaining, a churchwarden may be elected by the parish council without the necessity of calling a meeting of the parishioners.

If the office of the churchwarden appointed by the incumbent shall become vacant the incumbent shall appoint without delay some other qualified person to the vacant office.

Immediately after the appointment of a churchwarden to fill a vacancy the incumbent shall publicly announce to the congregation during the time of divine service the name of the person appointed, and shall have that person sign the required declaration and advise the diocesan office of the name of the new warden.

WHERE TO FIND HELP

Diocesan website

The diocesan website is a rich repository of information and resources to support you in your work as warden and should be consulted regularly.

Synod office

The synod office is the administrative centre of the diocese. Its staff carry out at the direction of the bishop and the diocesan council the day-to-day operations of the synod (the governing body of the diocese), ensuring the implementation of diocesan programs and adherence to synod policies, canons and regulations throughout the diocese.

The synod office is a support centre for the work wardens do on behalf of the parish. If in doubt about who to reach out to the synod office administrative assistant will direct you to the

right person for the job.

Synod office contacts

For a current list of synod staff visit bc.anglican.ca/about-us/pages/synod-staff. General areas of work conducted at the synod office:

Archives: Non-current parish and burial record-keeping, searches, provincial and national coordination in compliance with the BC Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA).

Finance: Payroll, budget management, investments, electronic collection plate, charity compliance, human resources administration.

Insurance and properties: Insurance claims, tax assessments, capital improvements, cemetery management.

Refugee sponsorship: Administration, training and support for parish-based sponsorship groups.

Safe Church: organizing training, completing certification of safe church and criminal records checks.

Archdeacons

Regional archdeacons are appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the bishop. **They are the first point of contact in each of the regions of the diocese.** For contact information for your regional archdeacon visit bc.anglican.ca/pages/archdeacons.

The role of the archdeacon is to monitor ministry in their region, provide feedback to the bishop and synod staff, to transmit information from the synod to the parishes, and to support incumbents and wardens in fulfilling their duties in the parish.

Episcopal office

As the chief pastor of the diocese and the head of the corporation, the bishop is responsible for ensuring that ministry is provided and developed within the diocese. The bishop serves as the overseer of all of the churches (among other responsibilities).

Churchwardens and incumbents work closely with the bishop and the bishop's designate(s) to uphold those areas particularly involving parish personnel.

The first point of contact in the bishop's office is the administrative assistant. They will either direct you to the bishop, the executive archdeacon, regional archdeacon or the appropriate member of the synod staff.