



St. Mark's Episcopal Church
Port Royal, SC

Vestry Covenant

Affirmed – Vestry Meeting – April 20, 2025

Our Mission and Purpose

St. Mark's Episcopal Church is an inclusive fellowship called by God, through Christ, to love and serve the world.

As the St. Mark's vestry, we

- represent the congregation,
- create the atmosphere for living the Gospel,
- learn and grow as Christian leaders,
- facilitate the spiritual growth of the congregation,
- prayerfully consider how to accomplish the parish's mission as stewards of the church,
- support the clergy, staff, and each other, and
- attend to the business of the church as servant leaders.

Our Values

- Love. We demonstrate our love of God and God's creation in everything we do. We hold one another up in prayer on a regular basis.
- Service. We serve each other, our congregation, and our community with gratitude and joy by investing our time, talent, and treasure in support of St. Mark's mission.
- Leadership. We establish the strategic direction of St. Mark's and lead by example as active participants in the mission and activities of the church. We create a welcoming, inclusive, and respectful community for all to come and see. We bring a variety of God-given gifts to the vestry leadership team, including talents in leadership and administration, communications, creativity, relationship building, spiritual entrepreneurship, and a willingness to work.
- Integrity. We ensure that our words and deeds are congruent and in keeping with the Gospel.
- Collaboration. We are open, honest, and transparent in our communications among ourselves and with the congregation and wider community. We are committed to listening and to ensuring free-flowing communications.
- Learning and Growth. We pursue our own spiritual development and facilitate the learning and growth of the congregation.

Top Priorities

Our top priorities—what matter most to us as a vestry—are highly interconnected. Just as with the body of Christ--the Church--all our efforts work together for the overall health of congregation.

- *Nurture the Spiritual Life of St. Mark's*. Worship, outreach to the community and the world, and the breadth and depth of our growth create a vibrant congregation at St. Mark's.
- *Focus on the Mission while Envisioning the Future*. We are committed to living the St. Mark's mission in all we do as a leadership team and a parish. At the same time, we look for opportunities to extend our mission and outreach through enhanced worship formats, programs, and services.
- *Manage St. Mark's Resources*. We will be good stewards of the gifts we have been given—people, finances, and facilities.

Adaptability and Learning

We are a learning organization committed to continuous growth for the benefit of St. Mark's. We do this by:

- *Being involved in the life of the church*. We will discern God's direction for St. Mark's through prayer and consultation, and we will learn by our personal involvement as servant leaders in the congregation. We will try new things and take prayerfully considered risks.
- *Gathering feedback from the congregation*. We will seek input from the congregation through a variety of means, including informal gatherings, community meetings, focus groups, and surveys.
- *Continual Review Process*. We will learn from experience and share our learning with others. We evaluate major project or event for lessons learned and opportunities for improvement and memorialize the results in an appropriate manner for future consideration. We will conduct an annual ministry review of on-going programs.
- *Learning from the experience of others*. We will consider the best practices for vestries as published by the diocese, the national church, and the Episcopal Church Foundation for any operational changes. In addition, we will learn from the community and other organizations/congregations.

Norms and Expectations

Internal

- We will engage in open, respectful, and civil communications with one another.
- We will conduct the affairs of the church in accordance with the Parish Bylaws and approved policies.
- When we identify problems, challenges, and opportunities, we will call for a subcommittee or project team to conduct the necessary research to address the issues on behalf of the vestry and the congregation. We will make informed decisions based on the research.
- To have effective vestry meetings, we will do the following:
 - o Submit and read committee reports before the meeting.

- o Discuss committee reports when there are questions or decisions to be made.
- o Have an open and collaborative discussion of all issues before deciding, ensuring that all points of view are heard. We will strive to reach consensus but will take a vote when necessary. The majority votes will decide the issue.
- o Make time at the end of each meeting for an open discussion by going around the table to build community and provide opportunities for new ideas to emerge.
- o Publish approved vestry minutes on the parish web page.
- As a common practice, we make decisions during in-person meetings. If time constraints dictate an email vote on an issue, sufficient information will be provided for members to make an informed vote and the results of the email vote will be read into the minutes of the subsequent vestry meeting.
- We do not require vestry approval for financial decisions within the parameters of the annual budget. We do require vestry approval for financial decisions outside the parameters of the annual budget.
- We will conduct an orientation for new vestry members.
- We will endeavor to respond quickly to sign-up requests for Vestry Person of the Day.
- We deal with disagreement in a respectful manner, inviting different opinions and listening carefully to all points of view in a search for common ground. We encourage disagreeing parties to resolve their differences face-to-face; if necessary, we will seek assistance of a mediator.

External.

- We will begin relationships with external entities by assuming good intentions.
- The rector will speak for the vestry and the parish so that we speak with one voice. The rector may delegate to other vestry members the authority to speak for the vestry on certain matters within their scope of responsibility.
- We will publicly support all vestry decisions.

Signatures:











