

Diocese of New Hampshire
Leadership Institute 2013: School for Vestries
QUIZ on Church Structure and Polity

N.B.: In the multiple choice questions below, more than one answer may be correct.

1. The name of our church is
 - a. The Episcopal Church
 - b. The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America
 - c. The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America
2. "Via media" means
 - (a) A press organization specializing in religious news
 - (b) The middle way
 - (c) Church transition marked by significant and profound change
3. The highest authority in The Episcopal Church is
 - a. The Rector
 - b. The Presiding Bishop
 - c. General Convention
 - d. The Archbishop of Canterbury
4. Changes in the Book of Common Prayer
 - a. Require the concurrent affirmative votes of the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies in two consecutive General Conventions
 - b. Can be made only by the Presiding Bishop with the advice and consent of the House of Bishops
 - c. Are not possible
5. A person becomes a member of The Episcopal Church
 - a. When his or her baptism is recorded in an Episcopal church
 - b. At confirmation or age 18, whichever comes first
 - c. When he or she receives Holy Communion three times a year
 - d. When his or her pledge card is received by the Pledge Clerk
6. The basic building block in the structure of The Episcopal Church is
 - a. the local parish
 - b. the diocese
 - c. General Convention
 - d. Lambeth Conference
7. When a diocese is without bishop for any reason, what or who becomes the ecclesiastical authority of the diocese?
 - a. Board of Trustees
 - b. Diocesan Council
 - c. Commission on Ministry
 - d. The Standing Committee
 - e. The Presiding Bishop
 - f. General Convention
8. The number of convocations in the Diocese of New Hampshire is
 - a. 815
 - b. 110
 - c. 46
 - d. 34
 - e. 16
 - f. 9
 - g. 7
 - h. 6

Extra credit: In which convocation is your congregation located?
9. No matter who holds title to an Episcopal church, the church cannot be sold or mortgaged without the permission of the Bishop and Standing Committee. True or False?

Extra credit: Who owns church property?
10. The ordination of a deacon or priest and the consecration of a bishop is valid only in the diocese in which the ordination or consecration took place. True or false?

Extra credit: If parishioner sincerely and in good faith believes that a member of the clergy has misbehaved, does he or she have any recourse?
11. Vestry members are responsible for
 - a. Keeping all members of the congregation pleased and happy
 - b. Supervising worship services
 - c. Administering church program
 - d. Adopting a budget
12. Vestries and parishes can be held legally liable for
 - a. Accidents and other incidents occurring on parish property during parish sponsored activities
 - b. Violation of fiduciary responsibilities, especially those relating to finances
 - c. Violation of contracts, leases, or other legal agreements
 - d. Wrongful discrimination and other employment practices
 - e. Discrimination and sexual harassment and misconduct

& Answers

1. The name of our church is all of those listed. "PECUSA" and "The Episcopal Church" are both expressly recognized in the Preamble to TEC Constitution. The name of the church is frequently abbreviated to "TEC."
"Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society" is and remains the official corporate name of the church, taken on when the church incorporated in New York State in 1821, and by its charter "comprehends all persons who are members of the church." TEC I.3
2. "Via media" means (b) the middle way
The Church of England, and hence Anglicanism, was formed when that part of the Catholic Church located in England withdrew as an autonomously governed body under the English monarch. *Via media* (Latin for "middle way") was first used by Anglicans in the sixteenth century as a way of describing the Church of England as the middle way between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. Among other things, the Anglican *via media* seeks to find a balance between central authority and local responsibility. The Anglican *via media* is not a compromise, but the better way, a "golden mean" and a model for reconciliation.
3. The highest authority in The Episcopal Church is (d) General Convention
This is the bicameral body that comprises the House of Bishops and House of Deputies and meets in regular session once every three years. It will next meet in 2015 in Salt Lake City. The Houses sit and deliberate separately; each may originate and propose legislation. All acts of Convention must be adopted by both Houses. The organization of General Convention bespeaks a unitary structure, with power and authority vested in one central, if bicameral, organization—not shared among member organizations. It is, therefore, neither a federation or confederation. It does not mimic the system of governance set forth in the U.S. Constitution. In the earliest American church the Presiding Bishop was the senior member of the House of Bishops; his duties were to preside over meetings of that House. Over the 20th century, the role of the PB increased significantly, and he or she is now also charged with pastoral and administrative leadership of TEC and, as a primate, represents the church to the world and in the councils of the Anglican Communion. The PB is elected to a nine year term of office by the House of Bishops, an election that must receive the consent of the House of Deputies.
4. Changes in the Book of Common Prayer (a) require the concurrent affirmative votes of the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies in two consecutive General Conventions
General Convention is empowered, among other things, to amend the Constitution and Canons of TEC, recognize new dioceses, establish rules governing the ordination of clergy, and revise the Book of Common Prayer, which contains our liturgy and creeds.
5. A person becomes a member of The Episcopal Church (a) when his or her baptism is recorded in an Episcopal church.
Baptism (performed with water, in the name of the Trinity, and in a Christian church) alone confers membership in The Episcopal Church, provided the baptism is recorded in TEC—that is, the church must know about it or have evidence of it.
Thus a baptized infant is a member. Members 16 years of age or older are adult members.
Adult members are expected to have made mature public affirmation of their faith and commitment, by confirmation by a bishop in TEC or, if confirmed by a bishop in apostolic succession in another church, being received by the laying on of a bishop's hands in TEC. Members who have received Holy Communion at least three times in the preceding year are communicants. Communicants who are faithful in corporate worship and in working, praying, and giving for the spread of the Kingdom are considered communicants in good standing.
New Hampshire canons require that vestry members be adult communicants and that wardens be adult confirmed communicants.
6. The basic building block in the structure of The Episcopal Church is (b) the diocese.
With few exceptions, a congregation of worshipers becomes an Episcopal church only when it becomes part of an Episcopal diocese by act of the Convention of that diocese. Each diocese has a single ecclesiastical authority, who is the bishop, also known as the "ordinary." The bishop diocesan is elected by the people of the diocese, as are bishops suffragan (assisting bishops) and bishops coadjutor (a bishop elected to succeed the ordinary). All bishop elections must received the consents of a majorities of the Standing Committees and bishops in other dioceses.
In each congregation with the status of parish, the rector or other clergy person in charge is the representative of the bishop. Mission congregations are under the supervision of the bishop, and the clergy person in charge is a vicar, the vicarious presence of the bishop.
7. When the diocese is without a bishop for any reason, the ecclesiastical authority of the diocese is (b) The Standing Committee.
If there is no bishop in a diocese, the Standing Committee automatically becomes its ecclesiastical authority. The Standing Committee is mandated by canons of The Episcopal Church. It comprises six members: three clergy and three lay persons elected by the delegates to diocesan Convention.
As for those other diocesan organizations:
Diocesan Council is created by diocesan Convention;

it comprises certain diocesan leaders and representatives of the six convocations. Diocesan Council creates, charges, and evaluates program committees and reports regularly to the convocations and annually to Convention.

The Board of Trustees was created by New Hampshire statute in 1846; although closely associated with the diocese, it is not subject to Convention. It holds in trust the diocesan endowment fund and funds owned by various congregations and entrusted to the Trustees for management and disbursement. All trustees are members of NH Episcopal congregations; the Bishop is their president.

The Commission on Ministry is mandated by TEC canons to advise and assist the Bishop in the ordination of clergy and in attention to needs and opportunities for the ministry of all baptized persons.

8. The number of convocations in the Diocese of New Hampshire is (h) 6.

The Diocese of New Hampshire is divided regionally into six convocations; other dioceses might call them “deaneries.” Our convocations are Central, Lakes Region, Southern, Northern, Western, and Seacoast. Convocation meetings are attended by Convention delegates elected by member congregations.

As for those other numbers:

“815” is the street number of the Church Center on Second Avenue in NYC, often serving as a nickname for TEC. The Church Center houses the main administrative office of TEC and a residence for the Presiding Bishop. 47 is the number of congregations in the Diocese of New Hampshire, 12 of which are missions and 35 are parishes. In addition, there are 7 seasonal chapels and 4 institutional chapels.

A parish is a self-sustaining congregation locally governed by a rector and vestry. A mission is a congregation not yet or no longer able to sustain itself without direct diocesan aid. Locally, it is served by a vicar (vicariously, the bishop) and a bishop’s committee. Jurisdiction of a seasonal (or summer) chapel is ordinarily shared with a nearby congregation, and the sheltering institution cares for its chapel.

A peculiar is a chapel or church that located within the diocese, but is not subject to the jurisdiction of its bishop. The Chapel of Sts. Peter and Paul at St. Paul’s School is such a peculiar.

According to the Anglican Communion website, there are 44 entities in the Anglican Communion: 34 provinces, one of which is TEC; 4 united churches; and 6 other churches—all spread around the world, all loosely allied in bonds of friendship and a common ancestry in the Church of England.

16 is the number of sovereign nations included in TEC, This is why we try to avoid calling it the “national” church as if it were contained within the borders of the United States. The nations include, in addition to the U.S.: Colombia, Ecuador, Haiti, Honduras, Micronesia, Dominican Republic, Taiwan, Venezuela, British Virgin

Islands, and—in the Convocation of European Churches—Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Austria.

9 is the number of provinces in TEC, each of which gathers the dioceses in a large region under a Provincial Synod.

New Hampshire is one of the 7 dioceses in Province I (the others are Maine, Vermont, Massachusetts, Western Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut).

6 is the number of convocations in New Hampshire.

Extra credit:

Central: Concord-Grace, Concord-St. Paul's, Dunbarton, Hopkinton, Pittsfield, and Weare.

Lakes Region: Ashland, Laconia, Meredith, North Conway, Plymouth, Sanbornville, Tamworth, Tilton, and Wolfeboro.

Northern: Berlin, Colebrook, Lancaster, Lisbon, Littleton, North Woodstock, and Woodsville.

Seacoast: Dover, Durham, Exeter, Hampton, Portsmouth-Christ Church, Portsmouth-St. John's.

Southern: Derry, Goffstown, Hampstead, Londonderry, Manchester-Grace, Manchester-St.

Andrew's, Merrimack, Milford, Nashua, Peterborough, and Salem.

Western: Charlestown, Claremont-Trinity, Claremont-Union, Hanover, Keene, New London, Newport, and Walpole.

9. No matter who owns it, church property cannot be sold or donated or mortgaged without the permission of the bishop and standing committee. TRUE.

It is as if every congregation holds its church property in trust for the larger church. This provision is so critically important to the hierarchical polity of The Episcopal Church that any congregation desiring to become part of the diocese must first affirm that it understands this rule and will be bound by it.

Extra credit:

In our diocese, all but a small number of church properties are owned by the Bishop as corporation sole. (This is an entity created by state statute, permitting a corporation comprising one person, that person being, in our case, the person duly holding the title of Bishop of New Hampshire.)

The Trustees own and manage Diocesan House at 63 Green Street in Concord, which houses the bishop’s office and diocesan staff.

A few congregations hold the deed to their church properties; in those cases, the vestry owns the property.

Any property held by “The Episcopal Church” is owned by its corporate entity, the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society.

10. The ordination of a deacon or priest and the consecration of a bishop is valid only in the diocese in which the ordination or consecration took place.

FALSE

Deacons and priests are ordained and bishops are consecrated for the whole church in strict application of

Title III of TEC Canons. Indeed, control and oversight of the ordination of its clergy is one of the marks indicating that ours is an hierarchical church. It is essential to our nature.

The entire process of ordination is under the authority of the diocesan bishop, who is advised by the diocesan Commission on Ministry. An important part of the process is grounded in the conviction that deacons and priests are recognized among and by the laity, within the community of faith. The discernment of a person's perceived call to ordained ministry occurs in the congregation. The process is formally launched when a person is nominated to the bishop by the vestry's letter of support indicating the congregation's pledge to contribute financially to the person's preparation and its intention to be involved in that preparation. A second letter of support must be submitted as a condition of ordination to the diaconate when preparation is completed. And a third letter of support "from the Deacon's congregation" is required before a deacon can be ordained to the priesthood.

Each such letter of support must be signed and dated by at least two-thirds of the members of the vestry, at a meeting duly convened, attested to by the clerk, and signed by the rector, priest-in-charge, or another priest of the diocese who is acquainted with the nominee. This is a solemn vestry responsibility.

Extra credit:

The church is deeply concerned for the well being of all persons, including those who have been harmed or threatened with harm by persons affiliated with the church. Title IV of TEC canons sets forth standards of conduct for all clergy and provides a comprehensive process for holding members of the clergy accountable for deviations from those standards. New Hampshire Canon 6 implements that process in our diocese. Moreover, diocesan Safe Church policy establishes a procedure for receiving and responding to allegations of sexual harassment, exploitation, or abuse by any person placed in a position of trust by the church.

11. Vestry members are responsible for (d) adopting a budget.

As "the agents and legal representatives of the parish in all matters concerning its corporate property" TEC

I.14.2, the vestry adopts the budget. The budget may be presented to the congregation for information and inspiration, but it is the work of the vestry to examine, understand, and adopt the budget.

In this, as in other areas of decision-making, we are not a congregationally based church. At every level in our Episcopal Church, governance is vested in elected representatives who are accountable to the electorate but not directed by it.

All other options, (a), (b), and (c) are not vestry responsibilities. Keeping everyone pleased is not only impossible, it may be unhealthy. The priest is in sole charge of worship. The business of the vestry is not to run the church program, but to assure that it is well run and to be helpful in every aspect of congregational life. According to New Hampshire canon (4.5.1(b)) wardens and vestries shall: elect a rector subject to the bishop's call; assist the clergy in developing and maintaining a mutual ministry and trust to promote the spiritual well being of the congregation; be responsible stewards of the property and physical assets of the congregation; ensure regular worship services for the congregation by securing, in accordance with the canons of The Episcopal Church and of this diocese, the services of clergy or qualified lay worship leaders or lay readers; transact the temporal business pertaining to the congregation; assist the preparation of and approve an annual parochial report; and collect and pay to the diocese the moneys committed for the support of the budget of the diocese.

12. Vestries and parishes can be held legally liable for all the listed conditions.

Vestry members are liable for violations of law and may be civilly liable in the event of accidents and other incidents occurring on parish property during parish sponsored activities; violation of fiduciary responsibilities, especially those relating to finances; violation of contracts, leases, or other legal agreements; wrongful discrimination and other employment practices; and discrimination and sexual harassment and misconduct.

The vestry is responsible for ensuring that the congregation is adequately insured. Insurance coverage should also include directors' and officers' coverage to protect the congregation corporately and vestry members individually.

