

Q. What is Vestry? Is that the same as Annual Meeting? How do I know whether or not to attend?

The Anglican church is full of ‘insider’ terminology – words that long-time Anglicans hear and understand without a second thought, but that are completely mystifying to those outside of the loop. Being a long-time Anglican myself, I sometimes slip into using this language, not realizing that not everyone would understand what I’m talking about.

The Vestry Meeting is the Anglican word for a General Meeting, to which all members of a church are invited to have a voice and a vote. It is mandated by our wider Anglican church structures that such a meeting be called at least once a year, before the end of February; however, there are occasions when it is appropriate and necessary for a parish-wide meeting to be held at other times of the year, particularly if there are serious issues that have arisen in the intervening time, or if the congregation requires that certain agenda items presented be given follow-up (ie. Last spring, we held a meeting to approve the work done on our steeple). Our Diocesan Canons say:

“In every congregation within the Diocese of Niagara there shall be a Vestry composed of all the baptised members of such congregation of the full age of 16 years, who for at least six months preceding the holding of a Vestry meeting have been identifiably involved with that congregation, through worship, fellowship, and financial support to that congregation...”

Interestingly, ‘Vestry’ is also the word that we use to refer to the side room, adjacent to the church sanctuary, where the linens and hardware used for communion are stored, cleaned, prepared, and where, historically, the clergy would store their ‘vestments’ and ‘vest’ for services. Although it is pretty clear the relationship between the words ‘vestments’ and ‘Vestry’, it isn’t entirely obvious why ‘Vestry’ then also became a synonym for ‘the entire congregation’ or ‘a meeting of the entire congregation.’

Our St. George’s Vestry Meeting will be held in two weeks time, ***February 1st, following the 10am service.***

The most important thing the leadership of St. George’s wants you to know is that WE WANT YOU AT OUR VESTRY MEETING! Your voice, your ideas and insights are valuable! This opportunity to gather TOGETHER, to identify TOGETHER our direction for the coming year, for as many people as possible at St. George’s to feel a sense of ownership, responsibility and participation in the life of our congregation is of VITAL and LIFE-GIVING importance. To this end, our meeting this year will be different from years past, and we will be creating time and space particularly for ideas to be offered and dreams to be dreamed. If you are new to St. George’s, and/or new to the Anglican tradition, your voice is that much more valuable. We will be looking both forward and back, reporting on the year 2014, looking forward to the year 2015, setting goals, making plans, and allocating our resources in ways that match what we claim we value. Oh, and by the way, there will be food - it wouldn’t be St. George’s otherwise!☺