

Vestries



What's it all about then

?

A note from Rev Jonny

For all of my life I have been fascinated by aircraft (in fact from an early age, probably like most boys, I longed to be a fighter pilot). I had the opportunity in my 20s to have some helicopter lessons.



On the first outing, not long after taking off, we had to bring the helicopter back down because it needed fuel. After refuelling we got ready to take off, but the helicopter would not start. My instructor opened up the cover where the engine was. It was a mass of cables and pipes, highly complex. And in amongst all

of this was a little plastic cover in which a small fuse was located. Cool, calm and collected my instructor removed the fuse to notice that it had blown. He quickly replaced it saying, "That will start now".

Sheepishly I stepped back into the helicopter, and he was right; within a few minutes we were back up in the air. **But it taught me an important lesson – whilst you can have a pilot operating this incredible feat of engineering, it needs every little bit to be working together, for the machine to get off the ground safely.**

And so it is the same with the Church. Often the focus of Church life centres on the minister, or the musicians, or the various organisation leaders. But without every element working together, the Church like the helicopter, will never operate properly.

We need everyone working together. In 1 Corinthians 12 Paul lists the many gifts and elements that make up the body of Christ. But tucked away in verse 28, Paul says that in the body of Christ, God appointed people in the church with the gift of helping.

That's how the NIV translation describes it, but the King James calls it 'Administration' (that's a shout out to our wonderful David Brown).

The Greek word is even better, which is κυβέρνησις (Kybernesis), which was the ancient used for steering a ship.

And so we need people in the church who can 'steer the ship' in the right course.

The wonderful thing about our church structures is that we have a body of people who serve to steer the ship, equipping the ministries that we have to reach out with the love of Jesus into our community. I would therefore ask you to take a good read at this information document which hopefully will inform you of why the Kybernesis roles within the church are very important for you to pray about, and to consider being a part of. You may not consider yourself as someone who can at the front of church leading, but a bit like that little fuse in the inner workings of my helicopter, you may have as important a role ensuring that the church is on the move.

Finally, thank you. Many of you serve, and many serve under the radar. None of us do this for our own recognition; we do this so that Christ may be exalted and praised. May all glory go to him.

Rev Jonny.

Introduction

Many parishioners or newcomers to the Church of Ireland may not understand how our churches are managed. This simple guide outlines briefly the management structures for governing the smooth running of a Parish and explains how we would like our parishioners to become more involved.

The General Vestry

Each year before Easter, every Church of Ireland Parish follows a process to record details of parishioners who wish to be considered members of the Church of Ireland, who can then be directly involved in the governance and management of the Parish. Every member of the Church of Ireland, who is at least 18 years old, and who has recently donated financially to the life of the church through a recorded mechanism, is entitled to be registered as a member of the general vestry of the parish. Being on the General Vestry provides you with the opportunity to nominate and vote people into specific positions within the governance of the church.

Should I be a member of General Vestry?

In a word '**absolutely**'. You belong to a church family, everyone is valued, God gives us all talents that can be used for the benefit of his kingdom. Being a member of the General Vestry entitles you to vote at the annual general meeting and to stand for election to the Select Vestry.

What exactly does the Select Vestry do?



The Select Vestry is the group of parishioners, appointed annually by the General Vestry, which takes responsibility for the decision-making and day-to-day management of our Parish responsibilities include managing Parish business and finance; the buildings, their contents, their safety and surroundings; ensuring

compliance with current legislation and Church regulations and attending to the welfare, mission and vision of the parish.

The Select Vestry does not oversee the spiritual direction of the Church – that lies solely with the Minister – but they are there to enable and facilitate the mission of the Church through resources and funding.

The Select Vestry can add in an element of **Care**: in their individual and corporate roles to take positive actions that promote the well-being of the congregation, its members and mission. Along with **Loyalty**: that all vestry members will not disparage the congregation or its leadership and work for the good of all.

Offices within The United Parish

At the Annual Easter General Vestry meeting, members who are registered can nominate and vote for those people to take specific offices within the church. This includes Church Wardens, Glebe Wardens and Select Vestry members. From within the Select Vestry an Hon. Treasurer, and Hon Secretary, will be appointed. The governance of The United Parish is the responsibility of the Rector, Wardens and Select Vestry working closely together, complying with the Canons of the Church of Ireland along with Charity Legislation.

A **Church Warden** will assist the Minister in the preparation for Sunday Worship. Essentially this will mean opening the church, preparing any materials for people to take as they come into church, organising the offering, and welcoming people as they enter.

A **Glebe Warden** will assist the Select Vestry with all property matters in the church. This will include Church buildings and residential premises owned by the Church. Whilst the Glebe warden will not carry out any property work themselves, they will work with the Select Vestry in the oversight of maintenance carried out by various external companies. Practical tasks usually include arranging routine maintenance, repairs and inspections of parish buildings, furnishings, and grounds.

An **Honorary Treasurer** oversees, on behalf of the Select Vestry, all financial matters within the Church. Their role will be supported by the Parish Administrator.

An **Honorary Secretary** manages the smooth running of the Select Vestry, under the chair of the Rector. They will take minutes, oversee that all actions are delegated, and ensure all obligations to the Diocese, the central Church, and external bodies such as the Charities Commission are effectively managed. The Honorary Secretary usually acts as a point of reference for the Rector and members to bring clarity on procedure, legal requirements, past decisions of the select vestry.



How many people make up the Select Vestry?

The people who make up the Select Vestry are the members of the clergy officiating in the parish (who is also the Chairperson), at this moment in time, Revd Jonny, two church wardens per church (known as the Rector's church warden and the People's church warden), the two Glebe wardens (known as the Rector's Glebe warden and the People's Glebe warden) and up to **12 additional parishioners** who are registered members of the General Vestry for the parish and elected to the Select Vestry at the Easter Vestry meeting.

When does The Select Vestry meet?

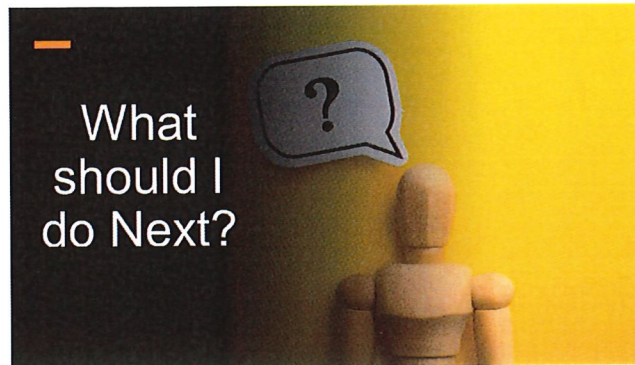
Select Vestry meetings are typically monthly, and positions are only held for 1 year until the next Annual Easter Vestry Meeting. Meetings are normally held on the second Wednesday of every month and last a couple of hours (no meetings are held during July or August).

What about Charity Legislation?

The United Parish is registered with The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (NIC103558). As such, Select Vestry members are Charity Trustees and have ultimate responsibility for managing the activities of the parish, ensuring that it is solvent and well-run, and delivering its charitable outcomes.

Why does any of this matter?

The purpose of the local church is to function as the body of Christ to advance God's Kingdom in the world by displaying God's glory. Therefore, being aware and involved in the running of the local church is important if we want to see God's purposes being fulfilled in our community.



Please consider registering as a General Vestry member in order that we, the Body, can partner in God's mission.

Being a General Vestry member does not mean that you have to put yourself forward for any specific responsibilities or join the Select Vestry, but it does mean you can speak into the future of the governance and stewardship that supports the ministries in the Church of God.

Please consider completing the appropriate Declaration for Registration as a Vestry Member if you have not already done this before. If you have moved house, please notify the Parish Office so that this can be changed on the Register of General Vestry members . The Parish Office will help you understand whether where you live is within the Parish boundary or outside, as there are two different forms dependent on where you live.

These registration forms will be reviewed and included in the Register of Vestry Members before the Easter meeting. Should you require any further guidance, please speak with Revd Jonny or Lorraine Ogilby (Honorary Secretary).

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www.theunitedparish.org.uk