

# **Guidelines for Developing Commissions St. Andrew's Episcopal Church: May 2004**

## **Preface**

The Commission System of St. Andrew's evolved as part of a day-long workshop for Vestry, Clergy and Staff on Saturday, 6 March 2004. The design of this form of leadership is five-fold. First, with a congregation of our size, we need to diffuse leadership so that a broad level of persons is invested with the capability to design and implement programs. Second, the work of both the Vestry and the staff of the parish are more clearly defined and that time spent by both is utilized appropriately. Third, our many ministries are grouped in terms of function and can accomplish tasks that center around common areas of interest and activity. Fourth, that there is a fundamental level of accountability for process, progress and evaluation. Finally, that the broadest level of the parish family can become involved in our organizational life.

The parish now has a working model (schematic) of leadership that supports the larger faith community in its life and mission. Ministries are grouped into seven defined commissions germane to our common life. Vestry members have been designated as liaisons to each of these commissions, and staff members have been assigned to work with each of these commissions as administrative and program support. Each of the Wardens has been assigned to oversee the work of several commissions. The Rector and Wardens work in concert to continue realizing the vision and giving direction to commissions and the larger parish (Executive Committee).

Having accomplished the above (which is Phase I), we move to Phase II, which is the scope of this paper.

## **Organizing**

For a Commission to become active, **leaders of each ministry** under that commission must be identified and gathered for an initial time of organizing. Note that leaders of ministries within St. Andrew's Parish are required to be part of that commission. There are organized ministries that function within our structure but are technically outside the parish corporation. Leaders of those ministries are invited and encouraged to attend gatherings, but are not required. However, should they wish the parish to support or sponsor a program, they must move through that commission to be recognized by the Vestry for decisions.

Initial meetings of all seven Commissions should take place prior to the end of June 2004. At this meeting, liaisons and staff will present an overview of the commission structure and insure that each commission member has documents that explain our organization and function. This will be a time to define the leadership plan for the parish over the coming three years. Fr. Mann is doing this as well within the context of each neighborhood meeting between May and November of this year. It is imperative that the Commission be identified as **united under a common aspect of ministry at St. Andrew's** and, further, that it is imperative for ministries so linked to be in conversation regarding the overall goals and objectives within the scope of that commission.

## **Defining**

In the initial meeting (and possibly in subsequent meetings the first year), the following areas should be defined and placed in writing:

1. **What do we share in common?** This is by way of defining the Commission and its common purpose within the context of several related ministries. This means that each ministry leader be able to articulate the purpose and function of that ministry within the parish.

2. **Why do we exist, and what do we need?** What overall purpose does this commission and its ministries have within St. Andrew's? As this is determined, the group can define the need(s) it has. This can be logistical, programmatic, financial, material or combinations of all these.

3. **How is our ministry understood?** While this sounds like another articulation of the above material, it actually addresses the perception that the larger congregation has of each ministry. This will lead to conversations about communication and visibility within the larger parish.

4. **How can we help the Commission fulfill its goals?** This basically begins to address the formation of a common statement of purpose and the vehicle by which organizational ministry will be accomplished (see "Administration" below). This is an important conversation and should be well documented by the end of the first meeting. Also, the commission members may wish to invite "parishioners at large" (i.e. parishioners who are not ministry leaders) who have an interest in this area of our common life and may have resources to assist the commission in its work.

5. **Choose a leader or convener for the Commission.** This person can be any member of the commission. This person will be responsible for seeing that the commission meets at particular times and places most suitable for its members and that communication is established and maintained with Vestry liaisons and staff as appropriate. Vestry and Staff Liaisons function as logistical support, channels of communication (reporting as well as requests and clarifications), and encouragement (the occasional nudge to get projects and programs accomplished).

Once these topics have been satisfactorily addressed, regular meetings that best meet the needs of the commission can be scheduled. Some may meet monthly (e.g. the Finance Commission). Others will meet less often and be more dependent upon seasonal planning (e.g. worship). It will be up to each commission to determine its pace and progress through the first year of development.

## **Vision**

The basic function of the Commission system is to provide a vehicle for coordinating program and determining needs for ministry. An equally important role is to gain a larger definition of our life and purpose as a congregation as it relates to ministries within the common group (commission). As Seneca once said, "A sailor without a destination cannot tell a good wind from an ill wind." The commission looks ahead to ask several important questions.

1. **What is our mission statement as a commission?** What one statement can define not only our current purpose but our direction and larger identity? There are a number of ways that each commission can succinctly state its mission. This first year is important to creating and publishing at least an initial mission statement for itself.

2. **What is the commission's role in the larger life of the Church?** The ministries in a single commission only represent a part of the larger parish's function. How does this commission see itself serve the larger purpose of the parish? The commission must be sensitive and responsive to the role of the other commissions that work alongside it for the common faith journey.

3. **Will our vision draw us together and energize us to seek goals and objectives to accomplish that vision?** It is one thing to state a vision. It is essential to find ways of attaining that vision. Each commission must have goals and objectives that will be measurable ways to get to where it wishes to go in its work. Those goals and objectives must be well enough defined that new leaders coming into the system can grasp them and continue to move forward without redefining the vision. It is like a football team...the design of each play is such that new players can be sent into the game, and the ball can be moved from one position to another without it being fumbled or lost.

## **Administration**

Within this revised context of leadership, the daily conduct of business must have adequate communication and a reliable vehicle for transmitting data. Conduct of business in a parish has the same parameters as any business enterprise. At another level, our leadership is one that has a spirituality and larger purpose. It is essential that communication be open, consistent, and shared in ways that keep all leaders informed and current. Thus, the guidelines below are being implemented.

1. **Minutes.** Each commission will report the actions of its meetings in writing in the form of minutes. This report includes attendees, topics of discussion and decisions rendered. Details of conversations are not necessary. This is a summary report. These minutes will be kept by commission leaders and a copy held in the parish office files after being reviewed by the staff liaison of that commission. Any concerns that arise in the commission meetings can receive appropriate action through the parish staff.

2. **Liaison Reports.** Each month, the liaisons for each commission will submit a written summary report of actions taken by that commission between Vestry meetings. These reports need to be submitted by the *Second Tuesday of each month* for inclusion in the pre-Vestry mailing. Liaison reports can be the minutes above endorsed by liaisons or additional reporting material.

3. **Action for Vestry.** All action for Vestry consideration will be submitted in writing and in resolution format. Commissions requiring actions on program or expenditure that require Vestry approval will be submitted in writing and in resolution format. This format is as follows:

“Whereas.....(insert a single reason or justification)”

Each subsequent reason or pre-resolution statement would have a “whereas”

“Be in resolved....(insert what is being requested)”

For each specific request, there should be a separate resolve.

Identification of submitting body.

**Resolutions for action must be submitted the Second Tuesday of each month.** This will allow for review by the Executive Committee and inclusion in the pre-Vestry packet that is mailed Thursday afternoon of the second week of the month. In order for the Vestry to consider actions of consequence, they must have the opportunity to reflect upon and pray about work that will be accomplished at the meeting. All program actions that require the expenditure of parish funds must be approved by the Vestry.

4. **Decisions of Vestry.** The commission is the basic level of business and input into the Vestry. When a commission is engaged in its work, recommendations and discussion will happen at that level. When a matter comes before the Vestry, discussion will be centered around the merit and rationale for making a determination. The Vestry must avoid becoming a “committee of the whole.” Should material submitted not meet with Vestry consensus, it will be referred back to the Commission. Vestry

members can become involved in subsequent revisions by being in touch with that commission whose work is being considered. All Vestry decisions will be made in accordance with the Canons of the Episcopal Church and this diocese.

5. **Annual Reports.** Each ministry of the parish is required to submit an annual report to the Annual Parish Meeting. This report summarizes the work over the past year and projections for the coming operational year. That report must be submitted within the first week of January. Commissions may organize reporting in such ways as reflect how each ministry works within the commission.

6. **Budget Preparation.** In September 2004, budget preparation will begin with worksheets and information being sent to each ministry leader. Staff and ministry leaders will be asked to submit requests for line items in the following year's budget on three levels: "Dream" (what is desired if funding were no object), "Request" (what is needed and desired to fulfill the work of that ministry), and "Basic" (what is essential for the conduct of that ministry). Preparation sheets will be returned to the Comptroller's office by 15 October to coincide with the work of the stewardship committee (and element of the Finance Commission). The final draft of the new budget will be presented to the Vestry for adoption prior to 1 January. This will allow sufficient time for publication prior to the Annual Meeting.

7. **Other Considerations.** Ministry leaders and staff are responsible to monitor their budget lines. Procedures for submitting requests and having funds released will be in accordance with material published through the parish comptroller's office.

### **Three Year Plan**

There are four "phases" for implementing this style of leadership for our parish. Briefly defined:

**Phase I:** Identify leadership needs and develop a model for St. Andrew's and its ministry. This included the workshop and designing of the profile for leadership. In this are identified the broad areas of focus and the individual ministries that support those areas.

**Phase II:** Develop the commission mechanics, inter-commission relationships and begin meeting for complete organization. This may take the balance of the first year (2004) and is the material largely developed in this document.

**Phase III:** Complete the vision and inaugurate goals/objectives for the commissions. Continue to develop reporting and accountability factors. This is a "fine tuning" phase that will occupy the second year. It takes time to become familiar and comfortable with a new leadership structure. Commissions learn to function within their individual groups, between commissions and work to develop relationships with the broader parish in creating ministry opportunities.

**Phase IV:** The Mission Statement for St. Andrew's Parish. After working in Phases II and III, it is now time for Vestry, staff and ministry leaders to come together to develop a single statement that identifies who and what St. Andrew's is. With this Mission Statement, we can cause to emerge the 1,2 or more things in which St. Andrew's "majors" as the Body of Christ and Episcopal presence in this part of our community and diocese. The Mission Statement and identification of purpose will become that upon which commissions will then focus their ongoing ministries and future developing opportunities.